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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 February 27, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Virtual Meeting

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

Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from January 30, 2025. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Public Comment:

None.

Presentation of FY24 Audit by Roland P. Lambalot, CPA

Ms. Pierce introduced Mr. Lambalot and stated that this would be his last audit of CMRPC. She thanked Mr. Lambalot for his several years of audits and his expertise and guidance regarding the creation of the retiree health insurance trust fund.

Mr. Lambalot stated that during his audit, he acquired all materials needed to conduct the audit. Mr. Lambalot described the differences between the first audit he did of CMRPC in 2009. Mr. Lambalot noted that during Ms. Pierce's tenure, the number of grants that were awarded to CMRPC has risen significantly. Mr. Lambalot stated that other regional planning agencies that he audits don't have as many local contracts as CMRPC does. Mr. Lambalot stated that over the past years, CMRPC has had excess revenues due to operating efficiencies.

Mr. Lambalot described the indirect costs of FY24, he noted higher salaries, benefits, and conferences due to the growth of staffing levels.

Mr. Lambalot stated that if the audit factored in the pension liability, CMRPC would be in a net deficit. Mr. Lambalot stated that if CMRPC is required to pay for pension liabilities for past years, it would cause a significant increase in the overall indirect rate of the agency moving forward. Mr. Lambalot noted that past contracts didn't account for the higher potential indirect rate if the recovered pension liability is factored into the budget. Ms. Pierce stated that if the indirect rate was higher, there would be a lesser amount for direct salaries.

Ms. Pierce stated that Senator Jo Comeford and Representative Natalie Blais have filed bills to resolve the retirement issue. Ms. Pierce stated the proposed bills would be to not have CMRPC or other regional planning agencies pay anything retroactively and to exempt the agencies from paying anything in the future.

Mr. Lambalot thanked CMRPC staff and the Executive Committee for their efforts. Mr. Lambalot thanked Executive Director, Janet Pierce for her steadfast commitment to the finances of CMRPC. Mr. Lambalot stated that he recommends a specific auditing company that has experience with regional planning agencies.

Motion: to accept the FY24 Audit Report as presented. Moved by Mr. Trifone, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Vote to Recommend the FY26 CMRPC Annual Budget

Ms. Griswold described the proposed FY26 Operating Revenue and Expenses. Ms. Griswold stated that there is a proposed 6.74% increase before pass-through contracts are accounted for in FY26 compared to FY25. Ms. Griswold said that there is a proposed 83.3% increase in pass-through contracts for FY26 compared to FY25. Ms. Griswold stated that there is an overall revenue increase of 19.65%.

Ms. Griswold stated that assessments would increase by 2.5% for FY26. Ms. Griswold stated that the RCCP revenues will increase by 6.22% overall. Ms. Griswold stated that the CPRG grant

administered by the Environmental Protection Agency is not being considered for the FY26 budget due to uncertainty of the funding source from the federal government. Ms. Griswold stated that the significant increase in pass-through contracts is due to MassDOT and DPH health services contracts.

Ms. Pierce stated that there is an anticipated increase in local contracts due to Community One Stop for Growth MOUs that will be awarded to CMRPC to assist municipalities. Ms. Pierce stated that the CDBG program is expanding to the towns of Spencer and East Brookfield. Ms. Pierce stated that there are also additional DLTA-A funds that need to be spent down in FY26. Ms. Pierce stated that she is comfortable with the budget and the proposed revenue sources.

Ms. Griswold stated the proposed FY26 Operation Expenses. Ms. Griswold stated that there is a proposed 37.73% increase in operating expenses before pass-through contracts are accounted for in FY26 compared to FY25. Ms. Griswold stated that salary, fringe benefits, health insurance, Medicare, state unemployment, and workers' compensation line items have increased due to additional staff that were hired or plan to be hired. Ms. Griswold stated that premiums from the GIC would increase by 15% in FY26 compared to FY25. Ms. Griswold stated that the Executive Committee voted to approve a new depreciation schedule from a threshold of \$1,000 to \$5,000.

Motion: to accept the recommended FY26 CMRPC Annual Budget as presented. Moved by Ms. Hirsh, seconded by Mr. Quiroa. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Executive Director's Report:

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

- A. Ms. Pierce stated that Dani Marini-King returned to CMRPC on February 18, 2025. Previously, Ms. Marini-King worked in the Town of Sudbury as their Sustainability Coordinator. Ms. Marini-King is the Environmental & Resiliency Manager at CMRPC.
- B. Ms. Pierce described the grants that were awarded and signed contracts for the month including Warren Zoning Bylaw Review, \$55,000; Northbridge Master Plan, \$140,000; Wachusett Regional School District, \$97,500; Hardwick Master Plan, \$130,000; West Boylston Green Communities Grant Administration, \$5,000.
- C. Ms. Pierce described the MOUs for the towns of Spencer and East Brookfield for CDBG applications. Ms. Pierce stated that all eligible member communities are now working with CMRPC regarding CDBG applications.

2. Transportation (Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director)

- A. Ms. Krishnan stated that CMRPC is holding off on PROTECT grant with the Town of Northbridge due to federal funding uncertainty.
- B. Ms. Krishnan stated that the Transportation Department is working with Hardwick, West Brookfield, North Brookfield and Uxbridge regarding Community One Stop for Growth projects.

- C. Ms. Krishnan stated that the request for proposals for the Vernon Street/I-290 Interchange project is out for bid until tomorrow. Ms. Krishnan stated that over 30 consultants expressed interest.
 - D. Ms. Krishnan stated that there will be a DPW Roundtable on March 26, 2025. Ms. Krishnan stated that the Transportation Department will outline engineering a project management services that CMRPC can provide member communities.
3. **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Trish Settles, Deputy Director RCCP)**
- A. Ms. Settles stated that Town of Princeton received \$100,000 through the MVP 2.0 Action Grant.
 - B. Ms. Settles stated that CMRPC held an information session regarding DLTA and Community One Stop for Growth.
 - C. Ms. Settles described assistance with Open Space and Recreation plans in member communities.
4. **Human Resources (Stephanie Toupin)**
- A. Ms. Toupin stated that on October 15, 2021, a COVID-19 Vaccination Policy was enacted by the Executive Committee. Ms. Toupin stated that the designated public health emergency has expired, and the policy is invalid. Ms. Toupin requests the Executive Committee rescind the COVID-19 Vaccine Verification Policy.

Motion: to rescind the COVID-19 Vaccine Verification Policy. Moved by Mr. Lies, seconded by Mr. Baker. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-08 for the month of February totaling \$147,065.82. She stated that \$124,524.19 is pass-throughs and \$22,541.63 is CMRPC expenditures.

Motion: to approve Warrant 25-08 for the month of February in the amount of \$147,065.82. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, Seconded by Mr. Hirsh. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- 1. **Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that the Transportation Committee met and discussed recommending an endorsement of Amendment #3 to the 2025-2029 TIP. Mr. Hassinger stated that the Committee ranked the 2026-2030 TIP projects.
- 2. **Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Trifone stated that the Committee is meeting next Tuesday to discuss legislation that has been filed.
- 3. **Physical Development** – Mr. Wheeler stated that the Committee will meet on March 20, 2025 regarding the round two of proposals for DLTA.
- 4. **Sub-Regional** –

- Mr. Baker stated that he will not be running for the Sutton Planning Board and will be stepping down from the Executive Committee. Mr. Baker thanked the Executive Committee for the opportunity to represent Sutton. Mr. Drobner thanked Mr. Baker for his service to CMRPC and his community.

New Business:

1. Chair Drobner stated that the upcoming Quarterly Meeting will be regarding proposed bills to create a Municipal and Public Safety Building Authority. Ms. Pierce stated that Senator Jo Comerford and Representative Blais would be speaking regarding their proposed bills at the Quarterly meeting.

Adjournment: Having completed all business, Chair Drobner adjourned the meeting at 8:56 pm.

Documents:

February 2025 Warrant
Draft Minutes January 30, 2025
Executive Director's Report
FY26 Proposed Expenses
FY26 Proposed Revenue
FY24 Audit Documents
FY24 Audit Governance Communication and Letter
5 Year Statement of Net Position

Respectfully submitted by Anthony Senesi, CMRPC.