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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
March 30, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
In-Person/Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	North: Douglas Martin, Barre
Treasurer: Otto Lies, Holden	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley
Asst. Clerk: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
Staff:	Not in Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Vice Chair: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	
Rich Rydant, Project Manager	
Diane Shea, Business Manager	
Matthew DeIulis, Administrative Assistant	
Ian McElwee, Principal Planner	

- **Call to Order:**
Following brief technical difficulties, Mr. Rajeshkumar called the March 30, 2023, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:11 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.
- **Approval of Minutes-**
Mr. Williams made a motion to accept the minutes from February 23, 2023, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion Approved.**
- **Public Comment:**
None.
- **Presentation of the FY'22 Audit by Roland P. Lambalot, CPA:**
 - Ronald P. Lambalot, CPA, presented the Fiscal Year 2022 Audit to the Executive Committee. Mr. Lambalot began with references to the statements on the Audit. These notes included: The longstanding familiarity with similar institutions as



well as yearly relations with CMRPC made this remote audit a seamless effort that complied with all necessary requirements; the primary focus of this audit was to understand the new GASB-87 pronouncement and how it affected the agency.

- Before Mr. Lambalot began his presentation, he gave with an overview of ‘carry over items’ that appear on the agenda each year. They included: GASB-68, which pertained to CMRPC’s participation in the state retirement system- for which CMRPC has not contributed towards and the State has been paying for this expense; GASB-75, which pertained to post-employment benefits and for which CMRPC has a trust in place to cover retiree health insurance premiums.
- Mr. Lambalot then shifted to an overview of audit statements, for which he highlighted ‘post-employment accounting’ and ‘GASB-87’- which is a new term and regards the recording of an office lease as both an asset and liability. Mr. Lambalot noted that the term ‘rent’ has been removed from the listing of indirect costs. Furthermore, Mr. Lambalot noted that he would speak in greater detail on the changes in 5 Year Statement Review section.
- Mr. Lambalot began their presentation by opening to the section titled “*Statement of Changes in Fiduciary Net Position*”, which pertained to the *Other Postemployment Benefits* (OPEB) Trust Fund for retirees. Mr. Lambalot noted that though the trust netted a reduction in the fund balance, the balance of \$ \$816,612 will support many years of retiree health insurance premium payments.
- Mr. Lambalot then moved onto the item ‘*Adoption of New Lease Standard*’- under the section titled “*Notes to Financial Statements*”, which pertained to the aforementioned GASB-87. Several notes were included in this section: All government agencies that enter lease agreements for more than a year need to follow this GASB standard; this policy creates an asset and a liability of equal value; the values of the asset and liability are determined with the total operating leases. The expense recognized this year was \$139,408.
- Mr. Lambalot discussed ‘*Note 15- Contingencies*’- which pertained to reimbursement of the Commission's proportionate share of retiree benefits paid to former employees for calendar years 2013 through 2021 and totaled \$1,958.262 for CMRPC over this time. Ms. Pierce and Mr. Lambalot then explained to the committee the current legislation filed on behalf of the seven



(7) Regional Planning Agencies and by the State Treasurer’s office on behalf of the State Retirement Board.

- Upon finishing their comments on “*Notes to Financial Statements*”, Mr. Lambalot then discussed “*Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards*”, which covered funds acquired through grants and government programs and contracts for FY’22. In this section, they highlighted ‘*Catalogue of Federal Domestic Assistance Number 93.323*’- which was listed as the item ‘*Epidemiology of Laboratory Capacity for Infectious Diseases*’- and noted it as an eye-catching and unexpected undertaking for a group of planners.
- Mr. Lambalot presented the ‘Five Year Statements’ and specifically focused on the “*Statement of Net Position*” for FY’22. Here they noted in the ‘*Current Assets*’ Section, the item ‘*Cash and Cash Equivalents*’ as being very high at \$1,610,781 for the month of June, but accredited it to money paid in advanced to CMRPC on contracts. He also noted the high balance in accounts payable, totaling \$513,960, having not been paid to vendors by June 30, 2022. He then discussed ‘*Non-Current Assets*’, where he again noted the newly adopted GASB 87 accumulated amortization of CMRPC’s lease is listed as an asset. Mr. Lambalot closed their notes on the “*Statement of Net Position*” by speaking on both ‘*Current Liabilities*’ and ‘*Long-term Liabilities*’. In the former they noted what the lease liability was for FY’22- \$99,253- and that it would be paid with the reductions and the long-term lease liability will concurrently adjust to reflect said payment. With the latter, he noted that if CMRPC were to stay at their current location after the seven year lease is up that GASB-87 would still be in effect and the next set of liabilities would be computed accordingly.
- Following their brief explanation of the “*Statement of Net Position*” he discussed the “*Statement of Revenues and Expenditures*”. He indicated both revenue and expenditures were up from the previous year- with total revenues being 42% higher than the previous year and direct salaries and consultants totaling up to a \$1.1 million increase in expenditures. Furthermore, Mr. Lambalot noted in the item line ‘*Operating Excess (Deficiency)*’, which they regarded as the real measure for profit, that CMRPC did quite well this year with a total of \$228,816. In continuing down the “*Statement of Revenues and Expenditures*”, he noted that OPEB revenue and expenses do not correlate with liquid cash and are instead *actuarial presentations* required by GASB-75.



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- Following Mr. Lambalot’s notes on revenue and expenses, Mr. Trifone inquired about how the *‘indirect cost’* impacts operations. Mr. Lambalot answered this by first explaining how indirect costs are calculated, and then how the calculated cost is then multiplied by the direct salaries charged, and billed to the individual contracts.
- Mr. Lambalot alerted the members to future GASB standards the Commission will need to adopt.
- Chairman Rajeshkumar called for a motion to accept the Fiscal Year 2022 Audit. Mr. Howland made a motion, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion Approved.**
- **Executive Director’s Report:**
 - a. Staffing and Administration**
 - Ms. Pierce gave her opening remarks and then gave a staffing update. Said update included a note that Danielle Marini, an Associate Planner for RCCP, left the agency in March. Furthermore, there is a posting out for the opening, as well as for 3 other positions, with more to come soon.
 - Following this, Ms. Pierce made a few business notes. In March, we submitted 5 applications for *Community Development Block Grants* (CDBG). None of the submittals included Housing Rehabilitation components. As usual, the applications, if successful will have the benefit of having significant dollars for grant administration that are affiliated with the contracts.
 - Ms. Pierce noted that Ian McElwee will be giving a presentation on an exciting regional opportunity. CMRPC will be filing a notice of intent to participate (NOIP) to the EPA Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program (CPRG) soon. Additionally, Ms. Pierce noted another opportunity that they were made aware of at the most recent MARPA meeting pertaining to getting more Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations in Central Massachusetts.
 - Ms. Pierce then opened the floor for questions. Ms. Hirsh then inquired for more information for the *‘EV’* initiative, to which Ms. Pierce clarified that there are grant opportunities that will fund installation of more EV in Central Massachusetts and Mr. McElwee will expand upon this in his presentation.
 - b. Transportation:**

Rich Rydant, Transportation Project Manager, gave the report in place of Deputy Director Krishnan.



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- Mr. Rydant opened with updates on Transportation's move to the MassDOT building. Noting, that *'Charter'* is now scheduled for internet installation on April, 11 2023. Furthermore, following said installation *'ClearCom'* will then sort out network configuration for the phones. Additionally, printers will be ordered soon and staff is hoping to make the move sometime in May.
- Mr. Rydant reported that staff met with CMRPC's *'Federal Partners'*- both *The Federal Highway Administration* and *The Federal Transit Administration*- to discuss the action items from the 2020 Federal Certification review. All items were completed and the *Federal Partners* were very pleased with the results. Moreover, while at the meeting CMRPC's representatives laid the groundwork for the upcoming Federal Certification in Summer of 2024 and expect to receive advance questions around this time next year.
- Mr. Rydant provided updates on the TIP Project Options. He noted that all projects were able to retain their spot on the 2024-2028 TIP- which will be released in April and endorsed in May. Additionally, MassDOT was able to bring additional funds to the table to effectively swap out a project in Southbridge with one in Webster- Southbridge needed more time to deal with design and *'right-of-way'* issues and will move back to FY'25 and the 395 and Route 16 interchange in Webster will now be advertised in FY'24.
- Mr. Rydant reported that staff is busy completing several sections of the *'Long-Range Transportation Plan'* (LRTP) as well as the *'Unified Planning Work Program'*- which is the document that lists everything CMRPC works on, how much it costs and who will be assigned to work on it. Furthermore, he
- noted that Staff worked with MassDOT and the MPO to create list of *'Major Infrastructure'* projects for the LRTP for the next 25 years (2023-2050). Some projects in the list included: US Route 20 reconstruction in Charlton and Oxford; Route 9 widening, phases 1 and 2, in West Brookfield will occur in 2024-25; US Route 20 and Route 112 interchange reconstruction on Grafton Street, Worcester- there is a design issue that often leads to flooding, which MassDOT is seeking to control the flood waters in the re-design; State-funded Route 20 reconstruction in Worcester and Shrewsbury; staff put together a *'Reconnecting Communities Grant'* application to be utilized for a Route 122 bridge replacement over 290- though the grant was denied, the project is at the forefront of the band of 2031-2035; I-495/Route 9 interchange reconstruction- which is valued at nearly \$400M- is



- underway and ramp construction through Westborough and Southborough will follow in the band of 2036-2040; the new grade-separated interchange at Route 146 and New Boston Road in Sutton will be proposed during the band of 2041-2045; Route 9 and Route 135 interchange replacement in Westborough will take place in the last band in 2045-2050.
- Mr. Rydant reported that Ms. Krishnan attended the East/West Passenger Rail listening sessions in Northampton and Springfield, which was held in the previous week. There, Ms. Krishnan heard a lot of support for Palmer Station and how the existing Quaboag Connector can provide ride to the station and help people connect to Springfield and beyond. Additional reporting from the listening sessions included: the Governor's budget has \$4M for Palmer and \$8.5M for Pittsfield station design and planning- which is a part of the *'East West Passenger Train Plan'*; MassDOT and Amtrak are pursuing a federal grant for \$104M- if awarded It will add two additional daily trains between Springfield to Boston.
 - Mr. Rydant reported that staff met with MassDOT, WRTA and the City of Worcester to discuss and finalize the corridor for *'Transit Signal Priority Pilot Project'*. Main Street was the first choice, but Worcester just applied for a *'Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity'* (RAISE) grant for this corridor to perform the necessary improvements. To not duplicate efforts, it was decided to proceed with Lincoln Street as the first pilot corridor for *'Transit Signal Priority'* (TSP) implementation through MassDOT.
 - Mr. Rydant reported that staff met with Veterans Affairs to discuss transit options for Veterans to access various resources- perhaps including the new VA Hospital on the UMASS campus. Recent conversations from their coordination team found the lack of transit options for veterans and staff provided some immediate services like mapping services, survey help etc. to pinpoint the geography of the need. The Veterans representative will report back to their contact and will try to schedule a roundtable to discuss this in further detail.
 - Mr. Rydant closed by noting that staff completed curating a survey for the *'Community Health Partnership of North Central Massachusetts'* (CHNA9) transit study for the Quabbin communities. The survey is now out- it aims to assess the needs and gaps with regards to transit in those communities and will closer around Mid-April.



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c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report and invited, Principal Planner, Ian McElwee, Principal Planner, to present a '*Deeper dive into Resiliency Planning*'.

- Ms. Settles began her report with updates of projects that staff are currently wrapping up. Notes included:
 - There is only one *Municipal Vulnerability Plan (MVP)* contract they are waiting for- which is from the Town of Oakham and contains a *Hazard Mitigation Plan* and an *Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)*.
 - Barre's *Open Space and Recreation Plan* is finally complete.
 - Hopedale's *Open Space and Recreation Plan* just needs a few more items completed before it is wrapped up.
 - Grafton *Complete Streets* is set to finish soon.
 - Staff have sent out final drafts to Princeton for this phase of the Master Plan.
 - Rutland has received their final *Master Plan* and should be with their Planning Committee.
 - *Princeton Housing Production Plan* has been approved.
 - *Spencer's Housing Production Plan* will be submitted soon.
 - The *Berlin Village Strategic Plan* is within a week of being completed.
- Ms. Settles added to Ms. Pierce's earlier announcement about *CDBG*, noting approximately \$5.5 Million are requested for applications for the towns of Brookfield, Dudley, Millbury, Warren and Athol.
- Ms. Settles reported on the work in the pipeline, noting:
 - Charlton is seeking an '*OSRP*'.
 - Staff will be submitting a proposal for the towns of Westborough and Paxton and help draft a proposal for the town Princeton for a *Hazard Mitigation Plan*. Additionally, Ms. Settles noted that new guidelines from *FEMA* and *MEMA*, which go into effect on April 19, will force staff to reconfigure the plans to be compliant.
 - The MBTA Community Compliance is in full swing. Staff is doing a lot of compliance modeling for several communities. Furthermore, staff spoke with representatives from the Department of Housing and Community Development, who noted that CMRPC was one of the most organized RPA's around this front.



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- Staff have met with several communities regarding DLTA. The communities involved included Blackstone, Boylston, Brookfield, Charlton, Hardwick, Hopedale, Spencer, and Leicester. Furthermore, staff hope to meet with Northborough when Ms. Hirsh is available to do so.
- Staff have been pursuing several planning assistance grants which included: *Community One Stop* expressions of interest for several towns; a project for the Hillside Master Plan in Boylston; 5 projects for the Town of Warren; one project for Hardwick’s Master Plan; one project for Leicester’s Master Plan; phase two for Barre’s Master Plan. Staff expect to assist Hopedale with their Zoning Bylaw rewrite. Paxton is asking CMRPC to assist them with their Zoning Bylaw rewrite. Expressions of Interest was submitted for Charlton’s Housing Production Plan.
- An Expression of Interest was submitted by Brookfield for an Economic Development Plan and a water connection between some of the “Brookfields”.
- RCCP is waiting on a contract from Charlton for a Digital Equity project.
- Staff are working with the towns of Boylston and Berlin and the Tahanto School District to fund installation of municipal fiber.
- Ms. Settles provided staffing updates, which mirrored Ms. Pierce’s update and added:
 - Postings for Economic Development Planner, Resiliency Planner, Community Development, and several internships have been circulated. Two of the internships are for RCCP and one is a Cybersecurity posting for Homeland Security Council.
 - A High school intern will be wrapping up her internship in the next week and will present a project to all staff. The intern worked with Yahaira Graxirena and Sarah O’Brien.

Ian McElwee, Principal Planner in RCCP, gave a presentation titled a ‘Deeper dive into Resiliency Planning’.

- In this presentation, Mr. McElwee spoke about current and prospective Climate Resiliency Planning projects. *Green Communities* is still a current highlight, as CMRPC works with more than half their communities with their *Green Communities Programs*. Moreover, project opportunity notices for the spring competitive grant round will happen soon and CMRPC will be working with towns to finalize which



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- ones will participate in this round or the fall competitive grant round. Mr. McElwee noted, in 2022 CMRPC helped ten of our communities receive over (\$)1.5 million dollars in *Green Communities* funding and about \$47.5 thousand dollars of that passed through the CMRPC for grant administration.
- Mr. McElwee spoke about upcoming projects.
 - Answering Ms. Hirsh’s earlier question, Mr. McElwee noted that National Grid received funding for the EV charging program. Now, towns that are members of National Grid or are recipients of their utilities are eligible to receive funding. He added that CMRPC will be advertising and advocating for towns to participate in the program and explore other EV programs that the state recently announced.
 - Mr. McElwee noted that *MVP* is announcing a new version of their grant planning program called *MVP 2.0*. This new version will enable towns to re-address some of the older *MVP* plans by analyzing what works and what is new and changing. Furthermore, it will begin as a pilot program this year and expand to a wide release next year. CMRPC is hoping to work with early adopters on a new planning process that guarantees small seed money for approved communities.
 - Mr. McElwee spoke about another energy program from the *Department of Energy*, which uses funding from the *Bipartisan Infrastructure Law*, called the *Energy Efficiency Conservation Block Grant (EECBG)*. This program will be available for CMRPC’s larger communities like Worcester and Shrewsbury, but there are competitive grant options for all smaller towns that have populations under 35,000. Mr. McElwee added that things are in flux as to how the money will be distributed. CMRPC will monitor the status.
 - Mr. McElwee spoke about the *Climate Pollution Reduction Grant Program* from the *EPA*. He noted the funding is through the *Inflation Reduction Act* and will award the top 67 most populated metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs) with \$1 million each to complete a comprehensive planning program over 4 years that addresses climate resiliency and will reduce carbon emissions in the region. Fortunately, Worcester, Massachusetts, Connecticut MSA is one of the top 67 most populated *MSA*’s in the country. This means that 75 communities in Worcester County and Northeastern Connecticut will be receive \$1 million over 4 years to produce some *Comprehensive Climate*



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Resiliency Plans. CMRPC will be submitting a letter of notice to the *EPA* which states we will be the lead applicant for the entire *MSA*. Mr. McElwee noted the possibility of organizing the plan in a way akin to the *Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization*. There will be a board and advisory committee to guide the planning processes. Additionally, staff have spoken with the folks at *NECCOG* and *MRPC* so that they are aware of this initiative. In order to get diverse community input and exposure, CMRPC will be hosting a webinar information session on April 5 at 1PM, which is available to all of the communities in the *MSA*. CMRPC will need to submit their formal application to the *EPA* by May 2023. The first deliverable for this grant will be due April 2024.

- Mr. McElwee closed his presentation by acknowledging two last projects. The first project is a *Regional Waste Action Plan*, which is currently being worked on by staff and is funded through *DLTA*. Staff are working to look at how waste is disposed, what type of waste is being disposed and how to reduce that as well as ways communities can dispose waste more sustainably. Moreover, this project may require funding from the *EEA*. The last project was a *Regional Heat Resiliency Plan*, which will look at *Urban Heat Island Effects* in both urban, rural and suburban areas throughout the region.
- Mr. McElwee then reiterated his excitement for all current and future projects and opened the floor up to the committee for questions. Ms. Settles took the opportunity to acknowledge Mr. McElwee's tremendous efforts and progressive vision to get both regional and community focused projects formed and funded.
- Ms. Pierce added that staff recently met with the *City of Worcester's Sustainability Group* to discuss the *CPRG Grant* that CMRPC will be taking the lead on. Additionally, the *National Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Formula Program (NEVI)* was discussed at the most recent MARPA meeting and CMRPC will be submitting a grant or letter of interest for this program's funding- which is a \$5 Billion program that is a part of the \$1.2 trillion dollar Infrastructure Investment and Jobs act.
- Mr. Howland added to the EV conversation and noted that there was a recent *ADA* audit for all Shrewsbury public buildings. This audit included 4 EV charging facilities, all of 4 which were non-compliant with Federal *ADA* regulations because of the parking space size and distance between spaces; accessibility



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routes; walkways. Instead, they were all designed based on Massachusetts' standards.

- The committee then discussed local issues that relate to a variety of zoning, including Federal and ADA regulations issues and obstacles.
- **Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Business Manager Diane Shea presented Warrant #23-09 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of March 2023 totaling \$136,875.24.
 - Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #23-08 for the month of March 2023 in the amount of \$136,875.24, seconded by Mr. Howland. **Motion approved.**

The report of cash and the cash flow chart was presented to committee members, showing an ending balance of \$2,023,894.48.

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

- a. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger noted the Committee met before the Executive Committee, where they recommended option A/1 on the *2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program*.
- b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Martin recalled the last meeting on March 14, 2023 and focused on organizing the next *Legislative Affairs Forum*. The committee is deciding on the exact date, but it will likely occur in the first two weeks of June and will have housing as a topic. The date will be selected at their next meeting in April.
- c. Physical Development Committee—**
 - Mr. Wheeler reported that the committee voted to support 9 projects over the two meetings, which will be utilizing the remaining ~\$80K in *DLTA* funds. Some of the supported projects included or pertained to *Grafton Open Space Prioritization*; the *Heat Resiliency Project*; short term rental impacts and historical preservation of Native American land.
- d. Rural Caucus—**
 - Ms. Settles noted that the committee met the previous week and had invited *MRPC towns* participate in a discussion on the *Digital Equity Program* with a representative from the *Mass Broadband Institute*. Ms. Settles reported that the caucus also discussed other community challenges and participated in peer-to-peer sharing.
- e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization –**



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- Ms. Pierce reported that the *SWC EDO* met at the beginning of March and no new proposals were presented at the meeting.
 - Ms. Pierce noted that the *SWC EDO* quarterly meeting also occurred this Month. During this meeting, participants were given the opportunity to tour the Worcester Auditorium and heard some ideas on its restoration.
- f. Sub-regional–**
- Ms. Pierce introduced the new committee member from Worcester, David Quiroa, who replaced Vaske Gjnio as the city’s delegate on the Executive Committee. David noted that he is the new *Community and Intergovernmental Affairs Manager* for the city of Worcester and gave some details on his personal and professional background, as well as expressing enthusiasm for joining the committee.
- **New Business:**
 - Ms. Pierce took the opportunity allow for Doug Martin to make their announcement that they will not be seeking re-election for their position on Barre’s planning board. Ms. Pierce thanked Mr. Martin for their many years of service to the committees and Mr. Martin then thanked her and noted how enjoyable and informative their time on the Executive Committee and Legislative Affairs Committee has been.
 - Ms. Pierce reminded the Executive Committee that the Nominating Committee will meet before the April Executive Committee meeting. Furthermore, Ms. Pierce recommended that the Nominating Committee should meet from 7 pm-7:30 pm so that there is enough time for recommendations for the ballot to be made. Furthermore, ballots will be sent out in May to be tallied for the annual dinner in June.
 - Ms. Pierce closed the new business announcements by asking if any Executive Committee members do not wish to continue to serve on committee to let her know so that we could reach out to other delegates and alternates.
 - **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Williams to adjourn at 9:04 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deuilis, CMRPC.