



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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 www.cmrpc.org

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

August 25, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Hybrid – In Person and Zoom Virtual Meeting

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

1. Call to Order

Mr. Rajeshkumar called the August 25, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:01 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes from the July 28, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

Mr. Trifone proposed an amendment to the minutes pertaining to the discussion of the ICAMA account. Mr. Trifone suggested the minutes be changed to state “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?” Mr. Wheeler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Howland to approve the minutes. **Motion approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director’s Report:

a. Staffing and Administration



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- Ms. Pierce stated that Greer Jarvis has been hired as the new Transportation Public Outreach Coordinator.
 - CMRPC partnered with MAPC on a statewide trails map grant application. CMRPC's portion is \$5,000 along with the other RPA's.
 - CMRPC submitted a proposal for the Brookfield Master Plan update.
 - Our Econ Dev team submitted an application to EDA. A portion of this application included EDA funding under the Planning and Technical Assistance Program. Ms. Pierce stated that is actually CARES Act funding that was left over. The district representative reached out and invited CMRPC to apply for this funding. The application for \$296,000.00 has been submitted and within the coming weeks it will be determined if is accepted or not. More to come on this. The application requires a 50% match, of which a little more than \$40,000 will come from the disbursement from MORE.

b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- Ms. Krishnan explained that MassDOT had reached out to CMRPC for grant applications involved with Reconnecting Communities program through the bi-partisan infrastructure law. One of the ideas included the Vernon Street Bridge by Kelley Square. This idea is now moving forward. A meeting was held with stakeholders, including MassDOT Boston Project Divisions, MassDOT District 3, the City of Worcester, and CMRPC. CMRPC will be a joint applicant in this because Federal Highway is looking favorably on applications that have partnerships. The grant applications are due In October and CMRPC is in the process of crafting letters of support, as well as putting together a list of partnerships that can also sign as support. More to follow.
- The Long-Range Transportation plan has reached the public outreach portion. Individual stakeholder meetings were held with the Town of Southbridge and the City of Worcester. Upcoming meetings will be held with Uxbridge, and Quaboag Valley CDC.
- CMRPC held its first kickoff meeting for its infrastructure summit. Both CMRPC's IMAGINE2050 plan and the Long-Range Transportation plan are working together and partnering. Meetings invitations have been sent to every sub-region that CMRPC serves. A few of these meetings have been held and 5 out of the 7 communities



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- attended the meeting sub-regional meeting. Transportation received a lot of feedback for the need to improve Route 20 in the SouthWest Subregion.
- Applicants have been applying the open Transit Planner Position. Interviews are being held and Ms. Krishnan is hopeful this position can be filled within the coming weeks.
 - Transit staff has been busy working on the yearly audit for the WRTA.
 - Staff participated in the Worcester- Mater Planning focus groups. Housing, economic development, and transportation mobility are the main topics. There is a lot to learn from these focus groups as Worcester is a big community in the region.
 - Ms. Krishnan explained that the Town of Upton requested a van for the COA (Council of Aging). CMRPC will be meeting with the town to provide some options and how they are able to achieve this.
 - The Oxford-Sutton Central Turnpike corridor profile is complete. The Town of Berlin also has a draft corridor profile complete.
 - Data Collection is in full swing.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report.

- RCCP is looking for a resiliency planner to help cover MVP and OSRP plans.
- CMRPC has continued to encourage 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.
- Master Plans for Boylston and Hopedale are in the final stages.
- The agency known as MORE, which is now dissolved has disbursed their remaining ~\$40,000 in funds to CMRPC for the benefit of regional projects. These funds will be used as the match for the EDA application.
- Ms. Settles explained that land use has a lot of different projects going on. CMRPC is waiting for the buildout analysis to get launched with the EEA. Efforts are continuing in West Brookfield for the zoning by-law rewrite. Ms. Settles stated that a few other communities are interested in zoning bylaws including, Hardwick, Boylston, and Spencer.
- It is expected that the new Homeland Security Contract for the Fiscal Year will be completed within the coming weeks. Ms. Settles stated that the goal is to come up



with some projects outside of CMRPC. This includes going back to the evacuation plans that were completed about 6 years ago to re-review.

- RCCP Staff Connor Robichaud and Ethan Melad held the regional dialogue with Town Managers and Administrators.
- Work is ongoing on the Warren Mill Economic Development project.
- CMRPC met with the new Town Administrator in Upton. Similar meetings will be held with the new Town Administrators in Blackstone, Berlin, and West Boylston. These meetings are a great way for the new administrators to understand what the current projects are and what the town has potential needs for.
- The MBTA community guidelines have been finalized. There are categories for rapid transit, commuter rail, adjacent community, and adjacent small town. Westborough and Worcester are the only two commuter rail communities in the region. Adjacent communities include Auburn, Holden, Shrewsbury, Millbury, Northbridge, and Northborough. Grafton is listed as an adjacent community, but Ms. Krishnan stated that there is a commuter rail stop in Grafton. The adjacent small communities include Leicester, Paxton, Princeton, Sutton, and Upton. There is one other small refinement that accounts for the communities that don't have a planned area within a half mile of the transit station. CMRPC staff is interacting with these communities to help them move towards the next milestone which is upcoming in January. By January 31, 2023, each of these communities has to develop an action plan. By 2025 the by-law must be passed that allows for multi-family by-right. A by-law must be passed in order to be eligible for many funding opportunities. CMRPC has dedicated a substantial portion of the DLTAF funds to help communities figure this out. A webinar will be held by DHCD for planning boards on September 8th, each town is encouraged to participate. While it is an option for communities to opt out of this, by opting out this takes away funding not only from the community and may affect the whole region. This funding is needed to access MassWorks, Housing Choice, and other resources. Mr. Hassinger inquired about the zoning. Ms. Settles explained that what you zone for can be completely different than what you get. This is due to all the different variables of land conditions, access to infrastructure, water/sewer, and permitting. Maps of the communities and the available land will be used. Mr. Rajeshkumar asked how the adjacent and adjacent small communities are determined. Ms. Settles stated that the adjacent communities are adjacent to a town that has a transit facility in it. The small adjacent communities are towns that have a population less than 7,000.



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

Business Manager Diane Shea presented warrant #22-02 for payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of August 2022 totaling \$82,188.39.

Mr. Wheeler made a motion to approve warrant #23-02 for the month of August 2022 in the amount of \$82,188.39 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. Shea further discussed the ICMA- Mission Square Retirement Account. Information was shared regarding the account from 2016-June 2022. The contributions, distributions, fees, and gains or losses were shared for each year. Ms. Pierce stated that this had come up at the last executive committee meeting and felt it was important to share this data with the committee. Mr. Trifone stated his concerns that our money is invested in the MissionSquare Model portfolio Conservate fund, which means this is a “fund of funds.” Mr. Trifone further explained that this fund is charging CMRPC .49% annual fees. The money is taken and invested into 22 different mutual funds and spread out amongst a various group of risks. The bad news of this being that 18 of the 22 funds are also Mission Square created funds. These funds are “Class M Funds,” meaning, it is costing us something buy that fund. It is further explained that MissionSquare was previously involved with violating a regulation or statute by a domestic foreign court. A regulatory agency has entered an order against MissionSquare retirement in connection with investment related activity. MissonSquare is also a broker dealer, which means they recommend which of their funds you buy, meaning they are a commission type of broker.

The Committee thanks Mr. Trifone for looking into this and using his experience to help benefit CMRPC. Ms. Pierce and Mr. Trifone will meet to discuss this information further and explore the possibility of other services, such as PRIM.

6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a.* **Transportation** – Nothing to report.
- b.* **Legislative Affairs** – The Legislative Affairs Committee met in August. The meeting covered the legislative considerations that are on the table. A new Legislation to help support public health departments, creating uniform standards, formalized reporting,



and data collection. Discussions were had about the infrastructure bond bill as far as the MBTA community requirements and other transportation issues. Another bill, House Bill 4720, which covers opportunities for resiliency, workforce, and revitalizing downtowns act. House Bill 1252, which is an act providing for climate change, adaptation, infrastructure, and an affordable housing investment. The existing priorities with DLTA were also discussed. This includes an act to increase regional transit accessibility in the commonwealth, an act to accelerate improvements to the local and regional public health services, senate bill 1729, which is an act related to regional planning agencies. Conversations were had about the legislative affairs forum, which is coming up in December. A topic at the forum will likely be Trails in Central Massachusetts due to the recent uptick in the topic.

- c. **Physical Development Committee**— The physical development committee met in August. An increase in funding for IMAGINE2050 was allocated, adding an extra \$10,000 towards the project. Three new projects were discussed. The first being the New Braintree Airport, which the town is seeking assistance evaluating options for future uses. The second, putting some money into continued work on Brownfields. The last, a net zero greenhouse gas regional wide study. Around \$290,000.00 has been committed with the match. The committee is always looking for opportunities to experiment with some new studies that can benefit the region.
- d. **Rural Caucus** – Rural caucus has not met; the next meeting will likely be in October. The Rural Policy Advisory Commission will potentially be meeting in September to discuss the candidates for governor and lieutenant governor.
- e. **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – The committee did not meet in August. There is a meeting scheduled for September 1st.
- f. **Sub-regional**- Mr. Wheeler stated that a new Town Administrator has been hired in Berlin. Mr. Wheeler further discussed the bond bill that states no less than \$500,000 shall be expended for the Town of Berlin for improvements to the rail trail. The town may ask CMRPC for assistance in determining what this exactly means. Mr. Rajeshkumar shared that the Town of West Boylston has hired a new Town Administrator and a new Fire Chief. Mr. Drobner discussed the Town of Boylston selectmen has asked the Town Administrator to start an RFP process to investigate some firms to research a combined fire/police/senior center. Currently, the senior center uses the old town hall which is not handicap accessible, and it has been argued that the police station is inadequate. The topic for regionalization for dispatch was discussed. Serval communities throughout the region have explored the idea.



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- 7. Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Ms. Hirsh, seconded by Mr. Wheeler the committee unanimously voted by roll call to adjourn at 8:27 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie McKinney, CMRPC.