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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

May 29, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers:	Attending Sub-Regional Delegates:
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*	North: Otto Lies, Holden*
Staff:	Not In Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Sujatha Krishnan, Deputy Director, Transportation	Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston
Trish Settles, Deputy Director, RCCP*	
Stephanie Toupin, Deputy Director, Administration*	
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager*	
Anthony Senesi, Communications*	*indicates remote participation

Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

Approval of Minutes:

Motion: to accept the Executive Committee Meeting Minutes from April 24, 2025, with the corrections to include Andrew Coles title as Dr. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Schur. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Public Comment:

None.

Executive Director’s Report:

1. Staffing and Administration (Janet Pierce)

A. Staffing

- Ms. Pierce stated that Anna Walker and Emily Thibeault started full-time in RCCP in May.
- Ms. Pierce stated that Ron Barron, a former employee of RCCP, will begin working at RCCP again in June.

- Ms. Pierce stated that Mike Maughan-Brown was promoted to Manager of Comprehensive Planning in RCCP. Ms. Pierce stated that Mike was an internal candidate.

B. Stephanie Toupin Promotion to Deputy Executive Director of Administration

- Ms. Pierce stated that she would like to promote Stephanie Toupin, Human Resources Manager, to the Deputy Executive Director of Administration position, effective July 1, 2025.
- Ms. Pierce stated that the Deputy Executive Director of Administration position will oversee all Human Resources, Finance, Information Technology, Administrative Services, Facilities, Procurement, and Communications staff and processes. Ms. Pierce stated that she highly recommends Ms. Toupin for the position.
- Ms. Toupin highlighted her over 20 years of experience in managing administrative processes. Ms. Toupin stated that having cohesive oversight is key to effective administration.
- Ms. Pierce stated that in the current employee handbook, it is unclear if the Executive Committee approves promotions.
- **Motion:** to approve the recommended promotion, in accordance with the current employee handbook, of Stephanie Toupin to the Deputy Executive Director of Administration position, effective July 1, 2025. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

C. Employee Handbook Being Reviewed by Personnel Subcommittee

- Mr. Drobner stated that the Personnel Subcommittee has met three times for 5 hours in total to review the CMRPC Employee Handbook. Mr. Drobner stated that the Personnel Subcommittee has sent the proposed Handbook to legal counsel for review. Mr. Drobner stated that once it has been vetted by legal counsel, the Personnel Subcommittee will review the draft and will recommend the draft to the Executive Committee.

D. Grants & Contracts

- Ms. Pierce stated that CMRPC has received \$1,000,000 for an EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant for a span of 4 years.
- Ms. Pierce stated that CMRPC was awarded \$5,000 for Oxford Green Communities grant administration.
- Ms. Pierce stated CMRPC submitted a Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program grant with MRPC, Central Mass Grown, and the Regional Environmental Council.
- Ms. Pierce stated that CMRPC staff are working on Community One Stop for Growth applications that are due next Wednesday.
- Ms. Pierce stated that Environmental & Resiliency staff are working to submit Regional Energy Planning Assistance grants for 25 to 27 communities by tomorrow.

2. Transportation (Deputy Exec. Director, Sujatha Krishnan)

- Ms. Krishnan stated that the CMMPO approved the 2026-2030 TIP last week and released the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Ms. Krishnan stated that the UPWP is now available for public comment, and a public meeting will occur on June 9, 2025.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that MassDOT released their Capital Investment Plan, and their meeting for the CMMPO region is on Monday, June 2, 2025, at 4:00 p.m.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that transportation staff submitted a culvert grant application for the Town of Brookfield.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that under the leadership of Jeff Howland, the transportation staff are working with Berlin, North Brookfield, Barre, and Hardwick to write their Community One Stop for Growth applications for the Rural Development Funds. Ms. Krishnan stated that transportation staff are also reviewing applications for West Brookfield and New Braintree.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that Active Transportation staff organized a successful Bike Month Brunch in Worcester. Ms. Krishnan stated that staff have attended multiple events with community partners.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that transportation staff completed the Oxford Essential Services & Food Access Study, which reviewed impairments and barriers to food access for seniors and people living with disabilities.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that STANTEC was chosen as the consultant for the Vernon Street / I-290 Interchange Project. Ms. Krishnan stated that there will be a project kickoff meeting with the steering committee next week.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that the Housing & Transportation Regional Study will be kicking off shortly, as the top consultant has been chosen.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that the Safe Streets for All Action Plan RFP period is closing soon, and staff will conduct interviews with the top consultants.

3. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Deputy Exec. Director, Trish Settles)

- Ms. Settles stated that they are in the final stages of hiring an Assistant Environmental & Resiliency Planner. Ms. Settles stated that CMRPC is still seeking a Regional Public Health Trainer.
- Ms. Settles stated that the Comprehensive Planning staff is wrapping up the Leicester Master Plan, Spencer Master Plan, and Grafton Master Plan.
- Ms. Settles stated that the Comprehensive Planning staff is working on the master plans for Northbridge, Douglas, Hardwick, Barre, and Warren.

- Ms. Settles stated that RCCP staff are wrapping up Mendon and Hopedale’s zoning bylaw updates.
- Ms. Settles stated that RCCP staff are wrapping up Phase 3 of the Mass Trails Grant, Leicester Town Center Plan, Rutland Open Space & Recreation Plan, Milbury and Southbridge’s Housing Production Plans, Hubbardston and Charlton’s ADA Plans, Upton’s CPC Plan.
- Ms. Settles stated that RCCP staff are completing the City of Gardner’s Technical Assistance for Resource Development contract.
- Ms. Settles stated that CMRPC has drawn down funds for the DLTA Augmentation funds for 2024. Ms. Settles stated that there are still 2025 funds available to be spent down.
- Ms. Settles stated that MAPC has given a grant for \$40,000 for the implementation of LaunchPad for local public health departments.
- Ms. Settles stated that CMRPC staff have had conversations with at least 20 municipalities regarding Community One Stop for Growth prospective applications.
- Ms. Settles stated that the economic development division is working with Blackstone and Brookfield regarding vacant storefront strategies.
- Ms. Settles stated that RCCP staff will be submitting ADA applications in June for the towns of North Brookfield and Millbury.
- Ms. Settles stated that CMRPC has been following and watching discussions regarding alternative energy sources.
- Ms. Settles stated that she has been following the 2026 FIFA World Cup planning and how that may affect the region.
- Ms. Settles described several upcoming events including the Massachusetts Housing Partnership conference, Brownfield Regional Roundtable, Central Mass Women’s Conference, Rural Policy Advisory Commission meeting, Out to Lunch tabling events in Worcester Common.

4. Human Resources (Deputy Exec. Director, Stephanie Toupin)

- Ms. Toupin stated that CMRPC is in the process of hiring three RCCP summer interns. Ms. Toupin stated that three seasoned interns in the Transportation department have been rehired as summer interns.
- Ms. Toupin stated that she is organizing the CMRPC Wellness Challenge, which is an initiative to have staff focus on wellbeing and work/life balance.
- Ms. Toupin stated that she is wrapping up the annual review process.

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 25-11 for the month of May totaling \$136,408.93. She stated that \$109,669.59 is pass-throughs and \$26,739.34 is CMRPC expenditures.

Motion: to approve Warrant 25-11 for the month of May in the amount of \$136,408.93. Moved by Mr. Hassinger, Seconded by Dr. Coles.
Roll Call Vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved.**

Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

1. **Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that the Transportation Committee voted to recommend the 2026 Draft UPWP. Mr. Hassinger stated that there were reports regarding a completed food access study.
2. **Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Grigg stated that the Legislative Affairs Committee did not meet this month. Mr. Senesi stated that the Legislative Affairs Forum is being organized.
3. **Physical Development** – Mr. Wheeler stated that the Physical Development Committee is meeting on June 3, 2025, to discuss minor adjustments to the DLTA allocations. Mr. Wheeler said that the Committee is going to discuss changing the name of the Physical Development Committee to something else that aligns better with the mission of the Committee.
4. **Personnel Subcommittee** – Mr. Drobner reiterated what was said in the beginning of the meeting. Mr. Drobner said that the draft Employee Handbook was sent to legal counsel for review. Mr. Drobner stated that he will be emailing the Executive Committee, asking for individual input regarding Janet’s contract extension and her annual review. Ms. Toupin noted that for retirement purposes, it is important that her performance review is completed in a timely manner.
5. **SWCEDO** – No updates.
6. **Sub-Regional** –
 - Chair Drobner stated that both Boylston and Berlin passed their budgets, including their school budget. Chair Drobner stated that Boylston Town Meeting passed two debt exclusion articles, for the Fire Station and Senior Center. Chair Drobner stated that the Senior Center did not pass the town-wide ballot question.
 - Mr. Wheeler stated that the Town of Berlin is working with the City of Marlborough and Solomon Pond Mall management regarding revisiting the zoning overlay district for the site. Mr. Wheeler said that the zoning overlay district may be changed to allow for research and development, light manufacturing, or entertainment purposes.
 - Ms. Hirsh stated that the Town of Northborough’s Town Meeting was four nights. Ms. Hirsh described a Medicare for All information session for municipal officials at Clark University on June 21, 2025. Ms. Hirsh stated that this may be beneficial to municipal officials in regard to the high cost of health insurance premiums.
 - Mr. Schur stated that Town of Westborough dissolved their Master Plan Steering Committee. Mr. Schur stated that the towns of Northborough, Southborough, and Westborough are working on a Quarter 9 Master Plan implementation group to assess

economic development possibilities on Route 9. Mr. Schur noted that the Route 9 is owned by MassDOT and should be considered as a stakeholder in those endeavors.

- Mr. Lies stated that the Town of Holden held their Town Meeting and did not pass the MBTA Communities Zoning Overlay District.
- Dr. Coles stated that the Town of Auburn had their Town Meeting and passed to fund their new fire station.
- Mr. Grigg stated that the Town of Spencer had their Town Meeting and both proposition 2 ½ questions passed, however, they did not pass on the town-wide ballot. Mr. Grigg stated that due to not passing the proposition 2 ½ questions, the Town will consider losing half of their firefighting staff in mid-2027, including the rescue squad. Mr. Grigg stated that he has had discussions with a fiber optic company regarding looking into the feasibility of beginning a town-owned broadband service. Mr. Grigg asked if any communities are doing similar initiatives. Mr. Schur stated that the Town of Sterling completed this, and he will reach out to Mr. Grigg with more information.

New Business:

- Mr. Schur asked Ms. Pierce if there were any updates regarding the pension liability of CMRPC. Ms. Pierce stated that there were no updates at this point in time.

Adjournment: Having completed all business, Chair Drobner adjourned the meeting at 8:15 pm.

Documents:

May 2025 Warrant

Draft Minutes April 24, 2025

Executive Director's Report

Letter to Join North Andover Amicus Brief

Respectfully submitted by Anthony Senesi, CMRPC.