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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

December 5, 2024 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

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

1. Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes:

Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from October 31, 2024

Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Schur. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.** Mr. Schur Abstained

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director's Report:

I. Staffing and Administration (Janet Pierce, Executive Director)

- Ms. Pierce stated that there are 5 open positions. And we have hired 4 new employees.
 - a. Emily Whittaker-Smith started on 11/1 as Regional Public Health Trainer

- b. Jordan Hollinger is an internal transfer from RCCP to Transportation as a Planning & Transportation Researcher
- c. Sandy Amoakohene is a Multimodal principal planner and will start on 12/9.
- d. Taru is a Principal Resiliency Planner and will also start on 12/9
- Ms. Pierce gave a shoutout to Transportation on the Federal Certification and that they received no corrective actions and received a commendation. Kudos to Sujatha and her team and to Trish for her team's support.
- In response to Chair Dobner's question regarding the process of the earmarks for the towns on the Economic Development bill signed by the Governor, Ms. Settles replied that there hasn't been much talk about earmarks. She said that she will find out more. They are reviewing communities for MBTA preparedness.

//. Transportation (Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director)

- The goal of the certification process is to have no corrective actions and CMRPC has zero this time. There were nine recommendations as follows.
 - Work with MBTA & transit stakeholders
 - LRTP – list cost estimates
 - They liked the micro projects plan. Make it more accessible.
 - Public involvement – develop an effectiveness report
 - Develop maps on race, color and national origin
 - Document cost limited English proficiency
 - Identify toolbox to mitigate harm
 - Congestion management process – develop evaluation strategies. Ms. Krishnan has asked for more guidance on this recommendation and asked the Federal agency to be part of the solution
 - MassDOT breakdown of PM2 & PM3
- Complimentary of the work and collaboration of RCCP & Transportation with the development of the ADA transition plan
- In response to Chair Dobner's question on the timing of the final report, Ms. Krishnan said that comments were due yesterday. The report should be finalized by mid-December with certification by the end of the calendar year.
- In response to Chair Dobner's question if other MPO's are on the same schedule, Ms. Krishnan said that they do 2-3 a year and rotate.
- In response to Chair Dobner's question on the new administration and following the four-year plan, Ms. Krishnan said that the new administration make shake things up but it shouldn't cause changes to the MPO. Some areas may slow, and some may accelerate, but we are prepared for that.

- Ms. Krishnan additionally updated on the TIP cycle. Only 2 projects have been approved for consideration. Asking communities to look at projects to apply for funding.
- Ms. Krishnan provided an update on three grants
 - Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) – Worcester and Southbridge are being considered
 - Promoting Resilient Operations for Transformative, Efficient and Cost-saving Transportation Program (PROTECT) – closes February 5th. Looking for any regionally applicable projects.
 - Mass Trails – Working on a feasibility study for Blackstone River bikeway completion.
- In regard to Oxford, we have met with the town, but MassDOT does not have an appetite for expansion. Ms. Krishnan suggested looking at it from the Economic Development side as it does not meet Transportation metrics.

III. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Trish Settles, Deputy Director RCCP)

- Currently interviewing for positions. Seth will be deployed, and Carli Harris will help bridge the gap. Marc G. will also be deployed with FEMA and currently looking for staff to help.
- Solicitations for DLTA proposals. There is a workshop coming up. Proposals are due January 9th and will be reviewed January 16th.
- In the works - Applications for Green communities, Complete Streets, Contract for HR with Rutland & WRSD phase 2
- Also in the works, Vernon Street bridge, Douglas Master Plan, Hillside Master Plan, Hardwick Master Plan, Saint Gobain & Gardner. Dudley did not get funding for a master plan.
- Met with MRPC regarding the National Parks Service
- Spencer and East Brookfield working on CBDG
- Peer to peer meeting on ADU
- Meeting with Paul Jahnige from the Mass Office of Outdoor Recreation
- Legislative Affairs will meet in January on Traffic and Pedestrian safety
- Sarah O'Brien has received the Young Planner of the Year Award
- Anne Gobi sent information on Rural OneStop – Berlin, East Brookfield, Oakham & Rutland
- To address Chair Dobner's earlier question on change in administration, Federal infrastructure should not be impacted as it is a very bipartisan issue.

IV. Human Resources (Stephanie Toupin

- There are five positions open as follows:
 - Land Use & Comprehensive Planning Principal Planner – finalizing offer
 - Resiliency Assistant / Associate Planner
 - Transportation Assistant Planner – finalizing offer
 - Manager of Environmental Planning – interviewing
 - Transportation Intern for Spring
- Ms. Toupin had previously discussed a change in exemption status based on salary, but that is being reversed so there are no changes at this point.

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-05 for the month of November totaling \$104,323.65

Motion: to approve Warrant 25-05 for the month of October in the amount of \$104,323.65.

Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Ms. Hirsh.

Discussion:

- Chair Dobner asked if the pass throughs from contracts all continue. Ms. Griswold said that Webster & Northbridge continue. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts is a refund for a grant and ends in November.

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

6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that they met prior to this meeting and voted to recommend Amendment #2 to the TIP highway project list.
- b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Trifone stated that they will meet in January
- c. Physical Development Committee**– Mr. Wheeler stated that they met November 20th. They looked at realigning DTLA funding. There has been \$292K used to fund over 25 projects. Transportation is beginning to participate. There is an information session on December 16 on participation
- d. Rural Caucus** – Ms. Settles stated that they have not met. Considering a Rural Caucus Summit in the spring
- e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Settles stated that they met today. Going forward they will meet bi-monthly. The advisory group will meet quarterly. They reviewed projects including St. Gobain.
- f. Sub-regions**– Mr. Drobner asked if anyone had a report
 - Northeast: Ms. Hirsh stated There will be an economic development meeting in Northborough. Kudos to Kerrie on gathering the information needed. Ms. Hirsh will update at the next meeting.

- East: Mr. Drobner stated that the Town of Boylston got earmarked funding if projects are approved at town meeting
- Mr. Rajeshkumar stated that the town of West Boylston has made an offer for the town administrator position.
- Mr. Trifone commented on construction on Rt. 20 in Oxford & Charlton. Two lanes in each direction are now open. It has been slow but will be much safer. Ms. Krishnan followed up saying that there is talk of possibly an additional ramp at 290 & 84, similar to 290 & 495.
- Mr. Hassinger commented on the UPS project between Grafton and Shrewsbury. The Grafton Planning Board has approved their part. They also have funding for the traffic light at Pine Street.
- Ms. Krishnan added that MassDOT is working on 146/Boston Post Road. There is a public meeting next week on the 11th.
- Mr. Coles stated that Auburn is building a new fire station.

7. New Business:

- Chair Dobner thanked Ms. Krishnan and her team for their work on the Federal Certification and asked her to share with the team.
- Ms. Pierce asked to have the next few meetings exclusively via zoom due to possible weather conditions during the winter. Chair Dobner said that without objection that the next three meetings – 2 in January and 1 in February – would be via zoom and that we will go back to Hybrid in March. There was no objection.

8. Adjournment:

- Having completed all business, Chair Drobner adjourned the meeting at 8:13pm.

Documents:

November 2024 Warrant

Draft Minutes October 31, 2024

Federal Certification presentation

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.