



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 September 29, 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
Treasurer: Otto Lies, Holden	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin	Central City: Vaske Gjino, Worcester
Asst. Clerk: Robert Hassinger, Grafton	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Staff:	Not in Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Vice Chair: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston
Diane Shea, Business Manager	North: Douglas Martin, Barre
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	
Stephanie McKinney, Business Assistant	
Andrew Loew, Project Manager	

1. Call to Order

Mr. Rajeshkumar called the September 29, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes from the August 25, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting.

Mr. Hassinger made a motion, seconded by Mr. Lies to approve the minutes. Mr. Williams and Mr. Gjino abstain. **Motion approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Executive Director’s Report:

a. Staffing and Administration

- Ms. Pierce shared that CMRPC was awarded the Economic Development Administration (EDA) Planning and Technical Assistance Program Grant for \$294,550.00. This funding will be used to update the Comprehensive Economic



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Development Strategy (CEDs). EDA will be funding \$146,050, a cash match of \$42,000, and \$106,500 in-kind.

- The Town of Brookfield has indicated they will award the contract for the Brookfield Master Plan Update to us. The total for the project is \$15,430.

b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- The Sub-Regional Infrastructure Summits are underway. The Southwest Sub-Region region was completed last month. This month the Northeast Sub-Region meeting was held in Westborough, the Southeast Sub-Region was held in Grafton, and the West Sub-Region was in North Brookfield. There was good attendance and conversation at the summits. Both CMRPC's IMAGINE2050 plan and the Long-Range Transportation plan are working together to examine the data and feedback they receive at the summits because a lot of the topics overlap. All of the transportation comments will be packaged and a stakeholder meeting will be held with MassDOT District Two and Three.
- Transportation staff has also been doing some tabling events. The Lincoln Street Block Party, Lunch on the Common, Westborough For life, The Street On Art Festival in Worcester, WRTA Platform, and The Brookfield Apple Festival were all attended by Transportation staff to collect comments.
- There was a good turnout for the MPO self-selection process. The Communities of Oakham, Princeton, Holden, Paxton, and Barre all attended. It was decided that Stephanie Mulroy of Holden will be the member and the alternate will be Kirk Huehls of Paxton.
- Ms. Krishnan stated that the Reconnecting Communities Program application for the Vernon Street Bridge in Worcester is moving forward. The application is due on October 13th. MassDOT is taking the lead on the application, but CMRPC is assisting with letters of support. If awarded, \$2 Million will be granted.
- Boylston and Uxbridge reached out to CMRPC to host an infrastructure meeting for their communities. Many different town officials and departments were in attendance. As a result of this meeting, the Superintendent in Uxbridge stated an issue with Uxbridge High School being located on a major highway. CMRPC will work with them to complete traffic counts and facility planning.
- The quarterly commission meeting that was held in September covered transportation topics. Ms. Krishnan stated that staff is very happy with the input that



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was received. Transportation staff feels that the Long-Range Transportation Plan will not only be projects and priorities, it will cover initiatives and some policies to push for as well.

- CMRPC met with 495 Metro-West Partnership as a stakeholder for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The Partnership just finished their strategic plan recently and a couple of their priorities included Transit and Walk and Bike. These priorities align perfectly with what CMRPC has been pushing for in these communities. In certain parts of the region, some communities are orientated towards the Metro-West area and, therefore, don't benefit from Worcester Regional Transit Authority. More to come on this.
- Transportation staff has been looking into bringing in a PE Design Engineer on board for CMRPC to help communities design transportation projects. This would be a RCCP and Transportation joint effort. This could be similar to MUNI-GIS where communities pay into it to get the service. Research is being done on similar models throughout New England. A survey will be sent out to the communities to see how much the communities are willing to buy into this. More to follow.
- MassDOT has rolled out new programs that include, municipal pavement, local bottleneck, and winter repair. Ms. Krishnan reached out to the liaison for MassDOT to set up a regional forum with DPW Directors and Town Administrators. This would involve a MassDOT Representative meeting with the communities to explain each program in detail. Ms. Krishnan stated that all communities in the Central Massachusetts Region should be taking advantage of this because it's easy money. This would include \$100 Million for all of the 351 communities. This is formula based, not population based.
- CMRPC will be meeting with Oxford and Sutton for their corridor profile.
- The Town of Berlin reached out requesting a specific meeting for the route 62 corridor profile.
- Transit staff helped WRTA with their Transit Asset Management Plan and writing the plan. The plan was approved by the board with performance metrics.
- In early October, the North Sub-Region infrastructure summit will be held. This will cover, Holden, Rutland, and West Boylston. Ms. Peirce invites the Executive Committee to attend the summit.



c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report.

- Seven communities received grants for Green Communities, totaling over \$2 Million. Annual reports are being completed in 23 communities.
- MVP Planning is winding down. Work still continues in East Brookfield, Holland, Oxford, and Warren. Staff is starting to think of what is next for MVP.
- Open Space Plans are moving forward.
- CMRPC was invited to attend the Mass Land Trust DCR Conference to discuss what's happening in Central Mass.
- Hazard Mitigation Plans are underway in several communities. The deadline has been extended to submit Hazard Mitigation Plans, which will allow for towns to be eligible for funding if there should ever be a disaster declaration.
- Complete Streets is ongoing in Grafton.
- Master Plans are in progress in 8 different communities. The Barre Master Plan, Brookfield Master Plan Update will be kicked off soon. Both Hopedale and Boylston are almost ready to submit their Master Plans.
- The CEDS Grant was awarded.
- Ms. Settles shared that the Barre Housing Authority revealed the project that Emily Glaubitz worked on with funding from Creative Placemaking.
- As previously shared, the MBTA Community guidelines have been finalized. CMRPC has been able to share more information with the planning boards.
- The Warren Economic Development project that was funded by EDA is coming to a close.
- The Town of Warren also received a Park grant with some assistance from Dani Marini for the Lucy Stone Landing.
- RCCP is still looking to fill the Resiliency Planner Position. This role will help assist with Green Communities, MVPs, OSRPs, and Hazard Mitigation Plans.
- IMAGINE2050 has been in full swing. A meeting was held with the steering committee to draft a workshop for the first draft of the vision and the components of that. Ms. Settles explained that the next step is to meet with the Technical Advisory Committee to discuss with the experts. Sarah O'Brien and RCCP staff will be meeting to discuss the formatting and chapters.
- The ADA plan in Webster is wrapping up. Staff has been reaching out to communities to determine who else can be helped with the next round of ADA applications.



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- As Ms. Krishnan discussed bringing in a PE Engineer to CMRPC, Ms. Settles further explained that Connor Robichaud and Ethan Melad have drafted an RFP for a housing coordinator. This housing coordinator would be a CMRPC employee that would be contracted out to communities.
 - Communities have reached out to CMRPC about shared town planners. Ms. Settles shared that CMRPC will look into further extending the program or looking for additional partnerships to provide more planning services in some of the communities.
 - Ms. Settles mentioned that there are a number of funding opportunities that CMRPC is starting to investigate.
 - EEA made a formal announcement about the Energy and Environmental Affairs Planning Assistance grants. CMRPC will be working on Build Out Analysis in three communities including, Douglas, Grafton, and Sutton. CMRPC is also doing the Hardwick Open Space Plan, the Auburn Housing Production Plan, the Eco-tourism plan in Princeton, and the Rutland Master Plan. All of these projects are being funded by EEA.

d. Overview of CDBG

Project Manager Andrew Loew gave the report.

- Mr. Loew shared slides regarding the background, current partner communities, and the team at CMRPC.
 - a. CDBG Background- Mr. Loew explained that CDBG is federal funding which comes through the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). There are 11 ‘entitlement’ communities, which are granted large federal funding automatically based on population. Small communities, known as ‘Mini-Entitlement grants’ follow a competitive process in which not all communities are given funding for CDBG. Projects under CDBG must meet three national objectives. The first being, benefit low to moderate income (LMI) populations (verified by income survey, qualification process, and/or census data) Elderly and disabled persons are generally considered to meet LMI criteria. The second, remove or prevent “slums and blight” (verified through slum and blight inventory and report or, for a single property, spot blight designation). Lastly, respond to community development urgent need (by special request only – very rare). The eligible project types in which CDBG includes Infrastructure improvements (roads, sidewalks, water, sewer, drainage), ADA-related



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improvements, if ADA plan is complete (elevators, sidewalk/access ramps, etc.). Public facilities improvements (senior centers, public housing: NOT for general municipal office buildings, DPW, etc.), Housing rehabilitation (deferred/no payment loans, public housing facilities, etc.), Parks and recreation (parks, playgrounds). Environmental remediation (brownfields assessment or cleanup; some costs depend on reuse), Planning, architectural and engineering studies, and social services (literacy, domestic violence prevention, etc.; requires local RFP). On the financial side of CDBG, \$1.35 m max. for single-town application for combined FY22/23 round (\$1.7 m for regional) (normally \$800,000 for single town). There is no municipal outlay required to apply for funding or to manage projects; CMRPC will enter into MOU with the Town for grant administration/project delivery. There also is no match Administration/project delivery costs paid from grant, if awarded. When it comes to grant cycle and application, approximately 30 competitive awards per year (around \$25-30 million total). The scoring criteria emphasize project need (40 points), feasibility/readiness (25 points), and community need score (predetermined 10-point scale). An interesting aspect of CDBG is that communities may apply jointly or individually.

- b. Partner Communities- Mr. Loew shared a list of the communities in which the CDBG team assists. These communities include Dudley, Brookfield, North Brookfield, Warren, Millbury, Leicester, Leicester-Barre, and Millbury-Dudley. Mr. Loew explained that CMRPC has been successful on 14 out of 15 applications and approximately \$10 Million has come to the region through the CDBG program.
- c. CDBG Team- Program Staff; Andrew Loew – Project Manager, Chris Dunphy - Principal Planner, Ian McElwee – Principal Planner. For the Financial Side; Diane Shea – Business Manager, Baseemah Shakir – Financial Assistant, Stephanie McKinney – Financial Assistant.

Ms. Pierce thanks Mr. Loew for developing and expanding CDBG for the communities in our region. Ms. Settles explained that CMRPC has gotten requests to extend CMRPC's CDBG services due to the teams' excellent efforts.

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

Business Manager Diane Shea presented warrant #23-03 for payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of September 2022 totaling \$165,634.48.



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Mr. Williams made a motion to approve warrant #23-03 for the month of September 2022 in the amount of \$165,634.48 seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

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

As a part of the ongoing discussion regarding the ICMA-Mission Square Retirement Account, Ms. Pierce and Mr. Trifone are currently looking into what other options the commission has. Ms. Pierce stated that next month they will be more prepared to share their findings with the Executive Committee. Mr. Trifone explained the Government Account Standards Board which is an independent organization that promotes clear, consistent, transparent, and incomparable financial reporting for state and local government agencies. He further explained, OPEB which is short for Other Post-Employment Benefits, this does not include pensions. Mr. Trifone gave the example, if CMRPC were too close today, the organization would still have the liability to pay for that insurance that it's promised it's retirees. To try and offset that liability an asset is created, which is the investment trust fund that we have.

Ms. Shea surveyed other RPA's and found that four other agencies also use Mission Square Retirement. One uses Raymond James, and one uses PRIM. In general, all the agencies were satisfied with the service they receive.

Mr. Trifone stated that he believes it would be beneficial to look elsewhere because Mission Square is not a fiduciary. A fiduciary places it's clients interest above its own. On the flip side, PRIM is a fiduciary. Mr. Trifone stated that for 15 years in a row, PRIM has received the Government Finance Officer Associations Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting. PRIM's private equity portfolio ranked number two by the American Investment Council of the 176 U.S. Public Pension Funds. They also have been in the top five every year the study has been conducted. Mr. Trifone would like more information form PRIM to get a clearer understanding of their services.

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.

6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a. **Transportation** – Nothing to report.
- b. **Legislative Affairs** – The Legislative Affairs Committee is set to meet on December 6, 2022. The meeting will be focused on Trails in Central Massachusetts. Ms. Pierce shared that there is a vacancy on the legislative affairs committee. Mary Bulso, Board of



Selectmen member from Blackstone is interested in serving. Ms. Pierce asked that the committee appoint her. Mr. Rajeshkumar approved and appointed Ms. Bulso to the committee.

- c. **Physical Development Committee**— The next meeting will be held in October.
- d. **Rural Caucus** – Rural caucus has not met; the next meeting will likely be in October. Ms. Settles attended the Rural Policy Advisory Commission meeting. She shared that the Smithsonian has exhibit based on Rural America and visit one of six communities where this exhibit would then be displayed. The communities include Essex, Hull, Athol, Deerfield, and in our region, Rutland.
- e. **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce stated that the board met this past month. A presentation was given by the Town of North Brookfield who is in the process of submitting a grant to the EDA for an expansion of their sewer lines. The board voted to support the application and will submit a letter of support. Ms. Pierce also mentioned that the quarterly meeting was held for the Economic Development Organization this past month. There was not a not a quorum for the meeting and there hasn't been one for the last three meetings as well. The Board will be revisiting the members that are serving and a recommendation may be made to lower the seats on the board to meet quorum in the future. The current seat count is 27, which means that 15 are needed for a quorum.
- f. **Sub-regional**- Ms. Pierce explained that she attended a meeting at Holy Cross, in which Lieutenant Governor Polito was also in attendance. Ms. Pierce stopped and chatted with her to thank her the partnership over the past eight years. One of Lieutenant Governors Polito's comments were, "well the RPA's are getting more money." Ms. Pierce was not sure of what she was talking about and later on other RPA directors mentioned the \$2 Million for RPA's. No one is exactly sure what this money is for, but it is speculated that this money might come through the DLTA. There is also discussion that this funding will be used to assist communities with grant writing. Ms. Pierce shared that this would be about \$165,000 additionally that would be received under the DLTA. More to come on this.

- 7. Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Willaims, seconded by Mr. Hassinger the committee unanimously voted by roll call to adjourn at 8:12 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie McKinney, CMRPC.