



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

CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
 October 26, 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	Southeast: Walter Baker, Sutton
Treasurer: Daniel Schur, Westborough	West: Jeffrey Howland, New Braintree
Asst. Treas.: C. Richard Williams, Rutland	Southwest: Andrew Coles, Auburn
Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester
Staff:	Not In Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	Asst. Clerk: Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough
Sujatha Krishnan, Dep. Dir., Transportation	Guests:
Matthew Deiulis, Administrative Assistant	Andrew Goals, Town Administrator for the Town of Charlton Legislative Affairs Chair
Connor Robichaud, Regional Projects Manager	
Anthony Senesi, Community Outreach Liaison	

1. Call to Order:

Chairperson Drobner called the October 26, 2023 Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:04 pm with a roll call to establish a quorum.

2. Approval of Minutes-

Mr. Williams made a motion to accept the minutes of the September 28, 2023 Executive Committee Meeting, seconded by Mr. Howland. **Motion Approved.**

3. Public Comment:

None.

4. Review Process and Determine Protocol to Requisition Commission’s Support of Proposed Legislation:

Due to the brief unavailability of Andrew Golas, the Chair of CMRPC’s Legislative Affairs Sub-Committee and the Town Administrator for the Town of Charlton, this item was initially tabled to be revisited upon the re-availability of Mr. Golas. This item was revisited



following the 'Update Current Salary Scale Schedule to Include Human Resources Positions' item under the Executive Director's Staffing and Administrative report.

- Connor Robichaud, CMRPC Regional Projects Manager, recalled the previous discussions pertaining to the *Coalition for Safe Drinking Water's* request for CMRPC to be co-sponsors of a piece of legislation- which is now only a request for a letter of support to be written for said legislation. Mr. Robichaud also discussed the Legislative Affairs Sub-Committee's role in giving approval and making recommendations to the Executive Committee as well as the roadblocks such a process can create when regularly scheduled meetings clash with rotating grant or project application cut-off dates.
- Mr. Robichaud transitioned from discussing said roadblocks into presenting the fourth (4th) paragraph (/paragraph four (4)) of the '*CMRPC Legislative Affairs Sub-Committee Charge*', which contains the language that restricts CMRPC staff and the Executive Committee from(,respectively) pursuing and authorizing the pursuit of projects and funding opportunities(, respectively).
- The idea of the full Commission approving large scale decisions was once again proposed and discussed, which prompted Chairperson Drobner to ask for a formal consensus on the matter of adjusting the aforementioned paragraph to officially include the full commission in the decision process. Mr. Golas, in turn, suggested that the Legislative Affairs Committee review their *Charge Document* and offer perspective and insight for the Executive Committee to discuss further. Mr. Golas' suggestion then led Ms. Pierce to recommend that- following the fulfillment of Mr. Golas' suggested course of action- the item be ultimately presented to the full Commission at the January Quarterly Meeting.

5. Executive Director's Report:

I. Staffing and Administration:

- Ms. Pierce began her brief report with a review of the recent staffing changes, which included the hiring of one (1) intern- Ben Spencer, who began their employment in early October- and one (1) full time employee- Jordan Hollinger, who will begin the Monday following this meeting.
- Chairperson Drobner inquired if there were any outstanding openings that need to be filled and Ms. Pierce noted that there is still a vacancy in the Finance/Business Manager position.

a) Update Current Salary Schedule to Include Human Resources Positions:



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

- Following Ms. Pierce’s short staffing and administration report, she began discussing the growth CMRPC has sustained over the last few months and compared the previous organizational structure with the current iteration. This segued into a presentation of a proposed pay scale revision that would include three new positions: finance manager, human resource manager and human resource coordinator. Ms. Pierce explained the reasons and research behind the changes to the schedule, desired qualifications for each position, which positions are prioritized and the expected timeline that these openings will be advertised.
- The Committee debated the pay range for the newly created positions, the purpose of having two employees that focus on human resources and the financial impact creating these positions will have on the indirect rate/budget/expenses. Ms. Pierce provided comprehensive explanations for each topic.
- Upon request of Mr. Quiora, Ms. Pierce explained the specific tasks that the newly created positions would be responsible for as well as the status of regulatory harassment training requirements.
- Mr. Quiora made a motion to approve the updates to the current salary schedule to include human resources positions, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion Approved with one (1) vote against.**

II. Transportation:

Deputy Director Sujatha Krishnan provided the Transportation report.

- Ms. Krishnan began her report by reviewing the conversation centered around the current ‘*migrant crisis*’. Her reporting encompassed the status of the street/corridor crossing issues on Route 146 and 20 and the surrounding communities’, WRTA’s and MassDOT’s involvement with finding permanent funding solutions as well as the current conversations being held with the state to also identify solutions. Ms. Krishnan carried this topic into her review of the recent town administrators’ meeting, where the plans to address schools and education for the migrants were discussed in addition to general conversations pertaining to transportation.
- Ms. Krishnan then reported on the Worcester Chamber of Commerce annual ‘*Game-Changers*’ meeting, which was centered around rails and transportation-also, for which she was a moderator for the session on freight rails. She noted, that conversations for this session revolved around the recently discontinued



'heart to hub' train that ran from Worcester to Boston Landing and the MBTA's action plan for addressing a variety of relevant issues.

- Ms. Krishnan pivoted to reviewing the Lieutenant Governor, Kim Driscoll's *'listening sessions'* for which this was the sixth (6th) of seven (7) sessions, with this one focusing on Central Massachusetts as a whole. Ms. Krishnan noted, that between ten (10) and eleven (11) communities were in attendance and that she was able to discuss the migrant population issue directly with the Lieutenant Governor.
- Ms. Krishnan closed her report with a brief review of the grant work staff are conducting and the meetings being held in relation to said work. Most notably, Ms. Krishnan recalled the current efforts surrounding the *'E-Bike Pilot Program'*, which included meetings with *Mass Bike*- whom, through which the program is funded- about the success of the current system and the useful data being collected. Moreover, Ms. Krishnan briefly discussed the community initiatives being made to address culvert related issues and CMRPC's role in assisting towns with assessments and training them to perform said assessments independently.

III. Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (RCCP):

Deputy Director Trish Settles provided the RCCP report.

- Ms. Settles began her report by noting several recent meetings and conferences, which included: the Southern New England APA Conference in New Haven, CT- which was attended by several CMRPC staff; the joint Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and Division of Local Services (DLS) conference at Holy Cross College; the collaborative webinar between the Central, Eastern and Western Massachusetts Historical Commissions to discuss cemetery preservation; the Town Managers and Administrators meeting, which, as Ms. Krishnan previously noted, had a focus on the migrant crisis and transportation; the Milltown Caucus, which was a CMRPC event in collaboration with the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC). Moreover, Ms. Settles also announced upcoming events, which included: the AARP summit in Worcester, which will be held in the week following this Executive Committee Meeting; staff are preparing to host a series of Climate Pollution Reduction Grant workshops beginning in the middle of November. These will be announced as they become scheduled.



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

- Ms. Settles noted the opening of the Healey-Driscoll Administration’s new office of Federal Funding and Infrastructure (FFIO), which will be regulating the release of funds available through the new IRA and ARPA programs that the Biden Administration have implemented. Ms. Settles noted that CMRPC, along with other RPAs, will be utilizing District Local Technical Assistance Augmented funds (DLTA-A) to assist the FFIO with funding prioritization and allocation.
- Ms. Settles announced that CMRPC were able to tally up a very significant dollar amount in project grants through the Community One Stop funds. Additionally, Ms. Settles noted that the Imagine 2050 plan received supplemental funding.
- Ms. Settles closed her section by briefly mentioning a few projects and endeavors that staff are pursuing with the aforementioned funding, which notably included conversations with the Quaboag Valley Food Policy Council to perform a food assessment. Additionally, Ms. Settles noted that they are nearly fully staffed. However, an applicant rescinded their offer letter- but an advertisement for the opening will go out soon.

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

Executive Director Janet Pierce presented Warrant #24-04 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of October 2023 totaling \$163,178.85.

- Mr. Hassinger made a motion to approve Warrant #24-04 for the month of October 2023 in the amount of \$165,178.85, seconded by Mr. Williams. **Motion approved.**

The report of cash and the cash flow chart were presented to committee members, showing an ending general fund balance as of September 2023, of \$2,771,882.07.

- Ms. Pierce also reported that the CMRPC trust fund, which pays for future and current health insurance premiums for CMRPC retirees, has an ending balance of \$855,704.39 for the first quarter of FY24. This amount is not included in the ending cash balance of the general fund.

7. Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- a. Transportation** – Mr. Hassinger recalled the previous T-Committee meeting, which was held prior to the Executive Committee meeting. He noted that they discussed an Urbanized Area Boundaries Update, which was ultimately recommended to the CMMPO. Ms. Krishnan expanded upon this report, explaining the importance, purpose, process for and effects of the ultimate adoption of the Urbanized Area Boundaries update.



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

- b. Legislative Affairs** – Mr. Quiroa noted that there was a meeting in September, where the December forum topic was decided to be *Solid Waste and Recycling*. Furthermore, Mr. Quiroa noted that the forum will be an in-person event and will mirror the *housing* forum from this past summer.
 - c. Physical Development Committee**- Mr. Wheeler reported that, at their next meeting on November 2nd, the Physical Development Committee will be strategizing how the remaining DLTA-A funds can be fully expended as well as having conversations centered around the next round of funding and how CMRPC optimize the submission window for CMRPC communities' comments and proposals.
 - d. Rural Caucus**– Ms. Settles reported that the next Rural Caucus meeting will be held early in November and will focus on the migrant crisis- particularly, housing and ensuring they are cared for- and transportation.
 - e. Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization – No news to report.**
 - f. Sub-regional**–
 - Mr. Williams noted that Rutland hired a new town planner.
 - Upon Mr. Wheeler's request, Ms. Settles and Mr. Sensei recalled the One Stop Funding awardees in broader detail than Ms. Settles previously noted.
- 8. New Business:**
- Ms. Pierce asked the board if their preference for how they would receive the invitation to the Executive Committee Meetings, which prompted a short discussion about the logistics of alternative methods. It was agreed that Ms. Pierce, Mr. Howland, Mr. Hassinger and Mr. Schur would participate in a trial run of event invitations and the rest of the committee will continue to receive the invitation as an email with the meeting materials attached.
- 9. Adjournment:** Upon a motion by Mr. Williams, seconded by Mr. Howland to adjourn at 8:36 pm. **The vote by roll call was unanimous. Motion approved.**

Respectfully submitted by Matthew Deuilis, CMRPC.