



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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 www.cmrpc.org

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

December 5, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Hybrid – In Person and Zoom Virtual Meeting

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

- **Call to Order:**

Mr. Drobner called the December 1, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:01 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

- **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.**

- **December Meeting Date:**

December 29, 2022 was agreed upon as the next meeting date. The matter of a completely remote meeting in favor of the hybrid format was discussed to accommodate Executive Committee members and staff who would otherwise need to come into the office during inclement or dangerous weather. A proposal was made to commit to full remote during the winter months, but it was agreed that the committee’s vote would wait until Mr.



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Rajeshkumar, who's prior wish was for the meetings to resume being fully in-person, is present.

- **Public Comment:**

None.

- **Executive Director's Report:**

- **a. Staffing and Administration**

- Ms. Pierce made a reminder that the next meeting will have votes on the assessment schedule, the recommendations of which will be presented to the full commission at the January quarterly meeting.
- Ms. Pierce announced several staffing changes which included a promotion, hirings and one staff member leaving the agency. The departing staff member was Faye Rhault, an Associate planner in Transportation, who had her last day on 11/8. The hires were: Sam Carter and Sarah Plutnicki as Assistant planners in RCCP; Elena Ion as a Principal Planner in RCCP; Matthew Deiulis as an Administration Assistant. Baseemah Shakir was promoted to Business Coordinator. There are several interviews currently being conducted and more job openings will be advertised soon.
- The occupancy agreement was signed with MassDot in their District 3 Office on Plantation Street in Worcester with a planned move of mid-January or early-February. Large purchases on current and future warrants will reflect technology needs in the new office.
- Ms. Pierced announced that the Western Massachusetts Rail Commission-which followed the east to west rail study-has been established in recent months. Their first meeting was on November 14th and there will be a minimum of six. More information will be provided at future meetings.
- Ms. Pierce voiced a request for a Personnel Board Meeting to review the salary scale-particularly to restore the position of program manager, and to discuss succession planning. Subsequently, a vote was proposed by Mr. Drobner for those who are a part of the Personnel Board if they wished to continue to be members. A tentative date of January 19, 2023 at 7 pm was agreed on for a Personnel Board Meeting.



b. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.

- Ms. Krishnan reported there was discussions during the Infrastructure Summit Meetings centered around a need for pedestrian and bicycle trails and general transportation.
- Ms. Krishnan reported that a Mid-Level Expedience Planner hiring ad will be sent out soon.
- Kevin Krasnecky and Richard Rydant from transportation are working on finding projects to bring into the Metropolitan Planning Organization for presentations in January regarding possible Transportation Improvement Program Funding. Ms. Krishnan will give an update to the committee when they finalize the list.
- Staff is rounding off the stake holder meetings for the Long-Range Transportation Plan. Next month the results of the community outreach should be put together and ready to have staff members present their findings at the next executive committee meeting.
- Current routine community outreach to report includes having met with Berlin to speak about the Route 62 Corridor Profile and a request from Northborough for a traffic count.
- Ms. Krishnan reports that the Regional Planning Agencies they are looking at the formula MassDOT uses to fund the planning piece of each part of the MPO, major funding. There was preliminary work done prior to the 2020 census and the COVID-19 Pandemic, but now that the population data is updated-and with Ms. Krishnan as chair- the committee are working to update the formula for Financial Year 2024, with an estimated completion date in March or April.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Deputy Director Trish Settles gave the report and brought in Kerrie Salwa and Sarah O'Brien to give greater context.

- Ms. Settles reported that RCCP's submitted a proposal to the Town of Spencer for work on their master plan, totaled almost \$130,000, and will be reviewed by their select board on December 5th.
- CMRPC is considering several EDA projects, which Kerrie Salwa has been working on



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- FEMA has extended their deadline for towns to submit their plans for hazard mitigation, RCCP is encouraging towns to file applications on their own and RCCP will be available for assistance. Municipalities would then administer it and CMRPC would contract with the given town.
 - Sarah Plutnicki has already assisted in 4 of these applications for Brookfield, Berlin, West Boylston, and Millbury. Auburn already submitted their application, but because of funds are from FEMA, procurement is necessary for RCCP assistance. All other towns are expected to procure services and CMRPC will respond.
 - Ms. Settles reported that MVP action grants were released, ideas were generated at a RCCP meeting and they will be further formulated with town committees. Issues mostly concern tree assessment, storm water and LID bylaws.
 - Ms. Settles reported a pending small piece of a contract with MAPC to assist with the development of a State-Wide Trails Map. The soon-to-be released trail hub was presented. The compiled data is to be shown at the Legislative Affairs Breakfast on December 5th.
 - RCCP has begun internal brainstorming District Local Tech Assistance Projects
 - Transportation and RCCP met with Community Health Needs Assessment District 9 (Quabbin Region). We will develop a proposal to perform a similar project that we did for the Quaboag Connector.
 - RCCP and Transportation staff met to have preliminary discussion on how to move forward to update the 2103 Evacuation Plan. MRPC was invited but was not able to attend.
 - RCCP is in the final stages for interviews of CDBG coordinator to work with Andrew Lowe and Chris Dunphy.
 - A Staff Position will soon be announced to hire housing coordinator to help towns with housing issues and assist CMRPC with other housing issues.

Principal Planner Kerrie Salwa gave an overview for Economic development projects.

- Ms. Salwa reported RCCP has received ~\$300,000 for the development of a 5-year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). They have been gathering input from a variety of community members to build economic resilience across the area. In doing so, they drafted a survey and designed and launched an engagement plan. The kickoff plan is scheduled for December 15th. They have already interviewed stakeholders and they will continue until September 2023. This will be a



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part of the Imagine 2050 plan. The team will have more information available in March and plan to present it at the CMRPC quarterly meeting.

- RCCP is currently in the drafting stage of the EEA funded infrastructure plan, where they have partnered with the Transportation team to host in-person subregional infrastructure and transportation summits. They were hosted in Dudley, Westborough, Grafton, North Brookfield, and West Boylston. They talked about topics like transit, bike paths, trails, accidents, crash sites, congestion, traffic patterns, traffic run off, wells, PFAs contamination, sewer, natural gas, the electric grid, supply chain, culverts, funding solutions, intermunicipal agreements and disagreements, cyber security, charging station, communication, Wi-Fi and broadband service. Ultimately, a total of 23 towns responded to the survey, which will lead to a great plan that will be incorporated into the Imagine 2050 plan.
- Ms. Salwa reviewed the Digital Equity Plan Project, where CMRPC had been selected as a pre-qualified consultant in the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's Municipality Broadband Digital Equity Program. This pertains to how, on a municipal level, cell phone coverage affects the residents in communities that cannot access fast and affordable internet. CMRPC will perform charrettes to engage the public.
- Ms. Salwa reviewed the Warren Economic Development Plan, which is focused on Warren development, particularly the West Warren project in preparation of the Wright's Mill master plan, which is funded by the EDA.
- Phase 2 of the Berlin Village Plan has commenced and is nearing completion. This is in conjunction with their housing production plan and ties into the Route 62 corridor study. RCCP is hosting a meeting in January to get public feedback.
- The Mendon and Upton Sign and Façade Program was approved by Physical Development. The Project is based in Upton and Mendon, particularly Route 16 in Mendon and the Village Center in Upton. Furthermore, this section of funding is based on Regional Economic Development Organization funding.
- Ms. Salwa will soon be heading to Hopedale and Rutland, working with economic development committees to set up strategies to move forward.
- Ms. Settles added that Charlton and Paxton started EDCs, which included Local Rapid Recovery programming out of the Covid pandemic that MOBD (Massachusetts Office on Business Development) made available.
- Ms. Hirsh requested clarification on the use of EDC and stakeholder interviews, to which Ms. Salwa confirmed the acronym and the types of leaders they were interested in interviewing



d. Imagine 2050 Visioning Session:

Sarah O'Brien presented the drafted vision Statement and preliminary goals for the Imagine 2050 plan. She reviewed the outreach and community engagement that has happened to-date.

- Ms. O'Brien reported that in the past year they have created this vision statement and preliminary goal statements for Imagine 2050. They conducted over 20 visioning sessions, 30 stakeholders and 20 tabling events promoting their survey which generated 650 responses and over 1000 public comments, all of which was compiled to make the vision statement and preliminary goal statements. After the resident data was collected, three workshops were hosted, one with the Imagine 2050 steering committee, the next with the technical advisory committee and the final one with the Commission at the November quarterly meeting.
 - Ms. O'Brien stated that following this meeting they will be meeting with the Steering Committee for Imagine 2050 and the Technical Advisory Committee for final approval, but Ms. O'Brien it opened back it up to the committee for concurrence, who then deliberated the use of the word "Breathtaking" in the mission statement. Specifically, what "Breathtaking" is meant to act as an adjective to.
 - The committee came to a partial agreement that "Breathtaking", being vague and imaginatively invoking, was a good choice for a vision statement of Central Massachusetts' varied and beautiful environments. It was also agreed that they would revisit this if members felt it was needed.
- **Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Business Manager Diane Shea presented Warrant #23-05 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of November 2022 totaling \$82,852.43.
 - Ms. Hirsh mad a motion to approve Warrant #23-05 for the month of November 2022 in the amount of \$82,852.43, seconded by Mr. Williams. Vice Chairperson Drobner inquired about equipment purchased in the total of \$18,115.81, which Ms. Shea confirmed was for the purchase of 11 laptop computers needed for the transportation department's move to their new facility. **'Motion approved.'**

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



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- Mr. Drobner inquired if there will be a jump in expenditure for the new transportation office. Ms. Pierce did not foresee a jump in expenditure but would have a better idea in the following weeks.

 - **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
 - a. Transportation** – Transportation- Mr. Hassinger stated that the Transportation Commission met earlier in the evening and had heard reports on work in progress, voted to recommend an amendment to purchase another bus-the money for which was already available in their budget.
 - b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Martin noted that the Legislative Affairs Forum Breakfast on Trails would take place in person on Tuesday, December 6, 2022 in Westborough.
 - c. Physical Development Committee—**
 - Mr. Wheeler discussed the Physical Development Committee’s previous meeting, where they looked to redistribute funds to ensure they were expending all available funds.
 - Mr. Wheeler discussed DLTA funded projects and Ms. Settles’ presentation-which she gave at their last meeting and covered the progress of the last ten years. He hopes that the report can be used for future projects. More funding is expected to come, and applications will be sent around soon.
 - Mr. Wheeler, Ms. Settles and Ms. Pierce then detailed the stipulations of both DLTA- with regards to grant writing- and additional funding for Division of Local Services (DLS)-of which approximately \$160,000 will be available to enable CMRPC to either submit applications on behalf of our municipalities or assist in the process for federal funding opportunities over 18 months.
 - Ms. Hirsh had a question about how they would inform the public about the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA). Ms. Settles explained two solicitations would need to be sent each year and CMRPC would send something sent out in early January-which will be reviewed by Physical Development Committee in mid to late January. Ms. Pierce added that there are usually priorities listed in the grant and communities are informed of this in the solicitation.
 - d. Rural Caucus** – Rural Caucus met in late November, Ms. Salwa and Ms. Krishnan came in and spoke about infrastructure plan.
 - e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce explained in their monthly meeting, which happened earlier in the afternoon, that



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everyone was brought up to date on the CEDS project. There were no current proposals. The Quarterly Board meeting in December will coincide with the CEDS launch.

f. **Sub-regional-** Mr. Howland explained that Shrewsbury received its 5th 40B housing development proposal in the last 5 months, which totals about 1,100 units. Capacity is available for projects, but 4 pump stations are not meeting the necessary level of functionality and need to be updated.

- **New Business:**

None

- **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Howland the committee unanimously voted by roll call to adjourn at 8:39 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deuilis, CMRPC.