



1 Mercantile Street – Suite 520
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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 December 29, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
 Zoom Virtual Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston	North: Douglas Martin, Barre
Vice Chair: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	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	
Staff:	Not in Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Treasurer: Otto Lies, Holden
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	Central City: Vaske Gjino, Worcester
Dominique Dutremble, Principal Planner	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Diane Shea, Business Manager	
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	

- **Call to Order:**
 Mr. Rajeshkumar called the December 29, 2022, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:01 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.
- **Approval of Minutes** from the December 1, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting. Mr. Wheeler made a motion, seconded by Mr. Williams- this was then amended by Mr. Wheeler to include corrections made by Ms. Hirsh and this motion was seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion approved.**
- **Vote to recommend the Fiscal Year 2024 Community Assessment Schedule at the January 12, 2023 Quarterly Commission Meeting:**
 Ms. Pierce presented the Assessment Schedule-which was formulated by Federally Certified Census Population based on a per-capita rate which is multiplied by a communities' population.. Ms. Pierce noted that per capita wasn't changed last year because of the significant increase in population, which increased most local assessments in excess of 2.5%. However, for this year Ms. Pierce recommended an increase of 2.5%. The total assessments



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will be \$186,237.76 after the 2.5% (\$4,541.68) increase.

Motion made by Mr. Hassinger and seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion Approved**

- **Future Meeting Orientation:**

Given the continuous presence and harmful nature of the COVID-19 virus, Chairman Rajeshkumar opened deliberation over meeting orientation. It was agreed that the quarterly meeting would be remote and future meetings will continue to be hybrid- given that state legislature extends the ability to do so beyond March. The annual was agreed to be planned as hybrid as well, but in the case that COVID-19 is a danger, the executive director will change the meeting to remote and reserve the chosen venue for the next year.

- **Public Comment:**

None.

- **Executive Director's Report:**

- **a. Staffing and Administration**

- Ms. Pierce announced that an offer made to a Community Development Block Grant Planner was made, but the applicant accepted another job. An advertisement for this position will be reposted soon. Additionally, Ms. Pierce reported that CMRPC will be employing another high school intern through the Worcester Community Action Council (WCAC). WCAC will be the employer. The committee later discussed the applicant's vetting process, payment arrangement and the results of past interns and the expectations of the new hire.
 - Ms. Pierce updated the committee with CMRPC's new contracts and grants. Beginning with a *Community Compact Efficiency and Regionalization Grant* for a Regional Housing Coordinator in the amount of \$107,250. Furthermore, 6 communities expressed interest in sharing the Regional Housing Coordinator as part of the grant. As indicated in the grant application, CMRPC has agreed to pay for the benefits and the difference between the fringe rate and indirect rate during the term of this grant. In the following years, CMRPC will contract with individual communities to provide the Housing Coordinator's services on a contractual basis. We anticipate all salary, indirect and benefit expenses to be paid for by participating communities. If the Coordinator has excess capacity, the employee can work on



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- other grant programs, housing production and master plans, paid with CMRPC funds.
- Ms. Pierce announced a new partnership with *Health Equity Partnership of North Central Mass (CHNA9)* \$40,000 contract that has been signed for a *Transit Feasibility Study*.
 - Ms. Pierce informed the committee that Transportation team has been moving ahead with purchasing technology for their impending move to the CMTC location and continue to make other technological arrangements.
- b. Transportation:**
- Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan gave the report.
- Ms. Krishnan expanded on Ms. Pierce’s reporting with the Community Health Network of North Central Massachusetts (CHNA9) Transit contract. Ms. Krishnan noted that CHNA9 was intrigued by CMRPC’s work with Quaboag Valley CDC to work to establish the Quaboag Connector and would like to implement something similar in the communities in Quabbin Region. RCCP and Transportation will work collaboratively on the contract. Ms. Krishnan added that because of the conversations with North County, she has recognized a need to coordinate among the existing transit services as many of the transit providers in the rural western part of the region are unaware or unfamiliar that WRTA has a contract with the non-profit service *SCM Elder Bus* and several local Councils on Aging to provide service, which can be augmented in a way that would extend this service to other areas. Ms. Krishnan will give an update to the committee once the meeting date is established.
 - Ms. Krishnan noted that she and other transportation staff had met with Quaboag Valley CDC to assess the fixed route service on Route 9. She reported that there isn’t much ridership, but their ‘*Dial a Ride*’ system is doing well. Moreover, the conversations have been focused on how to coordinate existing transit services and strengthen their relationship.
 - Ms. Krishnan reported that the Microprojects applications are out for communities and other transportation stakeholders to apply for small transportation project funding. The eligible categories are only capital funding. Ms. Krishnan encouraged the committee members to discuss this application with their communities. Staff is happy to assist with any questions pertaining to the application and project eligibility. Applications are due January 20th.



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- Ms. Krishnan added to Ms. Pierce's brief reporting on Transportation's move to the *MassDOT* building, saying that Matt Franz has spoken with their IT provider and in-house staff to ensure a seamless transition. Phone systems and badges are being finalized. The move date is expected to be in beginning of February.
- Ms. Krishnan reported on the recent Town managers and DPW meeting, which had a great hybrid turn out. At the meeting new programs for communities were presented-which included *Complete Streets; Shared Streets; Bottleneck Reduction; Municipal Paving* and *Winter Recovery Assistance Programs*. *MassDOT*, who presented the programs, provided a PowerPoint-which Ms. Krishnan offered to provide to any communities that may not have received it.
- Ms. Krishnan recounted some smaller projects and happenings. This included a meeting with Princeton about possible TIP work; Northborough made a request for some turning movement counts; staff is working on closing out a Title VI update that is due at the end of the calendar year.
- Ms. Krishnan reported that at the most recent MPO meeting the staff presented the public outreach analysis that was compiled from all the subregional meetings and surveys. The team will be able to present this at the next Executive Committee meeting.

Ms. Krishnan closed with a report on a meeting with Shrewsbury for the redevelopment of the gravel site. Noting, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA) is streamlining their processes to ensure that developers and coordinating with planning and transit agencies to coordinate site impacts and address any concerns prior to construction rather than after. Furthermore, she said development in Shrewsbury happens to be a distribution center, which prompted Ms. Krishnan to discuss the placement of distribution centers, traffic and delivery route concerns on both local community and statewide level.

c. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning:

Principal Planner Dominique Dutremble gave the report.

- Ms. Dutremble began her report by reiterating staff hirings that Ms. Pierce mentioned in the December 1, 2022 meeting- which are Elena Ion as a Principal Planner, Sarah Plutnicki and Sam Carter as Assistant Planners in RCCP. Ms. Dutremble added that Will Talbot will remain as an intern in the '23 spring semester.
- Ms. Dutremble announced that District Local Technical Assistance solicitation is out-although they are waiting on the contract it should. Furthermore, the first round-



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project review is slated for January 19th and the second-round review is projected to be held in March.

- Ms. Dutremble reported on the different RCCP teams work-which included; Municipal Vulnerability Planning for East Brookfield, Oxford and Holland; Hazard Mitigation Planning for Holland; Statewide trail maps led by MAPC and FRCOG; Open Space and Recreation plans for Dudley, Warren and Oxford; Green Communities thriving as usual-they are currently working on competitive grant applications and reports with several communities; EEA Build-out Analysis with Grafton, Douglas and Sutton- which is done through funding from the Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, and where RCCP is conducting a traditional buildout analysis and a scenario-based buildout analysis; Complete Streets with Grafton; seeking an extension for Brownfields; having recently completed Hazard Mitigation and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness plans for Hopedale and Warren; continuing to work with the South Central Chamber Charlton and Blackstone shared public health and contact tracing for Covid; working on fuel procurements-as usual; ADA plans for Millbury and Holden will start soon; Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2023 is in progress and the annual report was submitted; the Berlin Village phase 2 is underway; Housing Production plans are being worked on for Princeton, Upton, Mendon and Berlin; Mendon and Upton Façade improvement project is funded and underway; wrapping up zoning rewrites for West Brookfield; and we have provided planning assistance in Upton.
- Ms. Dutremble updated the committee with projects in RCCP's pipeline- which included; an Athol Community Block grant- our sister agency to the north requested our assistance with that; evacuation and critical infrastructure assessments projects with homeland security; MBTA Community Contracts with Mass Housing Partnership-working to help communities find what they need to meet MBTA community housing requirements; the state has opened up funding for Digital Equity planning and projects are bound to follow.
- Ms. Dutremble detailed the master plan work that is both currently being done at CMRPC. The completed work included having wrapped up the Hopedale Masterplan in October, Boylston's in November-both of which turned out spectacular and the communities are pleased- and recently phase one of Grafton's Master Plan-which focused on data collection and was received so well by the town that will contract with CMRPC on the remaining phases. Current work includes projecting to have



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Princeton phase one and all of Rutland and Mendon Master Plans completed in the first quarter of 2023; being halfway through phase one for Barre's Master Plan- RCCP has done the preparatory work and have a community survey out with workshops to follow; taking the initial steps to begin the newly awarded Spencer Master Plan which will begin in mid-January.

- Ms. Dutremble closed her remarks by detailing RCCP's desire to shift from phased Master Plans through the *Community One Stop Funding*: with the case of Spencer RCCP and the town were able to tap into the *Community One Stop Funding* and fund the entire Master Plan, whereas in the past it would take several rounds of funding through each of the many phases to fund a master plan.
- **Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:**
Business Manager Diane Shea presented Warrant #23-06 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of December 2022 totaling \$87,008.33.
 - Mr. Williams made a motion to approve Warrant #23-05 for the month of November 2022 in the amount of \$87,008.33, seconded by Ms. Hirsh. **Motion approved.**

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

- Ms. Shea made a note on the federal item in cash receipts which, with a total of \$367.27, was the first drawdown on the EDA grant.
- **Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:**
 - a. Transportation** – Transportation- Mr. Hassinger reported that the committee did not meet this month and have nothing new to report.
 - b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Martin recalled the recent Legislative Affairs Forum Breakfast on Trails in Central Massachusetts, which took place on December 6, 2022 in Westborough at the Fisheries and Wildlife building. Mr. Martin reported that the experience was successful and informative: there was great attendance and a lot of engagement and enthusiasm to work on trails and get various trails connected throughout Central Massachusetts. Presentations were made by *MassDOT*, *Rails to Trails*, the *Mass Bike Group* and the *Blackstone Heritage Corridor*.
 - c. Physical Development Committee**—
 - Mr. Wheeler added to Ms. Dutremble's remarks on the DLTA solicitation being sent, saying that CMRPC has been awarded around \$265,000 and there is additional \$170,000 funding available this year which allows the commission staff to assist



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towns with the application for federal grants- which is expected to be expended over the next 18 months. Mr. Wheeler concluded by restating and expanding the deadlines, which were January 12th for the first round, March 2nd for the second round and the Committee will meet on January 19th to discuss the first round and March 9th to discuss the second.

- Ms. Pierce commented on Mr. Wheelers report, adding that the Department of Housing & Community Development did send out a draft for the contract, the final copy to sign should be sent the next week and the funds should hopefully be in the bank by the end of January.

d. Rural Caucus– No new news.

- e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization** – Ms. Pierce reported that at the last quarterly meeting they launched the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs), which will ideally be completed in June so that it can be approved by September. Ms. Pierce also reiterated to the committee that CMRPC was given Economic Development District designation- which was a major priority for the prior CEDs.

f. Sub-regional–

- Mr. Rajeshkumar reported on West Boylston and their 3 40B projects.
 - Ms. Pierce added that there is a traveling Smithsonian exhibit, “*Crossroads: Changes in Rural America*”, being held at the Rutland public library for free until mid-January.
- **New Business: None**
 - **Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Williams to adjourn at 8:24 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew DeJulis, CMRPC.