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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
September 26, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers	**Attending Sub-Regional Delegates**
Chairperson: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	North: Otto Lies, Holden*
Vice Chair: Robert Hassinger, Grafton*	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough*
Treasurer: Daniel Schur, Westborough*	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton*
Asst. Treasurer: Andrew Coles, Auburn*	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley*
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin*	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer*
Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester*
Staff:	**Not In Attendance:**
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	
Trish Settles, Deputy Dir., RCCP*	
Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Dir., Transportation	
Anthony Senesi, Communications Coordinator	
Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager*	
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager*	
Sherrie Haber, Executive Assistant*	
Connor Robichaud, Dir. Regional Services*	*indicates remote participation

Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

1. **Approval of Minutes:**
   Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from August 29, 2024
   Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Schur. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

2. **Public Comment:**
   None.

3. Chair Dobner summarized the Annual Review of the Executive Director.
   - The main theme is how to plan for succession. He received feedback from many.
   - Goal – Consider with the staff the overall size of the organization and the service offerings; then consider what we should and shouldn't do.

- Goal – Update the old marketing brochure
- Goal – Consider project implementation / management. We already do this on the Transportation side and could consider it on the RCCP side as well.
- Goal – Quality control. Make sure there is a process for delivering quality documents.
- Overall rating is 10/10. Fantastic job.

Motion: To approve the Annual Review of the Executive Director. Moved by Mr. Grigg, seconded by Mr. Quiroa.

- Mr. Quiroa commented that Ms. Pierce is done a great job and thanked her for the culture she has created in CMRPC.
- Ms. Hirsh thanked Ms. Pierce and likes the recommendations of goals.
- Mr. Dobner enjoyed writing this review for a fantastic Executive Director.

Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

4. Chair Dobner explained that the Executive Director's current contract indicates that the Executive Committee shall determine if she receives a 4% or 5% increase in salary. The Personnel Committee voted to recommend a 5% increase.
Motion: To approve a 5% Annual Salary Adjustment of the Executive Director effective August 1, 2024. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Baker. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

5. Chair Dobner asked the committee to make a technicality change to Ms. Pierce's contract. He explained that when it was written, Vacation Accrual was improperly based on a 40 hour work week instead of a 37.5 hour week. The proper accrual is 4.33 hours per week and that is what Ms. Pierce has been actually accruing.
Motion: To amend the Executive Director's current contract Vacation Accrual to 4.33 hours per week, retroactive to August 1, 2023. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

6. Chair Dobner stated that the Personnel Committee has recommended changes to the Nepotism policy. He asked Ms. Toupin to speak to the changes.

- Although allowed by our current policy, in practice we do not hire family members. In the previous policy it would be at the discretion of the Executive Committee. The policy would change to allow the Executive Director to make the decision. There is further explanation of which relatives are included. There will be no direct reporting to family members. MGL references have been updated.

- In response to Mr. Grigg, Ms. Pierce said that we can add to the policy that the Executive Director will inform the Executive Committee when we have hired a family member.
- Chair Dobner asked Ms. Pierce to explain why we are making changes. She replied that we have staff with family members that are interested in positions. It is a disadvantage to not allow family to be considered. We could also use family as traffic counters. The revised policy also includes that we follow both Ethics and Conflict of Interest laws. We also added Domestic Partner as a relation.

Motion: To amend the Nepotism policy as recommended with the addition of notifying the Executive Committee . Moved by Mr. Grigg, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

7. **Executive Director's Report:**

Ms. Pierce thanked the Executive Committee for their kind words and thanked the staff as well.

I. **Staffing and Administration (Ms. Pierce)**

- Julia Moore and Eric Gemberline have left CMRPC.
- We have hired Carli Harris to help with Homeland and Cyber Security. She started on September 23rd.
- We received a resignation from Mishel Caisapanta, Public Health Training Manager. Connor has a few people interested in the position. Ms. Pierce wishes her the best as she moves on to Leicester and said that she has done a great job.
- In response to Mr. Dobner, Ms. Pierce answered that there are 9 total openings.

II. **Transportation**

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Transportation had its onsite Federal Certification on September 10th. It was a showcase of the growth of CMRPC. Many staff joined from other departments for a well-rounded group. They were complimented on three well attended meetings with stakeholders. The team was able to answer questions in depth. A draft of the report is expected in mid-October and the final report at the beginning of November.
- The Transportation Secretary attended the MPO meeting. CMRPC was complimented on the good work they do.
- Subregional elections for the Northeast and West were held. Shrewsbury and Boylston attended for the Northeast. Michelle Conlin from Shrewsbury was elected, and Bill Filsinger from Boylston was elected as Alternate. The West was

attended by Hardwick and Brookfield. Jared Grigg from Spencer was elected, and Brad Kadelski from Brookfield was elected alternate.

- Will have an open office hour before the MPO meetings so there can be a better understanding of issues when voting.
- Celebrations – Boston Worcester Airline Trail ribbon cutting yesterday.
- Mass Central Rail Trail advocacy bike ride was Saturday in our region. Participants had breakfast in Barre and Lunch in Boylston. They day was cut short with rain.
- CMRPC participated in the 50th anniversary of the WRTA
- Hardwick is working on Complete Streets approval
- The Safe Routes to schools regional forum will be October 8th. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked if we are inviting schools. Mr. Senesi replied that we are, as well as public safety, DPW, town administrators, select boards and town planners. Ms. Krishnan said that Grafton got a funded project. Mr. Grigg asked for a list of participating districts. Ms. Krishnan will share the list. Ms. Pierce added that there is also a component of teaching walking / biking safety.

III. **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):**

Deputy Director, Trish Settles provided the RCCP report

Past Events

- The Quarterly meeting open house was great and we gained a lot of leads.
- Housing bond bill forum, invited CHAPA
- Manager and Administrator Forum

Upcoming Events

- October 1 State house plan listening session on Regional Housing goals
- October 3 MARPA Division of Local Services
- October 3 Leicester Master Plan workshop
- October 7 Cottage Housing Webinar
- October 16 Farm to Heart Festival
- October 25 Mass Trails Conference
- Preservation Mass Conference
- Early November Southern New England Planning Conference
  Participating in conference both as presenters and to learn

Grant Opportunities

- National Park Service Grant – 5 towns applied and both Spencer and Hardwick received $100,000 each.
- PARC Grant will allow for an accessible park in both Barre and Dudley

- Applied for Dudley Webster bridge replacement. Expect funding of $850,000
- MVP Action Grants – Berlin Boylston will be able to do an Athletics project.
- EPA Community Change Grant – We need to evaluate to ensure a good partnership before we begin.
  We need to be thoughtful of what we go after with a lean staff.
- LAND Grant for open spaces
- CDBG does a lot of project management, and some work will be part of the Contract Grant Administrator Position

- Proposals are out for Master plans for Northbridge, Douglas and Hopedale.
- Digital Equity plans are coming to an end in Worcester & Millbury and starting in the Western region.
- CPRG – Conference by the EPA to learn the challenges and opportunities
- Imagine 2050 – moving into scenario planning. Updates will happen in January, March and May with final publication by June 30th.

Discussion

- In response to Mr. Grigg's question on shifting away from Digital Equity, Ms. Settles explained that the funding that the state made available is moving to implementation. Mr. Griggs followed up asking if we can help with implementation and Mr. Robichaud said yes.
- Ms. Settles thanked Mr. Senesi for sharing all of these events, projects, grants etc saying that the more people see what we are doing for others, the more they know we can do for them.

IV. **Human Resources**

HR Manager, Stephanie Toupin provided the Human Resources report.

- We are very busy hiring. Resiliency position has been a challenge. HR is reworking job descriptions. Mr. Dobner added that it is a hard market to find qualified people that will accept our offer.
- We have restructured positions and added new positions.
- In response to Mr. Grigg's question regarding training offerings many staff members explained different professional development opportunities and conference attendance.

Mr. Coles arrived at 8:20pm

8. Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-03 for the month of September totaling $137,097.29

Motion: to approve Warrant 25-03 for the month of September in the amount of $137,097.29. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Ms. Lies.

Discussion:

- Mr. Dobner asked about the software charges. Ms. Griswold explained that $3412.26 is the annual package to get 6 towns from CDBG onto Quickbooks for better time management. The drone deployment software is prepayed but will be distributed over months. The cost can sometimes be shared amongst contracts.
- Mr. Drobner stated that the quarterly meeting was a well spent expenditure.

Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

9. **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
   - ***a.*** **Transportation –** Mr. Hassinger reported that they did not meet
   - ***b.*** **Legislative Affairs –** Mr. Robichaud discussed the SAPHE Legislation
     - Franklin Regional Council on Governments has prepared a letter of support for SAPHE 2.0 that the Executive committee is asked to consider tonight. It has received backing from Mass Municipal Association as well as the Healy/Driscoll administration
     - Mr. Drobner clarified that regional health services are paid by ARPA funds that are now coming to an end. The state would continue funding through SAPHE 2.0
     - Mr. Grigg asked if there are any arguments against. Mr. Robichaud said that the original SAPHE received pushback from Anti-vax protesters, and it contained an unfunded mandate that has now been fixed. Ms. Hirsh added that fiscally conservative people may be against it.
     - Mr. Grigg asked that the Executive Committee receive information on such items sooner in the future. Mr. Robichaud stated that it was brought to the Executive Committee in July but there was not quorum.
     - Mr. Hassinger had a point of order that for process it should be on the agenda if Executive Committee will take a vote. Mr. Dobner said that the information just came in the morning and it was not anticipated by the chair.
     - Mr. Dobner expressed that the Executive Committee should support this – that if the funding disappears towns will either lose the positions or will have to fund themselves.
     - **Motion:** to sign the letter in support of SAPHE 2.0 as written by the Franklin Regional Council on Governments. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll Call Vote. (Grigg, Hassinger, Schur Abstained) **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

c. **Physical Development Committee-** Mr. Wheeler reported that Trish and team are working on DLTA and adjustments will be made at the end of the year.
d. **Rural Caucus–** Ms. Settles reported that they have not met. Rural Caucus may be changed to a yearly event as they have had little participation in the past. Ms. Pierce added that there are lots of meetings and that they often got the same people attending. This will allow us to be respectful of everyone's time and more thoughtful on topics
e. **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization –** Ms. Pierce said there they are meeting next Thursday.
f. **Sub-regions–** Mr. Dobner asked if anyone had a report
    - West: Mr. Grigg reported that Brookfields are working on Digital Equity (including New Braintree) and it's a great project
    - Northeast: Ms. Hirsh reported that they are searching for a Town Administrator
    - East: Mr. Drobner attended a select board meeting and was questioned if CMRPC would have a funding opportunity to help with converting a historic building into the senior center. He is pleased that people are starting to know to ask about opportunities.
    - Southeast: Mr. Baker reported that Jim Smith, Sutton Town Manager has resigned effective the end of the year.

10. New Business:

- None

11. Adjournment:

- **Motion**: to adjourn. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Grigg. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.** Chair Dobner adjourned the meeting at 8:43pm.

Documents:

ED Monthly Report September 2024	Nepotism Policy
September 2024 Warrant	Draft Minutes August 29, 2024
ED Annual Review	

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.