



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 February 23, 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	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Asst. Clerk: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	
Staff:	Not in Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Central City: Vaske Gjino, Worcester
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	
Diane Shea, Business Manager	
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	
Yahaira Graxirena, Project Manager	
Emily Glaubitz, Principal Planner	

- **Call to Order:**
 Mr. Rajeshkumar called the February 23, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

- **Approval of Minutes-** Due to an error on the January 26, 2023 Executive Committee meeting agenda- both the December 29, 2022 and January 26, 2023 meeting minutes were approved during this session. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the December 29th meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Mr. Williams made a motion to approve the January 26th meeting minutes, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll call was unanimous. Mr. Hassinger noted that two motions cannot be approved in the same roll call. **Motions Approved.**

- **Public Comment:**
 None.

- **Executive Director’s Report:**



a. Staffing and Administration

- Ms. Pierce gave her opening remarks, then announced that Ryan Saul, Associate Planner, would be leaving CMRPC at the end of May to pursue law school.
- Ms. Pierce made a note that bills are moving around the State House that would extend the ability for virtual meetings. More information will be provided once available.
- Ms. Pierce spoke about the Commission's upcoming Annual Dinner event at Galliford's Restaurant & Tavern at the Southwick Zoo on June 8th, 2023. They noted that the zoo is offering to sell CMRPC discounted group tickets which would be available for purchase to staff or dinner attendees. Additionally, a save the date invitation will be sent out in the coming weeks.
- Ms. Pierce noted that the audit is well underway, but due to Commission Regulations requiring the audit to be approved before March 30th, a second March Executive Committee meeting may still need to be scheduled before the already scheduled meeting on March 30, 2023.

b. Transportation:

- Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report and brought Yahaira Graxirena, a Project Manager with Transportation, for a presentation on *MicroProjects*.
- Ms. Krishnan opened with updates from the management team efforts. She began with recalling her presentation to the MARPA directors this month for the Transportation Planning (PL) formula funding that MPO's receive. Furthermore, the current proposal suggests a change from only using the population to adding roadway miles as a consideration. The next step is contingent on an urban area population from the 2020 census, which is delayed- CMRPC will provide a presentation update on the formula to the committee once more information is available. The next item Ms. Krishnan reported that Ms. Pierce, Ms. Settles and herself met with Hopedale to speak with their interim town manager- to discuss various Commission tasks. Similar meeting was requested by the City of Gardner which is the MRPC region.
 - Ms. Krishnan provided updates from the *Project Development Team*: Began with updates from the *TIP* readiness day where MassDOT along with the MPOs look at the current 5 Year Federally programmed Transportation Improvement Program and inform the group the project status and the readiness of the particular project funded in a year. The one project that was of concern with regards to readiness for a



project in Southbridge, with a potential deadline of 2024, due to staffing turnover, inflation, easements, right of way planning issues and timetable concerns-however CMRPC is meeting with MassDOT this week to verify if the timetable is still viable; there are some potential 2024 projects in Worcester that also have uncertain deadlines- specifically Pleasant Street's *Complete Streets* plan and the Harrison Street bridge project.

- Ms. Krishnan updated the committee on the *Transit Team*, who had some very productive meetings with the *Worcester Regional Transit Authority* and the City of Worcester for a pilot project that MassDOT is proposing for transit signal priority.
- Ms. Krishnan provided updates on the *Data Collection Team*: the team is working hard to finish the population, -employment and household projections by community- which is imperative to moving forward with the *Long-Range Transportation Plan*; the team is assisting with community requests for a variety of small projects- which includes assisting Charlton for a *Bottleneck Reduction Grant Program*.

Yahaira Graxirena, Transportation Project Manager, gave an overview for MircoProjects.

- Ms. Graxirena presented an overview of MicroProjects, its formulation, many types and timeline. Details from the presentation were as follows: the evolution of MicroProjects originated from a need for non-traditional TIP projects and streamlined financial plans because of CMRPC communities not receiving smaller grants- MircoProjects was inspired by '*Locally Originated Projects*' in PVPC and '*Community Connections Program*' in the Boston region; the timeline showed MicroProjects began in 2021 with presentations to the CMMPO for funding and survey distribution to towns for project category synthesis and by 2022 had been developed into a program ready for distribution; from the work done from 2021 to 2022 the team was able to declare their major goals, which were expanded public access to essential services, to create first and last mile connections for transportation and fill gaps in the public transportation network; with those goals in mind the team created four project types- public bikeshare programs, *MicroTransit* analysis, expanded van/shuttle services and Transportation Demand Management strategies; several communities showed interest in these project types- Southbridge for marketing existing transit options and Quaboag Valley CDC community for purchase of a new van, respectively; the presentation closed with a projected 2023



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timeline for current a Microprojects relating to air quality, kicking-off the projects meeting and scoping with staff and end with implementation.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report and invited, Principal Planner, Emily Glaubitz, to present on *'Planning for Housing in Central Massachusetts'*.

- Ms. Settles began her report with staffing updates. Reiterating Ms. Pierce's update, Ms. Settles noted that Ryan Saul would be moving on from CMRPC and the job description for his position will be posted soon. Additionally, openings for summer internship positions will be posted soon.
- Ms. Settles then gave an update on District Local Technical Assistance which had a successful first round in January. Moreover, solicitation for the second round is out now, applications are due March 9th and application approval is slated for March 16th at the March Physical Development meeting.
- Ms. Settles reported on happenings from the many RCCP's teams, noting the following:
 - Teams are wrapping up the Warren *MVP* and the Barre *Open Space Recreation Plan*.
 - Unfortunately, RCCP missed out on developing a *Hazard Mitigation Plan* in Auburn due to a lower opposing bid.
 - RCCP had an interesting conversation with the *National Flood Insurance Program*- which is requiring towns to review their Zoning bylaws and amend those in accordance with the *National Flood's* Plain language- to assist with making these necessary bylaw adjustments easily achieved through town meetings.
 - They are still waiting on the contract for the Oakham combined *MVP*, *Hazard Mitigation Plan* and *Open Space Recreation Plan* project, but it should be arriving soon.
 - Contracts for the Department of Public Health training hub are being worked on- trainers are being hired.
 - The shared *Housing Coordinator* position has been delayed until July 1st.
 - The new CMRPC website is progressing well- more information will be given at future meetings.



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- There are two new contracts with the *Mass Housing Partnership* (MHP) to assist Grafton and Leicester with compliance with 40A3A requirements.
- Sutton and Millbury will likely request funding through the MHP, but CMRPC will be assisting them with compliance adjustments as well.
- Master Plans for Barre, Spencer, Princeton, Rutland and Mendon are underway, with Barre's and Princeton's being in phase one.
- Ms. Settles reported on the work in the pipeline, noting:
 - Teams have been working on several *Community Development Block Grants* in Millbury, Dudley, North Brookfield, Brookfield and Warren.
 - There are conversations with the Town of Gardner for *contract to assist in* finding funds for projects the town has limited capacity with and requires assistance.
 - *DLTA Augmentation Funds* are being used to actively engage towns on their needs and to research grant opportunities.
 - The Town of Charlton has been given a budget for an *Open Space Recreation Plan*.
 - RCCP is looking to work with the Town of Princeton to assist with a *Hazard Mitigation Plan*.
 - Several towns have inquired about accounting services, for which CMRPC will begin a search.
 - Several conversations around a *Regional Housing Trust* have been explored.
 - Seth Peters from Homeland Security has explored performing an *Evacuation Planning Critical Infrastructure Assessment* for the region.
 - Mr. Peters is also looking into bringing on a cybersecurity intern.
 - Digital Equity workshop consultation is available to all CMRPC communities.
 - Funding is being sought for Charlton to help produce their housing production plan.
- Ms. Settles closed her report with a few miscellaneous updates:
 - They are excited to report that *LPA* hours are being used by communities on a variety of projects.



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- They announced that the *Citizen Planner Training Collaborative* is coming up on March 18th- which is a great conference at Holy Cross College with a large set of workshops.
- The *Rural Caucus* will be meeting on March 22nd.
- The Trails follow-up to the Legislative Affairs Breakfast will be on March 20th and will feature peer-to-peer group learning sessions.
- RCCP has been actively meeting with towns to discuss DLTA Augmentation Fund opportunities. The towns RCCP have spoken to included Boylston, Charlton, Spencer, Hardwick, Hopedale and Brookfield.
- Alternative funding opportunities- such as the Federal Register, *Commbuys* and *Philanthropymass*- are being researched.

Emily Glaubitz, Principal Planner in RCCP, gave a presentation on 'Planning for Housing in Central Massachusetts'.

- Ms. Glaubitz's presentation covered the housing efforts happening at CMRPC and the opportunities available to plan for housing. Her presentation highlighted the importance of housing planning, including: rising cost of living; slower housing production trends; the need for deed-restricted affordable homes; the need for more diverse housing options; the relationship of housing to workforce and economic development; barriers to housing production; and the significance of historic preservation. The presentation continued with describing the lack of deed-restricted affordable housing in Central Massachusetts, supported by a graph showing *Subsidized Housing Inventory* as of 2021 in the CMRPC region. This graph showed only four CMRPC communities have met or exceeded a 10% affordable housing threshold under M.G.L. Chapter 40B. Ms. Glaubitz subsequently described CMRPC's current efforts to support housing planning in the region, including a description of Housing Production Plans (HPP) and the communities that have plans in progress or have had them approved by DHCD in the past five years. The next item addressed was CMRPC's role in assisting communities with navigating Multi-Family Zoning Requirements for MBTA Communities to comply with 'Section 3A of M.G.L. Chapter 40A' Communities (51:31).
- Ms. Glaubitz discussed the *Housing Choice Initiative*, which first provides the 'Housing Choice' designation to communities and ultimately streamlines the grant process. She continued presenting on housing initiatives with a slide on the



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'Community Preservation Act' and *'Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Funds'*, both of which help communities with housing funding.

- Ms. Glaubitz concluded the presentation with initiatives that will be pursued in the future, including: discussions with towns to establish short-term rentals; the search for a Regional Housing Coordinator; and continuing work on Imagine 2050.
 - Ms. Settles followed up Ms. Glaubitz's presentation by reiterating the importance of proper housing planning and the various positive impacts it can make on a region and/or community.
- **Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Business Manager Diane Shea presented Warrant #23-08 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of February 2023 totaling \$21,952.36.
 - Mr. Drobner made an inquiry as to what the 2nd 'software' expenditure was for. To which, Ms. Shea confirmed it was Adobe Premier annual subscription for 33 licenses.
 - Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #23-08 for the month of January 2023 in the amount of \$21,952.36, seconded by Mr. Wheeler. **Motion approved.**

The report of cash and the cash flow chart was presented to committee members, showing an ending balance of \$2,161,059.50.

- **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
 - a. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger noted they met before the Executive Committee, where they voted to: recommend a proposed amendment to the 2023-2027 Transit TIP; continue under the current remote participation provisions of the basic open meeting law regardless of decisions from the statehouse; endorse the Bridge and Pavement targets; endorse the system performance targets.
 - b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Martin recalled the last meeting where they finalized their list of legislative priorities. This list was distilled down to bills that should be of interest to and endorsed by CMRPC. This list was sent around earlier in the day to all Executive Committee members- who then had discussions.
 - Ms. Hirsh inquired about a bill that proposed an assessment impact fee for transportation or shipping companies.
 - Mr. Wheeler inquired if the executive committee was approving these items for presentation at the next quarterly where endorsement will then be granted or if the executive committee's endorsement is all that is needed. Ms. Pierce confirmed



that the committee would be endorsing it for the Legislative Affairs committee and CMRPC to pursue opportunities with towns and no extra votes will be necessary.

- Mr. Wheeler made a motion to approve the list of proposed bills from the Legislative Affairs committee, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion approved.**

c. Physical Development Committee—

- Mr. Wheeler reiterated the deadline for the next round of DLTA funding would be on March 16, 2023.
- Ms. Settles added that the committee met during a special session on February 2nd where the committee authorized CMRPC to use the DTLA Augmented funds as they see fit to bring resources to their communities. Mr. Wheeler noted the committee freed up a portion of the money, about \$45,000, under the stipulation that communities can check in with Mr. Wheeler and he can choose to approve additional allocation.

d. Rural Caucus—

- Ms. Settles noted that the Rural Caucus would be meeting on March 23, 2023- where an employee of Mass Broadband institute is to talk about digital equity and how it can help rural communities.
- Ms. Settles announced that the Rural Caucus will be opened to the MRPC communities to assist their rural communities.

e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization –

- Ms. Pierce reported that they met at the beginning of February where they did not have any present proposals but did discuss CEDS. The next meeting is March 2, 2023.
- Ms. Pierce also noted that the Southern Worcester County EDO Quarterly meeting will be held on March 16, 2023, at 3:00 pm, for which Ms. Pierce does not expect there to be any proposals for EDA funding.

f. Sub-regional– No new business.

- **New Business:**
- Ms. Pierce noted that, though the committee was supplied with pertinent materials, there was some confusion on the agenda and the vote to recommend the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget was not included as an item. However, she requested that the committee



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review tonight and consider it when the item is presented at the March 9th Quarterly Commission meeting. Chairman Raj allowed for her to proceed.

- Ms. Pierce presented to the committee the proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget.
- Beginning with the revenue report, Ms. Pierce noted that the proposed budget for FY'24 would be \$5,335,532- which is a 14.62% increase from what was voted upon last year. Furthermore, Ms. Pierce highlighted that there was a 133.33% increase in pass-through contracts from last year- for which the skew in projected revenue can be attributed to.
- Ms. Pierce then began detailing the expenditure report. Ms. Pierce noted here that the indirect charge rate was over 90%- which is due to a new Government Accounting Standards Board 87 (GASB 87). Despite this, Ms. Pierce is hopeful that the commission's indirect rate will remain below 95%.

- **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Hassinger, 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.