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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 March 27, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Hybrid 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*	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin*	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer* (7:32)
Staff:	Not In Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director, Transportation*	Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager*	
Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources*	
Anthony Senesi, Communications*	
Matt Franz, Director of GIS*	
Jane Wyrick, Project Manager, Land Use & Zoning*	*indicates remote participation

Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:10 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from February 27, 2025. Moved by Mr. Schur, seconded by Mr. Quiroa. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Public Comment:

None.

Executive Director’s Report:

- Executive Committee Chair Role – Mr. Dobner reminded the committee that the chair role should rotate. He asked that the committee give it thought. He also asked that if anyone currently serving on the committee does not want to be considered for next year that they notify Janet so we can find replacements.
- Staffing and Administration (Janet Pierce)**

- A. Greer from RCCP Resiliency will be leaving in April.
- B. Last month the FY24 audit was presented. CMRPC's largest three contracts make up \$1,950,000. Based on an indirect rate of 86%, that is \$1,480,000 in salaries and \$902,000 indirect. If CMRPC has to pay \$330K a year in retirement assessments, the indirect rate would increase significantly. Additionally there would be significantly less funding for direct staffing. Other RPAs may not have funds to continue operating if they were required to pay the entire retirement assessment.
 - Mr. Schur asked which RPAs don't have to pay. Ms. Pierce stated MAPC, FRGC and Berkshire. She also stated that Cape Cod, Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket are exempt.
 - Mr. Shur asked what the cost would be to MassDOT or larger contracts if CMRPC was not doing them – or what services would cost if they had to hire them out. He asked for a calculation or if it would cost more or less. Ms. Pierce stated that they would have to pay salaries plus approximately 40% so it would be less, but they would need to hire, have space, etc.
 - Mr. Schur asked why MAPC does not pay and Ms. Pierce said that their formation is different and there is legislation to exempt the others.

3. Transportation (Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director)

- A. Vernon /290 Planning study went out last month. Seven firms applied and we are negotiating with a candidate.
- B. Housing and Transportation RFP went out last week. The need to be submitted by April 14th with the hope of a contract in May
- C. TIP – every project with design submission costs are up. Couldn't include any 2030 projects and project timelines cascaded a year plus. The target is \$28 million and there are no projects under \$10 million. Hazmat materials have to be taken out of state which has increased cost.

Mr. Grigg arrived at 7:32pm

- D. The Regional DPW forum had over 30 guests attending including DPW staff and town administrators. There was a mix of rural and urban communities. They would like to come back in September to discuss funding and Municipal Engineering and Project services. Next time they will also discuss procurement and workforce.
- E. Jeff is working with seven communities on a grant for community one stop
- F. Subregional bike plan meetings are going on now
- G. Rt 146 Public Planning Meeting
- H. Transportation and RCCP are applying for a grant for Municipality Vulnerability action plan for the bikeway in Blackstone.

- I. Questions: Mr. Schur asked what they are doing with Boston Rd. Ms. Krishnan said that south of the turnpike to the Rhode Island line they are looking for pinch points. It is a priority in the long-range transportation plan.

4. **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Matt Franz & Jane Wyrick)**

Presented by Matt Franz

A. Staffing

- Lost – Greer. Her last day will be April 11
- New – Assistant level community planner offers out to 2 former interns. Emily and Anna
- Still seeking Community planning principal who may be flexible enough to assist with master planning, housing and or economic development. Given a lack of qualified applicants, we are rethinking the Regional Housing Coordinator position as the work can likely be covered by current staff

B. Wrapping up

- Spencer and Grafton Master Plans
- Charlton, Rutland and West Boylston OSRPs

C. Kicking off

- Lots of DLTA projects
- Northbridge, Douglas and Hardwick Master Plans
- Continuing Warren and Leicester Master Plan

D. New Awards/Coming Awards

- Boylston Hillside contract signed
- Waiting on Barre ZBL contract
- Holden MBTA Community Zoning
- Southbridge ADA

E. Proposals Applications submitted or in development

- CMRPC Subdivision Rules and Regs for Millbury and Mendon
- CMRPC Invasives Study
- Charlton HPP EEA
- Barre MP Phase 2 EEA
- Berlin ZBL Update EEA
- Northbridge TDR EEA
- MOOR Outdoor Rec Asset Mapping
- US Forest Service Community Wildfire Planning Grant Brookfields less East Brookfield
- Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan with MRPC and Central Mass Grown

- Expressions of Interest for MEMA subaward several – (10 towns) Barre, Charlton, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Rutland, Sturbridge, Upton Uxbridge, West Boylston, West Brookfield
- MVP Action Grants- Hubbardston/Hardwick, Warren, Princeton and Brookfield
- Green Communities Competitive Round
- Princeton MVP 2.0
- CDBG –Athol TA Only, Barre, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Millbury, North Brookfield, Spencer Admin, Warren
- MVP Action Grant from CMRPC - feasibility study of the Blackstone River Corridor that will look at both the resiliency of the river and opportunities for trail improvements and connections.
- Community One Stop Applications in development with some level of CMRPC assistance with or without CMRPC participation in implementation including: Warren HPP, Leicester ZBL Update, East Brookfield culvert outflow inventory, Brookfield Vacant Storefront program, Barre STRAP, Noth Brookfield STRAP, sidewalks, New Braintree Parking lot, Hardwick Parking lot, West Brookfield MP and a STRAP Grant, Gardner Surplus Property Study, Charlton multiple projects, CMRPC TDR Study
- Digital Equity - Berlin & Boylston; Millville & Blackstone; Dudley & Webster
- CMRPC may be able to restart CPRG, the calendar invites are starting to come out again and it sounds like much of our PH funds are safe.

F. State level regional discussions

- CPTC was a big success. Trish presented with MRPC and FRCOG on what your RPA can do for you.
- Connor presented at a National virtual AARP conference on Age Friendly Central Mass

G. Calendar Meetings/Dates

- National Planning Conference in Denver 3/29 to 4/1
- Leicester Master Plan Workshop April 9
- CDBG Aps due April 15
- Central Mass Grown Annual Mtg 10 years May 2
- Rural Conference May 3
- Hardwick Master Plan Workshop May 8
- Worcester Regional Food Hub Grand Opening 5/23

Presented by Jane Wyrick

- A. Four land use planners (Mike, Tina, Gabe & Jane) are also working on Master plans
- B. A zoning update is being done for Mendon and Warren

- C. Once we have a contract with Barre we will be working on their zoning update
- D. EEA planning assistance grant is running behind and is needed for Berlin
- E. Many communities have bylaws that are out of date and we are working on developing bylaws as needed.
- F. 14 of our communities are MBTA communities and half have state approval on bylaws. We have helped some and are continuing to work with others. Some communities chose to work with other consultants.
- G. Working on ADU bylaws with 13 communities
- H. Working on Historic preservation & demolition delay bylaws
 - Mr. Dobner asked to expand on what is available for historic preservation. Ms. Wyrick explained that it is a DLTA project to research best practices for demolition delay bylaws. Delays can be 6, 12 or 18 months and are intended so the proponent can try to find an alternative (move vs. demolish).

5. Human Resources (Stephanie Toupin)

- A. Ms. Toupin stated that as mentioned, Greer is leaving and her position has been posted
- B. One intern position has been posted. There may be a few more if there is grant funding.
- C. It is time for open enrollment. Some plans went up a substantial amount (10-17%).
Making sure everyone is set up with MYGIC link for a smooth process
- D. Will assemble the Personnel Committee to review the Handbook and will send a poll for April availability

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-09 for the month of March totaling \$107,132.01. She stated that \$74,994.96 is pass-throughs and \$32,138.05 is CMRPC expenditures.

Motion: to approve Warrant 25-09 for the month of March in the amount of \$107,132.01.

Moved by Mr. Lies, Seconded by Mr. Hassinger.

- Mr. Dobner mentioned that the audit was the biggest expense and that we should expect it to go up next year. He also asked about the software line item. Ms. Griswold explained that it was for Adobe Team Licensing. Mr. Franz added that he was able to get a better rate this year based on the number of licenses held by the state.

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

Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- 1. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that costs are going up. Transportation voted to recommend endorsement of TIP amendment #5 to the 2025-2029 Highway Project Listing. He also expressed displeasure that projects are not going to be done in the year scheduled.

2. **Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Trifone stated that the LAC considered the house and senate bills discussed at the Quarterly Meeting. Mr. Senesi continued that the LAC recommended consideration of the bills. There has been communication from the towns that want to advocate for those bills. LAC recommends a vote to promote those bills. CMRPC could create a letter of support template for towns to complete with their own information and photos. The executive committee could also consider a letter of support to legislators and committees on behalf of CMRPC. Mr. Grigg added that they are well rounded bills with a funding source. Ms. Pierce stated that there was overwhelming support of the bills at the quarterly meeting and that the legislators may consider adding low interest loans.
3. **Physical Development** – Mr. Wheeler stated that they reviewed the second round of DLTA projects. Some cannot be acted on at this time without EEA activity. They will be considered in a third round. Approximately \$85K spent with \$25-30K left to expend by year end.
4. **SWCEDO** – did not meet this month
5. **Sub-Regional** –
 - Mr. Schur stated that the budget passed at town meeting.
 - Mr. Grigg stated that the Route 9 project in Spencer is moving forward. The town is considering an override.
 - Mr. Lies stated that Holden is working on MBTA Communities with CMRPC and that it does not have a lot of town support.
 - Mr. Quiroa stated that they are busy in budget season.
 - Mr. Trifone echoed what Ms. Toupin said about health insurance cost.
 - Mr. Baker stated that the Sutton Planning Director is attending the Denver conference.

New Business:

1. Mr. Grigg asked about considering a regionwide salary study. Discussion ensued with suggestions of contacting MMA, the municipal list serve for HR and contacting the Berlin Town Administrator because they have recently done a study. Ms. Pierce suggested that the town could look to physical development to fund a study.

Adjournment: Having completed all business, Chair Drobner adjourned the meeting at 8:31 pm.

Documents:

March 2025 Warrant
Draft Minutes February 27, 2025
Executive Director's Report

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.