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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 August 31, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 In-Person/Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	North: Otto Lies, Holden
Vice Chair: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Treasurer: Daniel Schur, Westborough	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Asst. Clerk: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	Southwest: Andrew Coles, Auburn
Staff:	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Not In Attendance:
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	

1. Call to Order:

Mr. Drobner called the August 31, 2023 Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:10 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes-

Mr. Schur made a motion to accept the minutes of the July 27, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. **Motion Approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director’s Report:

a. Staffing and Administration

- Ms. Pierce began her report by noting there were seven (7) new hires this month- with four (4) joining Regional Collaboration and Community Planning and (3) joining Transportation. Additionally, there were two resignations from RCCP: associate planners, Nina Weisblatt and Wenzheng Wang.
- Ms. Pierce announced that CMRPC was awarded several grants in the month of August. Most notably, Ms. Pierce reported that CMRPC was the only RPA to be awarded a regional MVP 2.0 grant, which was for \$290,000 and will support



Northbridge, Uxbridge, Sutton, and Douglas. Additionally, CMRPC assisted in the awarding of several Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) to Central Massachusetts communities as well as one town outside of the region, the town of Athol. CMRPC will be compensated for the administration of the CDBGs.

1. Discussion and vote to adopt personnel policy changes:

- Ms. Pierce presented the updated CMRPC '*Personnel Policy*', which the Personnel Committee had approved in the previous hour. She noted that she would be covering all the items on the agenda, but they might be addressed out of order.
- Ms. Pierce began with the revisions to the paid holidays. She noted that the proposed changes would add *Juneteenth* as an official commission holiday and change *Christmas Day* into a floating holiday. The latter of which had been adopted by a previous CMRPC Executive Director and would allow staff to work December 25th in exchange for a day of their choice. The committee briefly discussed the proposed change.
- Ms. Pierce then addressed the changes to the vacation policy, which would increase the annual accrual rate of vacation time and the total bankable vacation days for staff that have been with CMRPC for two years or more. The committee discussed how this compares to private sector public planning firms and other industries as well as how CMRPC's year to year budget is affected by the increase in indirect charges for vacation time and the paying out of former employee's vacation bank.
- Ms. Pierce continued with the proposed changes to '*Leaves of Absence*' section, by noting the increase of days allotted for '*Bereavement Leave*' for both immediate and extended family as well as the adjustment of what classifies as immediate family to account for those who have 'non-traditional' or step/blended families. The committee discussed the leave that a part-time employee is entitled to as well as adjusting the policy's language to include a staff member's '*partner*' in the section for what is considered immediate family. Additionally, to allow for people to attend memorial services that are in place of a funeral, the committee agreed to take out the word funeral.
- Ms. Pierce closed her review of the proposed adjustments to the '*Personnel Policy*' with the '*Longevity Pay*' section, which was modified to ensure that employees are given regular compensation for their commitment to CMRPC. She explained that the previous version limited employees, who are at the end of their pay scale, the ability to earn more on an annual basis. However, Pierce



noted that employees with five (5) years of tenure will earn \$250 at their anniversary date of hire and an additional \$50 each following year.

- Ms. Pierce then shifted her presentation to the updated '*CMRPC Position Title Chart*', which adjusted the '*Deputy Director of Programs*' to '*Deputy Executive Director*', '*Program Manager*' to '*Director*' and '*Project Manager*' to '*Manager*'. Moreover, she noted the changes were made to mirror the organizational structure of other RPA's and planning agencies. The committee inquired whether the title changes were simply in title and not a promotion, Pierce confirmed that there were no step increases.
- **Vote to adopt the proposed changes to the CMRPC Personnel Policy:**
 - Ms. Hirsh motioned to adopt the proposed changes to the CMRPC Personnel Policy, seconded by Mr. Howland. **Motion Approved.**

b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Ms. Krishnan began her report by recalling a recent meeting she and Ms. Settles had with Congressman McGovern's staff at the behest of the Blackstone Heritage Corridor, where they discussed the possibility of performing a feasibility study on the Blackstone River Bikeway. She noted that the meeting went well and the Congressman's office requested that CMRPC coordinate a stakeholder meeting with the Blackstone Heritage Corridor to collect community feedback.
- Ms. Krishnan continued by then recalling the Rural Transit Dialogue, which happened at the beginning of August and was well attended- MassDOT, FTA, Rural Policy Director Anne Gobi, several RPAs and a variety of important community stakeholders were all present. Krishnan noted that the dialogue was able to produce possible transit solutions for a variety of rural transit issues. Additionally, MassDOT requested that CMRPC invite all the surrounding RPA administrators to the next meeting. (58:09)
- Ms. Krishnan and staff briefly met Joshua Rickman, the new WRTA Administrator, and they organized a formal meeting where staff will bring Mr. Rickman 'up to speed'.
- Ms. Krishnan made note of funding opportunities, which included collaboration with MassDOT on a *Rural Roadway Departure Program* and(,) a *Reconnecting Communities Grant* project, a pedestrian bridge redesign for a non-CMRPC community.
- Ms. Krishnan updated the committee on the traffic issues in Berlin that are caused by the expansion of the Route 290 exit ramp on Route 495. Ms. Krishnan



reported that staff are making good progress in collaborating with MassDOT to generate solutions.

- Krishnan reported that Transportation staff received requests from three (3) CMRPC Communities to attend their Selectboard meetings and discuss the *Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*- particularly, what types of federal funding are available and how their town can access them. Krishnan took this opportunity to note that the MPO, which is the organization that determines federal funding, are having their election in September- for which only Selectboard members are eligible.
- Krishnan closed her section by reporting on a tourism project request that was submitted by a non-CMRPC community, for which staff will be collecting *Parking Utilization Data* in the coming weeks.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):

Deputy Director Trish Settles provided the RCCP report.

- Ms. Settles began her report by expanding on Ms. Pierce's staffing report, adding that Principal Planner, Chris Dunphy will be resigning in September, but is expected to stay on and work part-time. The four (4) new hires were: Regional Public Health Training Manager, Mishel Caisapanta; Associate Comprehensive and Land-Use Planner, Victoria Chavez; Regional Housing Coordinator, Jasifa Chowdhury and Economic Development Planner, Joe Sziabowski. Additionally, Settles noted there are three (3) open RCCP positions.
- Ms. Settles spoke briefly about the project management software, *Monday.com*, and how RCCP is taking full advantage of its organizational tools.
- Ms. Settles reported on projects in RCCP's pipeline, which notably included: facilitation of a large sum of National Park Service Funds to Pioneer Valley to produce economic development and historical preservation plans and ultimately an increase in community engagement; staff will be working with three (3) towns to facilitate more *Mass. Housing Partnership* funding to work on MBTA Community Compliance; staff are working to acquire regional funding to initiate larger scale *Digital Equity* projects; staff will be helping Millville and North Brookfield with local planning assistance; staff are waiting to hear back on *Hazard Mitigation, Open Space and Recreation* and *Community Preservation* plans.
- Ms. Settles recognized planner Sarah Plutnicki, as she was asked to present at the Worcester Polytech on the Regional Resiliency Planning. Additionally, she and fellow planner, Sam Carter, were also invited to present at the '*Moving Together Conference*' on trails accessibility in Central Massachusetts.



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- Ms. Settles briefly covered some current projects that are being wrapped up. During this, she made special note to mention that the draft of the Southern Worcester County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) is completed and will be presented and voted on at the September CMRPC Quarterly Meeting.
- 5. Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Executive Director Janet Pierce presented Warrant #24-02 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of August 2023 totaling \$114,610.27.
- Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #24-02 for the month of August 2023 in the amount of \$114,610.27, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion approved.**
- 6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
- a. Transportation – No meeting was held in August.**
 - b. Legislative Affairs – No news to report.**
 - c. Physical Development Committee- No news to report.**
 - d. Rural Caucus– No news to report.**
 - e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization – No news to report.**
 - f. Sub-regional– No news to report.**
- 7. Executive Session:** The committee entered executive session to discuss the recommendations the personnel committee made for Ms. Pierce’s updated contract.
- 8. Vote to approve Ms. Pierce’s updated contract:** Mr. Williams motioned to approve Ms. Pierce updated contract, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion Approved.**
- 9. New Business: No new business.**
- 10. Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Ms. Hirsh, seconded by Mr. Howland to adjourn at 8:49 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deiulis, CMRPC.