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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

May 28, 2026 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
Virtual Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub-Regional Delegates
Chair: Daniel Schur, Westborough	North: Otto Lies, Holden
Vice Chair: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley
Treasurer: Andrew Coles, Auburn (7:10pm)	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer
Asst. Treasurer: Howard Drobner, Boylston	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Staff:	
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Not In Attendance:
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	Southeast: Mary Bulso, Blackstone (left 8:28pm)
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin
Stephanie Toupin, Dep. Dir., Administration	Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston
Dara Griswold, Finance Manager	
Sherrie Haber, Executive Assistant	
Jordan Hollinger, Planning & Transportation Researcher	

Call to Order:

Chair Schur called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

Approval of Minutes-

Motion: to accept the minutes of the April 30, 2026, Executive Committee Meeting. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll Call vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved** with an abstention from Mr. Grigg.

Public Comment:

None.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Administration (Janet Pierce)**
 - Staff is working on Community One Stop applications. As of last night, there were 17 letters of support and we're expecting more. It is a testament to the relationships that staff have with the community.
 - The RFP for auditing services is being finalized and will go out within the week. We are hoping to review proposals in July with a contract in August.

- Quabbin Regional School District is looking at adding an Agricultural program. There is a dire need in Central Massachusetts. Baypath is also looking to expand its programming. There will be a superintendent meeting this summer. Students wishing to attend an agricultural school can petition their superintendent to go. Transportation can be very costly.

Andrew Coles joined the meeting (7:10pm)

- Please return ballots as soon as possible. Eight have been returned. Ms. Haber will send a reminder tomorrow.
- June is very busy with year-end, finalizing reviews, benefit changes, annual meeting, community outreach and contracts that are ending and starting new ones.
- Questions: Mr. Schur – Do we follow state guidelines for RFPs? Ms. Pierce replied yes.
- **Human Resources (Stephanie Toupin)**
 - Hiring
 - We've hired 3 interns that start June 2nd for RCCP and 1 is staying on.
 - A Transportation intern is needed for traffic counting.
 - Land Use & Comprehensive Planning Principle Planner will begin June 22nd remotely and will begin in person in July
 - We have finished the benefits year and we are working on reviews and increases.
- **Transportation (Sujatha Krishnan / Jordan Hollinger)**
 - Jordan will give a presentation on Regional Housing & Transportation Study. Jordan came in to CMRPC working in Land Use and has moved to Transportation. He has experience with policy. He bridges the gap by working on the Transportation chapter of master plans.
 - Project purpose and objectives – Through a regionwide study, do an existing conditions analysis, a suitability analysis and create a municipal toolkit. This is a living study that can be updated.
 - Key findings
 - The region's growth is uneven with more growth in the east.
 - The region is home to smaller households including roommates and seniors living alone. This trends with national data.
 - Changing demographics can mean different types of housing is needed. Most cater to multi-person / family housing
 - Housing production has slowed in recent decades. What is being built is still mainly single family homes.
 - For most households, housing in the region is much less affordable than 5-10 years ago.
 - Housing costs are high and vary from east to west.

- Costs for renters are lower but availability is limited (except in Worcester.)
- Access to cars is generally required in the region. This makes our region costly. There are also fewer small / affordable vehicles.
- Transportation options beyond cars are limited to key corridors and town centers.
- Transportation costs escalate household expenses especially for those without alternatives to cars.
- Housing Profiles are broken down into 3 categories:
 - Housing at the right price – combines rising cost of housing and transportation
 - Housing that is the right type – considers those downsizing in the community
 - Housing in the right location – considers those who may need to be near transportation
- Suitability Analysis & Development Constraints - This is intended as a tool to facilitate conversations and to think about what development could be supported.
 - Physical barriers can include slope, flood hazard, rights of way and permanent preserved open space.
 - Suitability is classed on what could be supported from a wide range of typology.
- Study as a toolkit –
 - It's not a plan, but a tool to further conversations. It includes two online tools
 - Online mapping tool where you can overlay different factors. It also includes zoning bylaws
 - Online dashboard to look from region to subregion to community level
 - Strategy overview – not prescriptive, but to give ideas.
- Questions:
 - Mr. Schur – Can links be shared to the tools? Mr. Hollinger, yes but they are still in draft mode.
 - Mr. Schur – The ADU laws went into effect. Are we seeing changes? Mr. Hollinger – Anecdotally there are changes but it can be seen as a band aid. Although it is a useful tool it is not going to fix the housing problem. That data won't be available for a couple of years.
 - Ms. Hirsh – On the last slide, what does “Adopt property tax stabilization for income qualified seniors” mean? Mr. Hollinger stated that it would offer tax breaks to qualified seniors to allow them to stay in their homes.
 - Ms. Hirsh – Are duplexes more attractive? The costs can be the same. Mr. Hollinger – It can be more attractive because they do not have to deal with home maintenance. There are two extremes being built, mid rise apartments and large single family homes. We are seeing demographic shifts that would want other types of housing.

- Ms. Hirsh – Could prefab homes be an answer to the housing issue? Mr. Hollinger – That could help and the technology is improving. Some communities have barriers to prefab housing. Mr. Hassinger wonders if Grafton has anything in the way. Mr. Hollinger stated that there are not many companies in this area that offer this.
- Mr. Schur – Are there any numbers on the relationship between the cost of regulations and the cost of housing? Mr. Hollinger stated that academics are trying to evaluate this but it is hard to separate other influences.
- Mr. Schur thanked Mr. Hollinger for his work and Mr. Hollinger left the meeting at 7:53pm.
- **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Trish Settles)**
 - Current Active Projects include
 - Planning & Land Use – Master plans, ZBL updates, MILUS, GIS & Data Services, Digital Equity
 - Economic & Housing – Economic Development, housing projects, Brownfields, Paul Bruhn Historic
 - Environment & Safety – Hazard Mitigation Plans, MVP 2.0 & MVP Action, Green Communities, Open Space Recreation Plans, Regional Health & Safety Plan with Evacuation Plan updates
 - Regional Service and Muni Support – Public Health Collaboration, Regional Training Hub, Opioid Settlement Distribution, Procurement, HR, School District, Healthy Aging
 - Other – Imagine 2050, Arts & Culture, Digital Equity, ADA Plan, Trails, Grant Writing, Grant Administration
 - Successes & Close-Outs
 - Berlin First Time Home buyer assistance
 - Barre Master Plan
 - Wachusett Regional School District Study
 - CDBG – Millbury 22-23 and Warren
 - Happy Factor
 - Holden MBTA
 - Sutton Design Guidelines
 - Pipeline overview
 - Discussions: Shirley CDBG TA, DEP Regional Solid Waste Plan, EDA Industry Transformation
 - Department of Energy: Multiple grants totaling \$1,286,000

- Community One Stop – A total of \$1,208,700 in grants is being worked on including the following towns: Upton, Leicester, Princeton, West Boylston, Uxbridge, Worcester, Rutland, Douglas, Berlin, Blackstone, Dudley, Oxford, and Regional Trails
- Eco One Stop – A total of \$3.72 million in grants including the following towns: Grafton, North Brookfield, Berlin, Blackstone, Warren, Upton, Oxford, West Boylston, Northbridge, Warren, Rutland & Leicester.
- STRAP, MTTA & MVP Pipeline: A total of \$188,000 for MTTA and \$118,000 for MVP
- CDBG FY26 Projects brought in \$4,258,800 to the towns of Athol, Dudley, North Brookfield, Spencer and the group of West Brookfield, Barre, East Brookfield & Hardwick. Additional funding was for FEMA BRIC, MAPC Mass Trails, MRPC Restoration partnership, Shrewsbury OSRP and Sturbridge ED Data.
- Public Health Programs funding totals \$1,610,417
- May Activities
 - CHAPA policy leadership council
 - MA Community Climate Advisory Council
 - Rural Policy Advisory Commission & RPP Feedback Workshops
 - MARPA Economic Development Directors & EDA NERDE Demo
 - Data Center CMRPC regional dialogue with 97 attendees
 - BESS Solar Round Table
 - Public Health Excellence Grant
 - Central Mass Brownfields roundtable
 - EDA Final Inspection – reactory project
 - EOED Patrick Field Econ Dev Review
- June Activities:
 - BESS Solar Round Table #2
 - RPAC Rural policy feedback sessions
 - SWCEDO Annual Meeting
 - WRRB Thomas Green Award (Emily Glaubitz receiving an award)
 - Mass Housing Partnership Housing Institute at DCU
 - MACEC V to Everything Workshop
 - Multiple MILUS meetings
- Discussion: Mr. Schur – The data center presentation was very well done.

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

Ms. Griswold presented Warrant 26-11 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of May, totaling \$199,939.82.

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 26-11 for the month of May in the amount of \$199,939.82. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Ms. Hirsh.
- Ms. Hirsh stated that postage fees are going up. Ms. Griswold stated that CMRPC prints stamps in the office and receives 5 cent savings. The monthly \$20 fee is more than covered with the savings.
- Roll call vote. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- **Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger stated that the committee voted to recommend amendment number 7 to the 2027-2031 TIP as well as the Draft FY27 UPWP. They also saw a presentation on public participation updates and there was a bylaw discussion.
- **Legislative Affairs** – no update
- **Physical Development** – Ms. Settles stated that they will meet in late June to review the charge of the committee
- **Personnel** – Mr. Drobner stated that the committee voted to recommend approval of both the staff attorney position and the salary scale. He stated that the employee has been doing legal contract work and would like to stay on.
 - **Motion: to approve the creation of the Staff Attorney Position.** Made by Mr. Drobner, seconded by Mr. Hassinger.
 - Mr. Grigg – what is the cost savings? Ms. Toupin it is subjective because reviewing the documents mitigates risk. Mr. Grigg asked if he has recently passed the bar. Ms. Pierce said yes and that he would like to continue to work with us on contracts and procurement.
 - Mr. Trifone is in favor of the motion. Catching something before we get into trouble is important. Now that he has passed the bar we should pay him accordingly.
 - Mr. Schur stated that at Personnel meeting he asked if we have a need or if we are creating a position for this employee. He now realizes it has merit and there is opportunity.
 - Mr. Lies asked how much we have spent on legal advice on average. Ms. Pierce stated less than \$5k. Mr. Lies asked how much this position will add. Ms. Pierce stated that he is currently making approximately \$65,000 and keeps up with over 150 contracts. She stated that he put together a tracking system as well. This is proactive and our contracts and subcontracts are much more complex than they were.
 - Mr. Grigg asked what the new salary would be. Ms. Toupin said the range is from \$77,550 - \$105,846 and they are estimating he would be in the \$80k range.
 - Mr. Hassinger asked how many commissions have this position. Mr. Drobner stated that Boston Metro has one. Ms. Toupin replied that SRPED also has one.

- Mr. Grigg stated that we did not need a licensed lawyer before but he has been doing this work. Who was doing it before him? Ms. Pierce stated that she and Ms. Settles had done the work before with standard contracts.
- Mr. Hassinger asked if there is a possibility of offering his services to other RPAs as well. Ms. Pierce stated that it would be considered if he has the capacity.
- Mr. Grigg stated that he is concerned that communities are failing overrides and the commission is adding positions, but if it is needed to be successful than he can support it. Ms. Pierce added that there is an opportunity to expand procurement to help communities to work with contracts between vendors and towns. This position is proactive and will save the Commission money.
- Mr. Hassinger stated that this vote is only to put the position on the schedule and that Ms. Pierce will only hire if it is needed.
- Ms. Hirsh asked if it requires a degree. Mr. Drobner confirmed it does and added that the contract specialist role will be kept in case we need to hire someone without the degree.
- Roll call vote. **Motion approved unanimously.**
- Ms. Toupin presented the FY27 Salary Schedule and discussed changes. The Public Health Training Manager has different requirements than other managers so it was moved on its own. The associate planner aligns with GIS. The Cyber and Homeland Security specialist position was recategorized. The Business Coordinator, HR Generalist and Communications Coordinator are now aligned. The Contract Specialist is recategorized. The Staff Attorney was added. The Intern / Technician position was retitled to be more general.
- **Motion: to approve the FY27 Salary Schedule as presented.** Made by Mr. Drobner, seconded by Mr. Hassinger.
- Mr. Grigg asked if we have the Staff Attorney position why we are keeping the Contract Specialist. If an attorney is need as discussed previously, it would not be acceptable to move down to a contract specialist. Mr. Schur stated that it might be a discussion a year from now when we see how it works out. Ms. Pierce added that they might want to hire someone who is just finishing their degree or about to take the Bar exam and this would allow them to hire the person.
- Mr. Quiroa asked for confirmation that this position is available but not posted or hiring. Ms. Pierce confirmed.
- Mr. Trifone stated that we need a fall back to cover our bases the best we can and added that not all positions will be filled.
- Mr. Hassinger stated that this vote is only to add to the schedule and added that there is no harm in leaving it there.
- Roll call vote. **Motion passes** with a no vote from Mr. Grigg.
- Mr. Schur thanked the committee for the open debate.

- **SWCEDO** – Ms. Pierce stated that the annual meeting is next Monday in the Revere Room at 1 Mercantile St. at 1pm.
- **Bylaw Review** – Mr. Trifone stated that the bylaws are currently in legal review
- **Sub-regional**– Chair Schur asked if there were any updates
 - Mr. Hassinger stated that there were over 1000 attendees at the town meeting and required overflow space. They voted in favor of the override and debt exclusion.
 - Mr. Quiroa is happy to report that the city with the Library and the MBI acquired laptops through the Municipal Digital Equity Plan. Thanks to all CMRPC staff who assisted. It was great to see the project through from planning to implementation. Additionally, there will be 4 watch parties for the FIFA world cup on the common.
 - Mr. Grigg stated that West Brookfield elementary school is closing. Leicester schools received a \$3m grant to add vocational electrical programs. North Brookfield is working on the sewer plant project. Spencer passed an override to keep the fire department. They are also looking at town owned fiberoptic. Mr. Hassinger asked if it is for public or municipal. Mr. Grigg stated it would be for residential data.

New Business:

- None

Adjournment: Having completed all business Chair Schur adjourned the meeting at 9:00pm.

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.

Documents:

- Minutes from April 30, 2026
- Warrant May 26-11
- Contract & Procurement Attorney job description
- FY27 Salary Scale
- H&T Presentation May 2026
- RCCP Update Presentation