



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
 Worcester, MA 01608
 P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
 www.cmrpc.org

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 September 28, 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: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Treasurer: Daniel Schur, Westborough	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin	Southwest: Andrew Coles, Auburn
Staff:	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Not In Attendance:
Dominique Dutremble, Dir. of Community Planning, RCCP	Asst. Clerk: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	

1. Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the September 28, 2023 Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:02 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes-

Mr. Howland made a motion to accept the minutes of the August 31, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion Approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director’s Report:

a. Staffing and Administration

- Prior to Ms. Pierce’s report, Chairperson Drobner recalled the September CMRPC staff meeting, for which he was in attendance, and reiterated to the committee what he had spoken about that day.
- Ms. Pierce began her report by announcing that CMRPC has hired six (6) new employees and one (1) intern. Moreover, staff are in the process of hiring two (2) more interns for the fall semester.



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608
P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
www.cmrpc.org

- Pierce continued with her announcements, noting CMRPC has been awarded two grants- one of which is embargoed and the other is through REPA and will enable CMRPC to assist communities with *Green Community* reports and grants.
- Ms. Pierce closed by commending the grant writers of both Transportation and RCCP on their efforts to create partnerships with communities to establish memorandums for an important project as well as grow a variety of grant programs into region wide successes, respectively.

b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Ms. Krishnan began her report by announcing the *Reconnecting Communities Program* for the Planning and design of Vernon St Bridge, which is a significant dollar amount and with connecting the neighborhoods to the Kelly Square area.
- Ms. Krishnan noted that staff is assisting communities with multiple Federal grants. CMRPC is working on a major regional '*Thriving Communities*' grant, to conduct a feasibility study and outreach for completing the Blackstone River Bikeway between Milbury and Uxbridge. Furthermore, Ms. Krishnan reported that at the last Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Associations (MARPA) meeting, representatives from MassDOT had requested that RPA's apply for as many technical assistance grants, as the Governor's office is reporting that Massachusetts should avail all the federal funds that are available.
- Ms. Krishnan spoke in some detail about the status of the '*Immigrant Crisis*' affecting Central Massachusetts' communities, CMRPC's role with helping the displaced migrants establish residency as well as the meantime travel and safety concerns for said migrants and what the State, CMRPC and Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA) staff are doing to address assist them. Ms. Krishnan noted that there would be a Town Manager's meeting in October to discuss this in detail. Chairperson Drobner inquired about the upcoming town managers meeting, particularly which towns are currently housing the migrants and what facilities are being used as well as potential towns and their respective facilities that could be utilized. Ms. Krishnan reported what she has heard, and the committee members also reported what they have heard from their own towns.
- Ms. Krishnan reported on a recent meeting she, Ms. Pierce and some transportation staff had with the WRTA's new administrator Joshua Rickman. She noted that they discussed adding new projects to CMRPC's list, strategies to



address the current WRTA service issues, the migrant crisis and how CMRPC can assist the WRTA with our community connections.

- Ms. Krishnan announced that the second Rural Transit Dialogue is being hosted tomorrow via zoom and it is expected to be well attended.
- Ms. Krishnan reported on community initiatives that staff are pursuing. Some noteworthy initiatives included: facilitating a conversation on a *‘Micro-mobility hub’* in Grafton as part of the Master Planning efforts; collecting sidewalk data for sidewalk prioritization plans; performing Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) presentations for CMRPC communities; collecting traffic data on Route 140 in order to perform a corridor study; collaborating with MassDOT to assist Charlton with road paving and safety improvements.
- Ms. Krishnan closed by recalling the most recent CMMPO meeting, which happened to be a selection meeting in the rotation for the West, Southwest and Southeast subregions. Ms. Krishnan noted the appointments for each region, which is as follows: the West subregion appointed Jared Grigg of Spencer as a new alternate; the Southwest subregion appointed Councilor John Daniels of Southbridge as a new member and Bill Borowski of Charlton as the new alternate; the Southeast subregion appointed Jesse Limanek of Sutton was reelected as a member and Ann Marie Foley of Grafton was appointed as the alternate.
- Ms. Krishnan opened it to the committee for questions and Ms. Hirsh took the opportunity to inquire how the funding from the TIP program can be applied. Ms. Krishnan responded briefly and offered to make time to discuss it in broader detail in the future.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):

Director of Community Planning, Dominique Dutremble provided the RCCP report.

- Ms. Dutremble began her report by repeating and expanding upon Ms. Pierce’s previous staffing update. Here, Ms. Dutremble noted that CDBG Coordinator, Chris Dunphy recently retired from CMRPC, but agreed to return for some part-time assistance. Moreover, she announced several hirings:
 - Jordan Hollinger as a Community Development Project Planner;
 - Marc Granato as the Emergency Preparedness Coordinator;
 - Jasifa Chowdhury as the Regional Housing Coordinator;
 - Mishel Caisapanta as the Public Health Training Manager;



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608
P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
www.cmrpc.org

- Mike Maughan-Brown and Jordan Hollinger were hired as;
Comprehensive and Land-use Planners;
- Felix Bookhard-Tsai was brought on as an intern through the *Dynamy Program*, which empowers high school graduates in a gap year to get experience and workplace exposure and is at no cost to CMRPC.
- Ms. Dutremble reported on the RCCP team’s many diligent efforts to work communities to find and apply for both local and regional projects and programs that are funded through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) renewed level funding and supplemental DLTA augmentation funds.
- Ms. Dutremble provided an update on the Community Development and Planning teams, noting that staff:
 - are in diverse stages of helping a variety of towns with *Open Space Recreation Plans, Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Plans, Hazard Mitigation Plans, Eco-Tourism Plans, Historic Preservation Plans; Housing Production Plans, Master Plans, Digital-Equity Projects and Planning Studies;*
 - successfully assisted seven (7) communities apply for and be rewarded with a significant dollar amount *in Community Development Block Grant* funding;
 - are still hard at work creating the state wide trail map as well as assisting town’s with a variety of accessibility plans;
 - submitted a noteworthy amount of *Regional Energy Planning Assistance* applications for a substantial amount of total funding;
 - are assisting more than half of CMRPC communities with *Green Community Annual Reports;*
 - staff are busy at a regional level working on *Regional Waste and Regional Heat Resiliency* plans as well as *Public Health and Shared Services* projects;
 - are busy with both fuel, and most recently, accounting services procurements;
 - recently assisted Leicester in the auctioning of several town owned properties for a significant dollar amount;
 - are actively assisting towns with GIS mapping in a variety of projects;
 - have been both participating in and organizing an impressive amount of conferences and workshops;



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608
P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
www.cmrpc.org

- making great strides in public health training for CMRPC communities;
 - are creating a strong pipeline of local and regional plans, grants and programs as well as zoning bylaw and regulation rewrites and assistance;
 - recently completed the final draft of the 2023-2028 *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) and released it for public comment;
 - are working with the *Mass Housing Partnership* to assist MBTA Communities address issues and concerns;
 - are in the early stages of developing two (2) federal applications, one through The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) *Pro Housing Program* and the other through the *Thriving Communities Program*.
- Ms. Dutremble reported on several grants and programs available in the current funding cycle, which notably included the *Community Compact Best Practices Program*, *Community Compact IT Grant* and the *Mass Trails Grant*.
 - Ms. Dutremble closed her section by reporting on an application that staff are submitting through the Massachusetts State Senate and House that would create a Municipal Public Safety Building Authority. Chairperson Drobner inquired about a few specifics on this matter, for which Ms. Dutremble provided sufficient answers.
 - Ms. Pierce also added that CMRPC has entered into a memorandum of understanding with the Town of Hardwick to work with them to create an application for CDBG.

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

Executive Director Janet Pierce presented Warrant #24-03 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of September 2023 totaling \$73,561.26.

- Mr. Hassinger made a motion to approve Warrant #24-03 for the month of September 2023 in the amount of \$73,561.26, seconded by Ms. Williams.

Motion approved.

The report of cash and the cash flow chart were presented to committee members, showing an ending balance as of August 2023, of \$2,999,222.41.

- Ms. Pierce made a brief announcement that the audit should be on time this year and an additional March meeting will likely not be needed. This prompted



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608
P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
www.cmrpc.org

the committee to discuss the possibility of pushing the December meeting to early January to accommodate committee member's potential commitments during the holiday season.

6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

a. Transportation – No meeting was held in September.

b. Legislative Affairs – No news to report.

- Ms. Pierce took this as an opportunity to announce that the Coalition for Safe Drinking Water requested CMRPC to write a letter of support for a piece of legislation that would enable the assessment of the quality of private well-water in Massachusetts- which the coalition had unsuccessfully requested co-sponsorship from CMRPC during the April Executive Committee. The committee discussed the legislation's logistics and goals, CMRPC's stake in writing support and the internal process for approving the letter- which would have the Legislative Affairs committee first vote for recommendation to the Executive Committee to vote.

c. Physical Development Committee- Mr. Wheeler echoed Ms. Dutremble's report that staff are busy finishing up this year's DLTA funded initiatives and noted that the committee will likely discuss the upcoming funding cycle at the next meeting.

d. Rural Caucus– Ms. Pierce noted that the Rural Caucus did not meet this month and then invited the committee member to attend the Rural Transit Caucus, which is being held via Zoom tomorrow, September 28, 2023 at 9:30am.

e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization – Ms. Pierce noted that there was a quarterly meeting earlier in September where the where the discussed edits to and the adoption of the 2023-2028 CEDS. Furthermore, Ms. Pierce also noted that there were no projects presented and the October meeting has been cancelled due to scheduling conflicts.

f. Sub-regional–

- Mr. Quiroa noted that the *Massachusetts Broadband Institute* reached out to him regarding the promotion of the state's *Digital Equity Plan* survey- which is meant to gauge wireless internet access throughout Massachusetts- and he asked for the committee members to consider offering their input by filling out and submitting a survey.

7. New Business:



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
Worcester, MA 01608
P: 508.756.7717 F: 508.792.6818
www.cmrpc.org

- Mr. Schur prompted a discussion about the recent flooding damage to dams and culverts in central Massachusetts, for which Ms. Pierce and Ms. Dutremble provided answers on the possible problems communities face with dams and culverts as well as the programs available to solve them.
 - The Committee closed the meeting by discussing the microphone issue and the possibility of getting professional consultation.
8. **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Howland to adjourn at 8:28 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deiulis, CMRPC.