



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520  
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**CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**

October 27, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes  
 Hybrid – In Person and Zoom Virtual Meeting

| <b>Attending Officers</b>                     | <b>Attending Sub Regional Delegates</b> |
|---|---|
| Chairperson: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston | North: Douglas Martin, Barre            |
| 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        |   |
| <b>Staff:</b>                                 | <b>Not in Attendance:</b>               |
| Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director           | Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley      |
| Diane Shea, Business Manager                  |   |
| Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP                |   |
| Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation   |   |
| Stephanie McKinney, Business Assistant        |   |
| Connor Robichaud, Project Manager             |   |
|   |   |

**1. Call to Order**

Mr. Rajeshkumar called the October 27, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

**2. Approval of Minutes** from the September 29, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting.

Mr. Williams 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**

- Ms. Pierce stated that there are no staffing changes this month. There is currently one job ad out and is likely two more will be posted in the coming weeks.



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- The MassDOT contract, which is the largest CMRPC contract has, was granted for \$1,513,945. This contract will run October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2022.
  - Several Green Communities Grants were applied for this last month, totaling \$962,049.84. Included in these applications was about \$35,000 for CMRPC for grant administration.
  - The Digital Equity Program Pre-Qualification was submitted to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute for \$37,426, there will be more to come on this.
  - Ms. Pierce discussed the Re-connecting Communities Grant in which CMRPC was a co-applicant with MassDOT and the City of Worcester.

**b. Transportation:**

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- Ms. Krishnan further explained the re-connecting communities grant and shared that MassDOT went for the full \$2 Million.
- Transportation staff has been working on various items for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. The sub-regional infrastructure meetings have wrapped up. Overall, 24 of the 40 communities in the region attended these sub-regional meetings and there are approximately 100 online surveys completed. There have been over 40 individual stakeholder meetings, with either small groups or individual meetings and there are 10 more upcoming meetings scheduled. The hub-site is up and running, which is accessible through the CMRPC website.
- CMRPC met with the town of West Boylston DPW director and Town Administrator discussing transportation. Trucking issues, future tip projects, previous studies in the past, and other data were presented.
- The Town of Uxbridge reached out to CMRPC regarding the Uxbridge High School entrance. This school is located on a major highway and over the last month CMRPC has been collecting traffic counts and facility planning. More to come on this.
- A road safety audit was completed in the Town of Sutton.
- A meeting will be set up with MassDOT as a stakeholder partner to discuss all the important priorities CMRPC has heard from all the sub-regions. This will help CMRPC understand what MassDOT has in mind on state priorities. More to follow.
- CMRPC has a meeting set up with the Town of Berlin and their new Town Administrator to discuss their Route 62 corridor profile as well as other topics.
- The Town of Rutland is also meeting with CMRPC to talk infrastructure and transportation.



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- Eric Gemperline, on the Transportation staff is now a Certified Drone Pilot. He has been out in the communities taking drone pictures for TIP projects as well as before and after photos. Ms. Krishnan mentioned that the Town of Northborough would benefit from drone pictures for their feasibility study.
  - The Town of Holden has passed the right-of-way vote at the town meeting, which is a \$12 Million TIP project.

**c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:**

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report.

- Master Plans are in progress in several different communities. Ms. Settles shared the Hopedale Master Plan that was adopted by the Select Board.
- Housing Production Plans are underway in Auburn, Spencer, Princeton, Mendon, Upton, and Berlin.
- Economic development plans are ongoing.
- The West Brookfield Zoning Bylaw Re-write will be completed within the coming weeks.
- CMRPC met with New Braintree to discuss the airfield.
- Open Space Plans are moving forward in Oxford, Douglas, Dudley, Northborough, and Warren.
- Hazard Mitigation Plans and MVP Plans are being worked on in Oxford, Hopedale, East Brookfield, Paxton, Holland, and Warren.
- Two different trails grants are ongoing.
- RCCP is proceeding with a Net Zero Greenhouse Gas project that was funded by DLTA.
- CMRPC is working on a Complete Streets project in The Town of Grafton.
- Public Health, Regional Services, Procurement, and Homeland Security projects are being worked on by RCCP staff.
- Assessing updates are being completed in several communities.
- Ms. Settles discussed the market for Town Planners is popular. A number of communities have reached out to CMRPC to assist them with resources. Whether this be interim, shared position, or full-time.
- IMAGINE2050 is rolling along. A progress update will be shared at the Quarterly Meeting.



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- The Town of Spencer has reached out to CMRPC to discuss a Master Plan. This project was recently awarded and will receive funding for \$130,000 through the Community One Stop Program.
- Ms. Settles shared that if communities don't have a Hazard Mitigation Plan or it has expired, there is funding available to update these plans.
- The CDBG team has been approached by two communities outside of the CMRPC region for potential projects. Ms. Pierce further explained that the referrals for CMRPC's CDBG services were made by the Executive Director of a Regional Planning Agency who no longer administers CDBG Grants. These communities will be followed up with once the CDBG Team has determined their capacity.
- Ms. Settles shared that a MBTA Community meeting will be held on November 3, 2022, to discuss zoning that is multifamily by-right.
- Ms. Settles has been asked to make a presentation to the State's land Trust and State Agency Retreat.
- There are a few open positions within RCCP which includes a Resiliency Planner and CDBG Project Manager. CMRPC also met with Worcester Community Action Council to discuss hiring High School Interns as done previously.

**d. Overview of Procurement, ADA Planning, Regional Services, Public Health & Digital Equity:**

Regional Projects Manager Connor Robichaud gave the report.

- Procurement: Procurement was designed to create open and fair competition and has scaled procedures for local governments to use dependent on the goods or services. CMRPC operates the procurement process requests for proposals or invitations for bids, selecting the best possible vendors, and providing administrative support through the contract. CMRPC has done procurements for fuel/oil, obtaining a better price per gallon price than other statewide contracts. About 30 towns participate in the procurement process. CMRPC also procures the services of an auctioneer that specializes in tax title auctions. Town accounting services were also procured through CMRPC. Most towns like to use the accounting services as interim.
- ADA Planning: A little over three years ago CMRPC partnered with a few consultants to assist with ADA plans. ADA plans have been completed in Shrewsbury, Auburn, Barre, Berlin, Northbridge, Southborough, Upton, Princeton, and Webster. ADA is a civil rights law which is used to ensure that those with a disability are not excluded in participating in or getting the benefits from services and activities offered by local



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and state governments. Municipalities must conduct a self-evaluation of their programs and services as well as an evaluation of all facilities that have physical barriers to access. If funded, this is a 6-month planning process.

- **Regional Services:** A municipality planning for its own successes, should still have consideration for the success of its neighbors. This can include facilitating meetings, finding grant funding, administering procurements, conducting feasibility studies, and even hosting some services. Crucial to this process is the shared services survey which connects towns with mutually beneficial interests. For example, the towns of Hardwick and Princeton came together recently to get a shared town accountant.
- **Public Health:** Throughout the pandemic CMRPC was deeply involved in the local public health response. DPH needed a way to connect with 351 local boards of health across the commonwealth and relied on agencies like CMRPC to be their financial and communication connection. These connections were able to create great partnerships. CMRPC now facilitates several public health shared service partnerships. This is new grant funding for local public health, Massachusetts was the only state in the country that did not have a line item in the state budget for local public health until last year. Now, regional partnerships can get an annual \$300,000 to fund shared staff and obtain some equipment, technology, and training. The current partnerships include Northborough, Southborough, Westborough, and Boylston. Another partnership with Leicester, Barre, Hardwick, New Braintree, North Brookfield, and Holden. There are also a few that CMRPC manages on an ongoing basis which includes the South-Central Partnership (Webster, Auburn, Dudley, Southbridge, Brimfield, Wales, Oxford). The Blackstone Valley Partnership (Northbridge, Mendon, Douglas, Blackstone, Upton, Hopedale, Uxbridge). The most recent partnership (Charlton, Sturbridge, Wales, Spencer, and Sutton). All these towns are working towards certain minimum standards. Federal funding has been received for contact tracing, which has funded full time nurses for many of these groups. Public health nurses can surveillance on diseases beyond covid like Monkeypox and Tuberculosis. The biggest barrier to public health right now is capacity. DPH response to the capacity issue includes regional training hubs. CMRPC being one of these 10 regional organizations in which would hire 4 regional trainers charged with helping the towns in their service region build up their skills.
- **Digital Equity:** Requests for proposals from the Mass Broadband Institute were submitted by CMRPC to get pre-qualified as a vendor. There is federal funding available to fund digital access. This includes wires in the ground, internet



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affordability, digital literacy, device affordability, and reliability. Towns should be able to apply for a digital equity plan within a month. The process will look similar to MVP plans, in which towns select a vendor, complete data collection, identify action items, and a workshop.

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

Business Manager Diane Shea presented warrant #23-04 for payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of October 2022 totaling \$39,647.71.

Mr. Williams made a motion to approve warrant #23-04 for the month of October 2022 in the amount of \$39,647.71 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.

Mr. Drobner inquired about the MMA account. Ms. Pierce stated that the funds have been being transferred from Fidelity to the MMDT account. The account is held through the state as far as being reactive to the stock market. The Fidelity MMA account is used to cover payroll and monthly expenses. This is averaged out and the excess goes into the MMDT account. Mr. Drobner mentioned that it might be worth having a conversation about how to better utilize some of the better return rates on these accounts. Ms. Pierce explained that this Fidelity account was the bank and not the investment firm. There is a list of banks that CMRPC can use to make investments in and use through the state that they must abide by. Ms. Pierce stated that MMDT through the years has been very reactive in a positive way, last month the interest was over \$2,000. Ms. Shea clarified that MMA account is inflated due to the health grants drawing down money, as well as the quarterly health insurance payments.

As a part of the ongoing discussion regarding the ICMA-Mission Square Retirement Account, Ms. Pierce reached out to the state retirement benefit trust fund regarding their PRIM account services. Auditor Rolland was also asked his opinion on the PRIM account in which he supported the transfer of funds out of Mission Square. Ms. Pierce stated that most of the major retirement boards throughout the state have their funds invested in this PRIM account. Ms. Pierce explained that this would be a safe investment and there would be less fees.

Mr. Wheeler made a motion to endorse this transfer of funds and decision that has been made by Ms. Pierce. Mr. Hassinger seconded this motion. **Motion approved.**



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Mr. Rajeshkumar questioned the amount of money that would be transferred. Ms. Pierce explained that this amount fluctuates depending on what's going on in the market, but as of the end of September there was \$776,125.31 in the account. Ms. Pierce anticipates this transfer will not be completed until the end of November due to the setting up of the PRIM account.

**6. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**

- a.* **Transportation** – Nothing to report.
- b.* **Legislative Affairs** – The Legislative Affairs Committee met in October to discuss the legislative priorities. The Legislative Affairs Forum is going to take place on December 6, 2022. It is undetermined if this meeting will be in person. The topic of the forum will be trails in Central Massachusetts.
- c.* **Physical Development Committee**— The next meeting will be held on November 17<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will cover the redistribution of some of the DLTA money to balance out some of the projects so there is no excess and the full amount of money is spent. Ms. Pierce shared that the Lieutenant Governor announced that there was going to be an additional \$2 Million that will be distributed through the DLTA to the RPA's for the use of helping communities with federal grant applications. More to come on this.
- d.* **Rural Caucus** – Rural Caucus will be meeting on November 29<sup>th</sup>. The focus of the meeting will be around infrastructure. This will give participants a chance to share the specific challenges and successes communities have had.
- e.* **Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – The monthly meeting was held in October. Nothing new to report. However, there will be a meeting to discuss the number of members that serve on the board. There has been an issue with obtaining a quorum for the past 3-4 meetings. There are currently 27 members, which is a 14-member quorum. Ms. Pierce stated that a list will be shared with the Chairmen for appointment in the near future.
- f.* **Sub-regional**- Mr. Wheeler explained that a meeting was set up with a representative from Main Streets America. Massachusetts is now one of nine states in the U.S. that doesn't have a presence, there are communities within the state that participate but there is no state sponsorship. The representative discussed what the program offers to communities and some of their objectives. It seems that there is no interest from the state for membership, but they are eager to hear what communities think. Ms. Settles mentioned that this could be a Worcester-County main street program. Mr. Hassinger stated that the last time the Town of Grafton completed a Master Plan, their town planner had left, and the same thing is now happening again. Mr. Drobner discussed the



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Town of Boylston selectmen had put out RFP proposal for a combined fire/police/senior center. There was 1 reply from a design firm, which completed a study. Boylston is looking to use town owned land for this project.

- 7. New Business:** Ms. Pierce asked the committee about upcoming meeting dates. The November meeting falls on Thanksgiving and the December meeting falls on December 29<sup>th</sup>. The November meeting will be moved to December 1<sup>st</sup> and the date of the December meeting will be decided at the next meeting.

Mr. Rajeshkumar stated that he feels the meetings are losing touch with being hybrid. Perhaps the meetings could be moved back to in person with the potential hybrid option if the committee would be in agreeance with that. More discussions to be had on this.

- 8. Vote to Enter Executive Session (M.G.L. Chapter 30A, Section 21A) for the following reason:**

- a. To consider the purchase, exchange, lease or value of real property if the chair declares that an open meeting may have a detrimental effect on the negotiating position of the public body.

Mr. Lies made a motion to enter in executive session, Mr. Howland seconded the motion.  
**Motion approved.**

- 9. Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Lies, seconded by Mr. Williams the committee unanimously voted by roll call to adjourn at 8:56 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous.**  
**Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Stephanie McKinney, CMRPC.