



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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 www.cmrpc.org

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

July 28, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Hybrid – In Person and Zoom Virtual Meeting”

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

1. Call to Order

Mr. Rajeshkumar called the July 28, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes from the June 30, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

Mr. Williams made a motion, seconded by Mr. Howland to approve the minutes. Ms. Hirst, Mr. Baker, and Mr. Gjino abstained. **Motion approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director’s Report:

a. Staffing and Administration

- Ms. Pierce stated that RCCP employee Mary Hannah Smith has left CMRPC. An advertisement for a general planner position will be posted within the coming



weeks. Staff from RCCP will be filling the void and assisting with MVP plans and environmental planning.

- The Town of Douglas has been awarded a \$3.3 million grant in EDA funding. CMRPC assisted with the application for this grant.
- Ms. Pierce stated that Governor Baker has signed the budget. Within the budget, \$3 million was allocated for district local technical assistance funding. CMRPC receives about \$265,000 that can be disturbed through the Physical Development Committee to the communities for technical assistance. 10% of this is matched which allows about \$291,000 in funding to be distributed. MAPC, which is CMRPC's sister agency has a legal team that provides updates to all the area directors regarding the funding. The items that pertain to the communities and the RPA's will be shared with the committee once Ms. Pierce gets this information.
- Ms. Pierce explained that CMRPC is in the process of closing out the fiscal year that ended June 30.

b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- Ms. Krishnan attended an event put on by the Worcester Chamber where she got to meet an international ambassador from Ghana. Colleges, business personnel, and state legislators were in attendance. The meeting was very interesting, and Ms. Krishnan stated that she was glad she had to opportunity to go.
- MassDOT reached out to all regional planning agencies for potential grant opportunities via the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) discretionary grants. One particular grant was for reconnecting communities, which would be used for underserved areas that were negatively impacted with the construction transportation infrastructure in the past. CMRPC brainstormed and presented two location, one with the City of Worcester, Vernon Street bridge over I- 290 in the area of Kelley Square. Ms. Krishnan explained that it is not easy for people to cross the bridge. The other project being, Route 146A pedestrian bridge in the Blackstone Valley. These ideas have been sent to MassDOT and a meeting will be scheduled to discuss these projects. More to follow on this.
- Transportation staff has been working on the long-range transportation plan. Staff is tackling different aspects of this plan including public outreach, the website, and data analysis. The big product that comes out of this is the data for the population and employment projections. All regional planning agencies in the state work with



MassDOT to understand where the state will grow in population, labor force, employment, as well as how these numbers are distributed in each region. Generally, Central Mass has been happy with what the projections have been showing. MassDOT has collaborated with another agency and the trend line is showing that Central Mass will lose population in the coming years, but data from the Census and other counts is showing the opposite. Ms. Krishnan sent out a rebuttal to the draft population projections to MassDOT. If MassDOT does not change our region's projections to the positive Ms. Settles and Ms. Krishnan game planned to come up with alternate growth projections for our region. This data will not only impact the long-range transportation plan but the regional plan as well. Stay tuned on this.

- Another transportation employee has earned their certification to fly drones.
- Staff has been out in communities doing data collection. This includes traffic counts, pavement data, turning moving counts, travel times, etc.
- The Shrewsbury Sidewalk study is underway.
- CMRPC met with the Town of Westborough regarding the Boston-Worcester Airline Trail. Westborough has a feasibility study completed and they are looking to CMRPC to assist with some community outreach.
- Transportation meetings will start for all subregions beginning in August/September for the long-range transportation plan.
- Staff has scheduled a training for culvert data collection. Ms. Krishnan stated that this will be beneficial for the region to get a more complete picture of culverts.
- Transportation staff will be attending Worcester's Masterplan meetings discussing transportation mobility, economic development, and housing.
- WRTA service changes will go into effect at the end of August. CMRPC had assisted the WRTA with the public outreach on this. The biggest change being that one of the existing routes will be going to the new Market Basket in Shrewsbury on Route 20.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report.

- New Projects have started to roll in. One of them being, the Town of Charlton Shared Services Coordination for public health, along with assistance to surrounding communities. The contracts have been finalized for all communities with CDBG projects.
- MVP plans have been wrapping up.



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- CMRPC has encouraged communities to apply for funding for the Hazard Mitigation Program. This program is in place for towns to have a hazard mitigation plan established so they are eligible for funding if there ever should be a disaster declaration. Ms. Settles explained that funds are rolling out rapidly due to the drought conditions and the extreme temperatures. It is important for towns to get on top of this now even though several of these are not expiring until 2024.
 - Master Plans (or parts) are ongoing in Boylston, Rutland, Mendon, Hopedale, Princeton, Barre Grafton, and North Brookfield.
 - Five communities have active housing production plans - Upton, Mendon, Berlin, Princeton, and Spencer.
 - The Green Communities team was successful in getting an amendment to the existing REPA grant. CMRPC was hopeful to get \$50,000 but only about half was granted due it being a very competitive grant across the state.
 - DPH training hub conversions are still underway. More to come on this.
 - EDA applications have been in the works. CMRPC has been meeting with North Brookfield about a potential infrastructure project with EDA.
 - We are working on the dissolution of the agency known as MORE. The remaining ~\$40,000 in funds that was left of this this organization are set to be transferred to CMRPC for the benefit of regional projects.
 - The MBTA communities' guidelines are still not finalized yet.
 - Both RCCP and Transportation have been working together on the population projections because they are so critical to the regional plan. Communities have reached out asking for the data, but since the census data has not been certified, things are at a stand until under further information is available.
 - The regional plan is moving quickly. Team members are out in the communities weekly and getting survey responses. The survey is now translated into five different languages.
 - The Energy and Environmental Affairs Grants that were applied for in May were granted, but the contracts have been completed yet.

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

Business Manager Diane Shea presented warrant #22-12a for payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of June 2022 totaling \$142,024.60



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Mr. Williams made a motion to approve warrant #22-12a for the month of June 2022 in the amount of \$142,024.60 seconded by Mr. Howland. **The vote by roll call was unanimous.**

Motion approved.

Mr. Hassinger questioned the \$44,000 charge for PrintResource. Ms. Shea explained that the charge was made by Connor Robichaud on behalf of DPH shared services grants. This included hand sanitizer with the shared services logo on it. This will be reimbursed through DPH shared services projects.

Business Manager Diane Shea presented warrant #23-01 for payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of July 2022 totaling \$6,497.23

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #23-01 for the month of July 2022 in the amount of \$6,497.23 seconded by Mr. Howland. **The vote by roll call was unanimous.**

Motion approved.

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

Ms. Pierce mentioned that Bill Trifone had reached out to her and questioned about the ICMA-RC account. The firm in which the funds are sitting at, many of the other RPA's are using. Back when the account was set up, it had to be determined how aggressive or how conservative the account would be. The executive committee decided on taking a more conservative approach. Mr. Trifone asked if any fees are being charged and if they are competitive. He also questioned the performance of the mutual fund. How does it compare to its peers?

6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a. **Transportation** – At the Transportation committee meeting, the committee recommended the endorsement of proposed amendment number 7. Updates were given on the long-range transposition plan project.
- b. **Legislative Affairs** – Nothing to report.
- c. **Physical Development Committee**— A meeting will be held in August. Ms. Pierce mentioned that one of the town delegates is interested in serving on the Physical Development Committee. Mr. Wheeler stated that this could be discussed at the next meeting. Mr. Wheeler questioned if there was seven-member limit on the committee.



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Ms. Pierce stated that she doesn't believe there is a limit. Ms. Settles said she would research this and add it to the next meeting's agenda.

- d. **Rural Caucus** – Rural Caucus met in June. The focus was on economic development, particularly including ecotourism. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked about what ecotourism was. Ms. Settles explained that it is often about the experience.
- e. **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – The committee did not meet in July. There is a meeting scheduled for August.
- f. **Sub-regional**- Mr. Howland stated that the town of Shrewsbury met with MassDOT discussing the 25% design drawings of the eastern portion of the Route 20 widening. This will include two roundabouts, widening the road to include two lanes in both directions, as well as a turn lane in the middle. There will also be a sidewalk on the north and a shared use path on the south. There also may be three 40B's submitted within the next couple of months, totaling 600 units. Mr. Williams shared that the site plan for the Arbor Classic homes was signed last night for 142 units. These units will be used for Senior Housing. Mr. Rajeshkumar shared that in the Town of West Boylston the Town Administrator and the Fire Chief have retired.

7. **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Williams the committee unanimously voted by roll call to adjourn at 8:11 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie McKinney, CMRPC.