



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 January 26, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	North: Douglas Martin, Barre
Vice Chair: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Treasurer: Otto Lies, Holden	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin	Central City: Vaske Gjino, Worcester
Asst. Clerk: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	
Staff:	Not in Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	
Diane Shea, Business Manager	
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	
Seth Peters, CHRSAC Program Coordinator	

- **Call to Order:**
 Mr. Rajeshkumar called the January 26, 2023 Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

- **Approval of Minutes-** Mr Williams noted that there was an error on the Agenda-which had the December 1st meeting's minutes as the item for approval- the Committee will approve the minutes at the next meeting where the agenda will account for the December 29th meeting and this, January 26th, meeting.

- **Public Comment:**
 None.

- **Executive Director's Report:**
 - a. **Staffing and Administration**
 - Ms. Pierce gave her opening remarks, then expressed hope that the several job openings will be filled in the next month.



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- Ms. Pierce noted that effective as of January 1st, the Mileage Reimbursement per the IRS increased to 65.5¢ which will be reflected in the future warrants.
- Ms. Pierce reported on the audit, noting that; she delivered all the pertinent audit materials; the pre-audit indirect cost rate for the fiscal year 2022 is down to 90.18%, though there is a small possibility for a 1-2% increase; in the past few years the indirect has not changed in recent years and likely will not; the importance of keeping a low indirect cost and the value of contributing to our communities
- Ms. Pierce spoke on the move to the MassDOT, noting that the move is progressing well: badges will be issued soon, dual screens have been purchased and that will be reflected in the coming warrants, the respective IT departments have met and are in the process of setting up internet and WIFI connections, the call forwarding phone service *Univerge Blue Connect* will be utilized to avoid having to purchase a new phone system.
- Ms. Pierce reported on the second public hearing of the *Western Mass Rail Commission*, noting that there was almost full in person attendance and no clear signifier as to which type of agency will oversee the Western Mass Rail. Furthermore, there was expression from other RPA's that the MBTA shouldn't be responsible for oversight- especially since the *Western Mass Rail Commission* has already been established and would be the most sensible option. Ms. Pierce mentioned that she was able to speak with Senator Anne Gobi at the commission meeting about the re-filing of Retirement Fund Liability bill which would make the 7 RPA's exempt from said liability, which the senator did confirm she had refiled in the new legislative session. Moreover, CMRPC will be reaching out to other senators and regional representatives to encourage votes in favor of the bill.
- Ms. Pierce reported on the recent MMA conference, for five CMRPC employees were in attendance. Ms. Pierce followed up a question from the previous Physical Development Committee, regarding *Augmentation Funding* and its possible applications. She spoke with Sean Cronin at the MMA Conference, who confirmed there are no restrictions and can be used for any grant purpose.
- Ms. Pierce closed with an update on the *Imagine 2050* plan- being that CMRPC has been getting a lot of great feedback from the many committee and staff meetings and are very close to finalizing their vision statement. Ms. Pierce is hopeful that CMRPC will be able to present more at the next Executive Committee meeting.



b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- Ms. Krishnan opened with updates from the *Project Team*: the TIP project timeline is proceeding well and includes the *Route 9 East Brookfield Project*, a proposed roundabout at the Route 9 and 49 intersection in Spencer and a development on Main Street in Oxford to provide better *Complete Streets accommodations* and turn the road into a “gateway” into the town’s center; they are working on corridor profiles for Berlin; they are working to finalize to work with Sutton and Oxford on the Central Turnpike corridor profile and the Freight Planning work.
- Ms. Krishnan provided updates on the *Data Collection Team*: the team is working on creating CMRPC’s own population projections, as they feel the state’s numbers may be low; they are working on town requests-specifically Northborough- for a variety of counts and assistance with consultations; the team is presenting for approval the yearly statewide performance metrics for safety, travel time reliability, and bridge conditions.
- Ms. Krishnan updated the committee on the *Transit Team*: they are facilitating meetings to follow up on MassDOT’s delegation of WRTA’s region to perform transit signal priority programs and a meeting is scheduled for next Monday to brainstorm locations; Worcester’s *Transportation and Mobility Division* has been staffed well and a Deputy Commissioner has been hired- CMRPC has met with them to discuss projects for the TIP and creating a pipeline for future opportunities.
- Ms. Krishnan finished the team updates with the *Project Implementation Team*: they have analyzed the public comments received from the *Long Range Transportation Plan* and presented to a variety of committees; MassDOT has requested help with promotion of MassDOT’s own *Long Range Transportation Plan* beyond Mobility and the team are working to find locations for MassDOT to host promotional events; they have participated in *Walk Audit* training; the team is working hard on gathering MICRO-Projects applications and Ms. Krishnan hopes that the team will be able to present more at the next meeting.
- Ms. Krishnan closed her updates with some general announcements. They began with the upcoming yearly meeting between MassDOT and the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, where: MassDOT will provide updated guidelines on regional financing for *TIP*, *Unified Planning Work Program*, other materials for the *Long Range Transportation Plan* and status reports on a variety of



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projects throughout the state; Ms. Krishnan will be presenting an updated planning funding formula as the chair sub-committee and follow up in February at the meeting of Directors. Ms. Krishnan also addressed questions they heard from other RPA's to MassDOT as to why MPO's hear problems in TIP projects at the last moment and MassDOT corrected this by opening the door CMRPC to assist and establish more open lines of communication with the public throughout each project.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report brought in Seth Peters for updates on Homeland Security.

- Ms. Settles gave her standard updates. They began with hiring updates, noting: that interviews for the open CDBG position will be put on pause so that staff can prioritize applications for CDBG; CMRPC is looking to hire a shared *Housing Coordinator* that will be shared with several towns that are participating in a *Regional Efficiency Grant*; CMRPC intern Will Talbot will be returning for another semester to assist with RCCP and has shown interest in joining the staff after graduation.
- Ms. Settles then reported on the previous Physical Development meeting, noting funding has been approved for: *Holden's Zoning Diagnostics*; *Rutland's Communication Pilot Project*; *Charlton and Sutton Low Impact Development Bi-Law*; *Regional Waste Action Plan* which includes several towns; *A Worcester Land-Use Audit*; *Arts and Culture Asset Inventory*- which will feed well into Imagine2050; *Brownfields* was extended and funding is being sought; *Green Communities*; *Imagine2050*; *MBTA Community Assistance*, *Regional Services* where they are continuing their EEA Matches for rounds 5 and 6; *Grafton Park redesign*; *West-Brookfield Permitting Review Guidebook*. This round of funding totals out to be is looking ~\$250,000, the next solicitation will be sent the following week for the next round in mid-March.
- Ms. Settles reported on happenings from the many RCCP's teams, noting: municipal vulnerability plans are in the works for East Brookfield and Holland; work with Oakham has gone exceedingly well and they will be receiving a MVP, Hazard Mitigation and an Open Space and Recreation Plan- which will net about \$40,000 in funding; they wrapping up Oxford's MVP; everyone is hard to work on the state wide



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trail map and the trail accessibility projects; there are several ongoing Open Space Plans in Dudley, Douglas, Oxford, Warren and Hardwick; The *Green Communities Competitive Grants* are underway; the Grafton Complete Streets has been extended; finally wrapping up the Warren MVP; Berlin Village Strategic plan is going along well; Boylston Master Plan is nearly wrapped up and there are high hopes that more projects can come from this; Sturbridge planning board assistance; last round of DLTA included the West Brookfield zoning bylaw rewrite; wrapped up Grafton's Masterplan; have completed a stint of planning board assistance in Upton; assisting Southbridge for their CDBG applications; LPA is used by Sutton for their *Open Space Plan*, Sturbridge for *Interim Planning*, Holden for *Trail Mapping* and Mendon for *Open Space Plan* edits.

- Ms. Settles reported on the work in the pipeline, noting: Athol's CDBG project where CMRPC is assisting with applications; 8 competitive Green Community Grants in Charlton, New Braintree, Rutland, Southbridge, Spencer, Sturbridge, Sutton and Uxbridge; proposal for Charlton's Open Space Plan, Auburn Hazard Mitigation Plan, towns are inquiring about *Flood Insurance* programs and CMRPC will be meeting with *MEEPA*; continuing work in the Public Health center; there are constructive talks between communities as to how the shared housing coordinator position will be funded; there have been talks about setting up a *Regional Housing Trust* and pending legislature has been filed by senator Paul Mark to support this; two *ADA* Plans are in the works for Millbury and Holden; *Community Health Needs Assessment* in the Quabon Region; *Housing Protection Plans* in Princeton, Upton, Berlin, Mendon, Oxford and Auburn are all in the works; Bare and Spencer Master Plans; Brookfield Masterplan update; *MassHousing Partnership* will fund CMRPC to provide technical assistance to Leicester and Grafton; *Digital Equity* proposals are submitted and CMRPC is waiting for any interest; Ms. Settles has spoken with *MassHousing* about future opportunities for collaboration; Ms. Settles will be meeting with the *National Flood Insurance Program*.

Seth Peters, CHRSA Program Coordinator gave a program overview for the Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council.

- Mr. Peters presented an overview of things imperative to understanding the Central Region Homeland Security Advisory Council. These being: the regional discrepancies between the Homeland Security Council and Massachusetts' regions; a flow chart of the *Homeland Security Council's* governance structure; the council's many different



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- members and their respective organizations; how the council's funding is determined and organized; the council's subcommittee and projects- which included *Mass Care and Sheltering Cybersecurity* projects through the region; a wide variety of equipment training that is offered by the council; other training projects- which included Nero's Law Hybrid training, Aggressive Command Training, ASHER & TECC Training; details on interoperability projects- which included *PSAP P25 Base Radio Updates* and *Worcester County Sheriff's Office Mobile Command Unit Radio Upgrades*.
- Mr. Peters concluded his presentation and opened the opportunity for committee members to ask questions. This prompted Mr. Trifone to note that he thought the presentation was great but there is a need for public school representatives to be on the subcommittee list. Mr. Peters responded by agreeing that it was a good point and there is a higher education rep and that there have been recommendations for the rep to have an alternate from another level of education.
 - **Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Business Manager Diane Shea presented Warrant #23-07 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of January 2023 totaling \$83,019.55.
 - Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #23-07 for the month of January 2023 in the amount of \$83,019.55, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion approved.**

The report of cash and the cash flow chart was presented to committee members.

 - Mr. Trifone commented that between the January 1st and the December 1st balance that \$150,000 was lost, though that's on par with other organizations.
 - **Discussion and vote to adopt proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Salary Schedule:**
 - Ms. Pierce reflected thankfully to the last revision to the pay scale-which happened in 2019- and how the revisions have functioned in terms of hiring and promotion. She continued, noting that the cost of life changes, raise in minimum wage and the staffing circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic has created a need for CMRPC to re-evaluate their own pay scale. Furthermore, these changes are being made so that CMRPC to remain competitive in the job market.
 - Ms. Pierce also spoke about the need for the addition of the Program Manager position and the applicability of succession planning.



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- Mr. Trifone made a motion to adopt the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Salary Schedule, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. **Motion approved.**

- **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
 - a. Transportation** – Transportation- Mr. Hassinger met before the Executive Committee, where they voted to recommend a proposed amendment to the 2023-2027 Transit TIP- which will allocate newly-available funds- and the *State Safety Promotion Methods*.
 - b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Martin recalled the last Legislative Affairs meeting in January, where they discussed a broad spectrum of legislature. After deliberating, they developed a short list of items that would be of interest to CMRPC- this list will be submitted to the Executive Board for consideration in the following week. The next meeting will be on March 14, 2023- at which point they will move forward as the Executive Board recommends.
 - c. Physical Development Committee—**
 - Mr. Wheeler spoke about the last Physical Development Committee meeting, where- like Ms. Settles noted in her section- they went over 16 proposals and agreed to allocate ~\$250,000 to projects. The remaining funds will be used later in the year for necessary adjustments.
 - Mr. Wheeler also spoke on the additional DLTA funding, building off of Ms. Pierce and Ms. Settles, noting that it will be used for assistance to communities with federal grants. Moreover, though there was \$5,000 expended this round, Mr. Wheeler sees the possibility for the resources to be used on a great deal of grant opportunities.
 - d. Rural Caucus– No new news.**
 - e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce reported that they met earlier in the month, but there were no new proposals. Ms. Pierce also reported that active participation in the CEDS update and the CMRPC quarterly meeting will be centered around the CEDS.
 - f. Sub-regional–**
 - The Committee briefly discussed the turnover of town employees as well as the January MIIA conference.



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- **New Business:** Ms. Pierce noted that there has yet to no Budget Subcommittee volunteers. As a result, it will be built into the agenda for the February Executive Committee meeting. If there are no volunteers there, then the decision will be left to the full Quarterly Committee at the March quarterly meeting.
- Ms. Pierce reiterated that the audit materials were dropped off earlier in the day- though she hopes that the auditor might be ready for the next February Executive Committee meeting- it's likely that the committee may need to schedule an extra meeting in March.
- **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Williams to adjourn at 8:51 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deiulis, CMRPC.