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## CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

April 24, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

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

### Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

### Approval of Minutes:

**Motion:** to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from March 27, 2025. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

### Public Comment:

None.

### North Andover Amicus Brief:

Chairperson Drobner referred to the materials that were sent to the committee regarding the North Andover Amicus Brief.

- Ms. Pierce spoke on the difference between discontinuation of roads versus abandonment, adding that there would be a burden on communities if someone were to come forward, causing the community to have to upgrade the roads.
- Mr. Schur stated that before Mass Highway, roads were classified as city versus county.
- Mr. Hassinger added that CMRPC acts as the county commissioners and should support this.

- Chair Drobner mentioned that farm towns in the west could be greatly impacted.
- In response to Ms. Hirsh's question, Ms. Pierce stated that it could cause hardship to towns because they could have to improve roads to current code. Chair Drobner added that there could even be houses over the discontinued road.
- **Motion:** To join in supporting the North Andover Amicus Brief  
Motion made by Mr. Hassinger and seconded by Ms. Hirsh. With a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously with an abstention by Mr. Grigg and a vote of "present" by Mr. Schur.

### **Executive Director's Report:**

1. Ms. Pierce asked if we could obtain the maps for discontinued roads. Mr. Hassinger brought up having a county commission meeting and suggested CMRPC discuss with Mass Highway. Ms. Pierce will follow up next meeting. In response to Mr. Grigg, Ms. Pierce stated that the commission is appointed as needed and made up of 4 members of the executive committee and one technical member from MassDOT.
2. **Staffing and Administration (Janet Pierce)**
  - A. Per request of the Personnel Subcommittee, the CMRPC Organizational chart was sent to the committee. If anyone would like a hard copy, please contact Sherrie Haber.
  - B. Grant/Contract Submissions
    - CDBG submitted 5 grants for 6 towns
    - MVP Grants submitted for Hardwick/Hubbardston and Princeton/Westminster
    - Working on Community One Stop that is due in June
  - C. Grants Awarded/Signed Contracts
    - Mass Outdoor Office of Recreation
    - Warren Master Plan phase 2
    - Multiple EEA Planning Grants
    - Land conservation assistance grant for West Boylston
    - Barre Zoning update
  - D. Bylaw Revision – Ms. Pierce asked if the committee is interested in updating the Commission Bylaws. Ms. Haber expanded on some items that are out of date. Dr. Coles suggested that the committee structures be looked at along with better descriptions. Ms. Pierce suggested that revisions be ready to vote by the full commission at the September meeting. Chair Drobner asked that the committee send notes on possible changes to Ms. Pierce and Ms. Haber.
3. **Transportation (Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director)**
  - A. Transportation is working to ensure that documents are scrubbed per the federal executive order. They have been told by Federal and State entities that they will not be

approved if specified language is included. They are working to align with Federal partners.

- B. As of May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Federal liaisons that Transportation has been working with will be taking the buyout. It is assumed there will be new staff, but if there is not it is unclear who will approve documents.
- C. Applied for Mass Trails Grant
- D. Vernon Street Transportation study is close to signing a contract
- E. Housing and transportation study RFP just closed and there are seven proposals
- F. WRTA has changes to route schedules on April 26<sup>th</sup> and Transportation will be assisting with the changeout
- G. Baystate Bike month is in May and there will be a breakfast and a ride will be scheduled
- H. Jeff is working with communities on Community One Stop
- I. Letters from Rob are going out for traffic counts

#### **4. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Trish Settles)**

A. Notices from EDA, CPRG (EPA), HHS, USDA, FEMA that we need new language as we do our work.

##### **B. Staffing**

- Greer's last day was April 11<sup>th</sup>.
- Anna Walker and Emily Thibeault were interns that will be hired full time.
- Looking to fill Elena and Greer's roles as well as a Public health regional trainer.
- Seth has deployed and Carli Harris and Dara Griswold have stepped in

##### **C. Wrapping up**

- Hazard Mitigation projects including Holland
- Leicester, Grafton & Spencer Master Plans

##### **D. New Awards/Coming Awards**

- Community One Stop for Barre, Warren, Hardwick & Boylston
- Mass Office of Outdoor Recreation
- EEA for Millbury Mendon, Barre, Warren, Charlton, Northbridge & Berlin
- DPH Launchpad for purchase of ipads for Boards of Health
- MVP for Warren, West Boylston, Brookfield, Boylston, Rutland, Hardwick/Hubbardston, Blackstone
- HMGP Subgrants for Barre, Charlton, East Brookfield, Hardwick, Rutland, Sturbridge, Upton, Uxbridge, West Boylston & West Brookfield
- Applied for Green Communities for Barre, Charlton & Mendon
- Community One Stop are due June 2<sup>nd</sup>

##### **E. Potential Projects in Discussion**

- ADA applications for Mendon and Northborough

- Vacant storefronts for Blackstone and Brookfield
- Mass Housing for Paxton
- MVP for Princeton and Dudley
- Farm action plan – Central Mass Grown & MRPC

#### **F. Upcoming Calendar**

- May 2<sup>nd</sup> Central Mass Grown 10 Year anniversary in Sturbridge
- May 29<sup>th</sup> Food Hub Grand Opening with private tour available

#### **5. Human Resources (Janet Pierce)**

A. Nahrin Sangkagalo from Transportation has left. His position will be filled internally.

Mr. Trifone left the meeting at 8:25pm

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-10 for the month of April totaling \$66,246.84. She stated that \$54,365.10 is pass-throughs and \$11,881.74 is CMRPC expenditures.

**Motion:** to approve Warrant 25-10 for the month of April in the amount of \$66,246.84. Moved by Mr. Rajeshkumar, Seconded by Mr. Hassinger.

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

#### **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**

- 1. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that they discussed the Unified Planning Work Program, the Vernon Street 1-290 Interchange Planning Project and TIP updates.
- 2. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Senesi stated that the Legislative Affairs committee has recommended priorities for the committee to consider. There are five overarching themes and if bills fall into these categories, they would be considered further.
  - A. Municipal and General Operating Aid**
  - B. Municipal Infrastructure Maintenance & Resiliency**
  - C. Federal & State Funding Opportunities**
  - D. Public School Funding Formula Reform**
  - E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Priorities**
  - Ms. Settles added that the committee can later determine the level of activity – awareness and education, engagement and dialogue, mobilization and support, or direct advocacy
  - Chair Dobner clarified that LAC is looking for a high-level roadmap.
  - Dr. Coles suggested a possible addition of Economic development in Worcester. Ms. Settles suggested that could be part of an Economic Development omnibus bill or various budget bills.

- Mr. Hassinger asked if the committee should be advocating for school funding. Mr. Grigg replied that lack of school funding is causing deficits in towns. Ms. Pierce said that it is a common concern in Master Planning.
  - **Motion:** to authorize the Legislative Affairs Committee to pursue the priorities as presented.  
Motion made by Dr. Coles and seconded by Mr. Grigg.  
Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**
  - Mr. Hassinger would like it noted that he thinks that the committee is overstepping by considering school funding as a topic.
3. **Physical Development** – Mr. Wheeler stated that they will be meeting in mid May to review the remaining DLTA funding for matching funds on EEA Grants. There was also discussion of changing the name of the subcommittee.
  4. **Personnel Subcommittee** – Mr. Drobner stated that the committee will need to think about succession planning as Ms. Pierce will retire at some point. Ms. Pierce clarified that she would like to retire between October 1, 2027 and July 1, 2028. Mr. Drobner added that this is an ongoing process and that it is better to be prepared.
  5. **SWCEDO** – Biotech is part of comprehensive strategy. There is nothing new to report. The annual meeting will be held in June.
  6. **Sub-Regional** –
    - Chair Drobner noted that town meetings are beginning and asked if any towns are considering an override.
    - Mr. Grigg said that Spencer’s override includes 3 years worth of minimum local contributions for schools, 350k to maintain firefighters and 150k for the central rescue squad. There is a second question to add a police detective and a highway employee.
    - Mr. Rajeshkumar said that they are looking at \$750,000 and a cut budget. There has been talk of cutting trash collection
    - Mr. Hassinger said that the schools have been asked to shave their budget this year to keep from having an override. The budget has affected the select board race this year.
    - Mr. Grigg added that Spencer is part of a pavement management program to understand where the town is with road conditions. Ms. Krishnan added that CMRPC offers this service for less money than a consultant.

**New Business:** None

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

**Documents:**

April 2025 Warrant

Draft Minutes March 27, 2025

Executive Director's Report

CMRPC Organizational Chart

Commission Bylaws

Letter to the Executive Committee re: Discontinuance Public Ways

North Andover Amicus Brief

Worcester County Examples of Discontinued Public Ways

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.