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**Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC) Q2 Meeting
150 Wakefield Street, Conference Room 1A
Rochester, NH 03867**

**FINAL Meeting Minutes
December 6, 2018**

SRPC Members Present: Chair Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Leslie Schwartz (Durham), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Lisa Henderson (Newmarket), David Landry (Dover), Donald Hamann (Rochester), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Gary Anderson (Nottingham), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Michael Rollo (Rollinsford), Mark Avery (Madbury), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Wayne Burton (Durham), Evan McDougal (Wakefield), Secretary/Treasurer Tom Crosby (Madbury), Wes Merritt (Durham), Lindsey Williams (Dover)

SRPC Staff Present: Jen Czysz (executive director), Shayna Sylvia (communications and outreach planner), Rachel Dewey (data analyst), Marica Moreno-Baez (GIS planner), Stefanie Casella (data collection and analysis assistant), Nancy O'Connor (program content coordinator)

Guests: Sylvia von Aulock (SNHPC), Anne Weidman (Access Navigators), Todd Hanson (Access Navigators), Julian Long (City of Rochester), Barbara Holstein (Rochester), Lisa Beaudoin, Lisa Goodwin (Able NH), Jim Burns (Able NH), Sabine von Aulock, Geraldine Humphner-Gates

1. Welcome/Introductions

Chair Victoria Parmele welcomed everyone to the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

Introductions were given around the room. V. Parmele introduced item 2 on the agenda, action item(s).

2. Action Item(s)

a. Approval of Draft Minutes of Sept. 27, 2018, Commission Meeting

Tom Crosby **MOVED** to approve the minutes of Sept. 27, 2018. Mike Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion. Steve Diamond suggested a change. The motion **CARRIED** and the minutes were approved with the suggested change. Donald Hamann and Lisa Henderson **ABSTAINED**

3. Presentation: Inclusive Community Design & Accessibility

Panelists: Sylvia von Aulock (Southern New Hampshire Planning Commission), Todd Hanson (Access Navigators), and Anne Weidman (Access Navigators)

Communications and outreach planner Shayna Sylvia noted the meeting topic, inclusive community design and accessibility. She introduced the presenters—Sylvia von Aulock, executive director of Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) and Anne Weidman and Todd Hanson of Access Navigators—and gave synopses of their key presentation points.

S. von Aulock explained that she would present on SNHPC's Age-Friendly program, which has residential and business components. She shared that she became interested in implementing an age-friendly program after seeing a presentation at a Northern New England Chapter of the American Planning Association (NNECAPA) conference.

S. von Aulock discussed the three phases of SNHPC's age-friendly program. Phase I included identifying town assets, opportunities, and roadblocks focused on community infrastructure and programming for millennials and seniors. Phase II used assessments that enabled SNHPC to work with its communities and businesses to address specific issues through pilot programs and move toward Age-Friendly Strategic Plans. Phase III is a continuation of the pilot program and is raising awareness through outreach and engagement.

S. von Aulock noted that project partners include town staff members, service providers, private businesses, institutions (colleges/students), volunteers, and religious groups. She added that realtors have also been interested in the project due to the various housing needs of different age groups. S. von Aulock detailed assessment processes including methods for research, stakeholder feedback, community conversations, web-based surveys (which received 641 responses), and on-site assessments. She explained that mystery shoppers were also used to note amenities and accessibility. Throughout all these processes, conversations have focused on housing (trends, needs, diversity, and zoning), transportation (accessibility and connections), broadband, recreation, and business and economic development. She added that data from conversations and other assessment processes were separated based on whether the respondent was a millennial or a senior. This enabled analyses of similarities and differences.

S. von Aulock cited one of the pilot programs from Phase II of the project, in Chester, where a housing diversity charrette was held to determine acceptable housing types. She reviewed preferences for the town of Chester. She also described a pilot program in Goffstown where a bus was brought to a community event to educate residents about regional transit services and options.

S. von Aulock described how SNHPC conducted outreach concerning its age-friendly project including radio, community conversations, webcasts, community meetings, social media, newspaper, and community events. She elaborated on feedback received during the assessment period and named additional partners SNHPC had worked with.

S. von Aulock elaborated on the age-friendly business program and participants in the pilot programs. She reviewed the definition of an age-friendly business and said there are many ways businesses can be accessible including presence of bike racks, wide sidewalks, etc. She discussed the process by which SNHPC created its age-friendly business checklist (including environmental sustainability, design and atmosphere, customer service, employee benefits, products and services). She reviewed examples of ways to implement each checklist item.

S. von Aulock closed her presentation by highlighting project funders AARP, Tufts Health Plan Foundation, and the NH Department of Transportation.

A. Weidman introduced her presentation and noted her professional affiliation with JSA, Inc., an architectural design firm that both she and her fellow presenter, Todd Hanson, work for. T. Hanson founded Access Navigators, which is corporate responsibility initiative under JSA, she noted. A. Weidman provides community outreach support. A. Weidman recognized important colleagues.

A. Weidman said Access Navigator's goals include presenting a way for people to understand accessibility constraints at restaurants and attractions in and around the Seacoast and New England. Data collection and presentation plays a large role in this process. She noted that Access Navigators began building its database in Portsmouth.

T. Hanson shared his story, elaborating on how he learned about the importance of accessibility. T. Hanson began using a wheelchair after he was diagnosed with primary lateral sclerosis. He said he began noticing things he had not noticed before. He gave the example of brick sidewalks that, while beautiful, can be uneven and therefore unsafe. He also explained other problems that pose access and mobility issues, such as items blocking sidewalks, storm grates, and even snow in the winter.

T. Hanson said he started Access Navigators after he began to experience problems accessing restaurants in downtown Portsmouth. A. Weidman noted that accessibility maps for about 18 communities are on the Access Navigators website. She added that each restaurant mapped has attached information on entry, restrooms, moving about the interior, and the location of parking. Access Navigators uses Google and its innovative technology as the backbone of their user interface. A. Weidman explained that Access Navigators identifies business that can be used by people with disabilities and Access

Navigators then becomes an economic driver for those businesses. This can be a beneficial relationship for both parties, she said.

A. Weidman explained the data points that are collected for each business and the common accessibility issues that Access Navigators finds, such as no vertical grab bars in bathrooms and trashcans blocking wheelchairs from turning.

A. Weidman said that Access Navigators has partnered with UNH, and the University offers a two credit course through its nursing program. Students in the course collect data in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, which has helped to grow the Access Navigators database. Once data is gathered, Access Navigators looks for a champion in each town who will assist in keeping the information up to date.

A. Weidman explained that Access Navigators also catalogues outdoor spaces. She said they created a walk-and-roll project to test an outdoor map/database and had interns and volunteers test a loop around Portsmouth. She shared an anecdote about a new park that did not have an accessible picnic table until the city removed one seat to make it accessible to wheelchair users.

A. Weidman noted an exemplary project in Portsmouth, the reconstruction of Chapel Street. The new design has no curb and is now more accessible. She reminded everyone that Access Navigators is all about helping people with mobility challenges stay connected to their community. A. Weidman also noted that she and T. Hanson speak around the state and the country. Next year, they will speak in Washington, D.C., and in Toronto.

T. Hanson noted that concerns about trail accessibility are becoming more frequent with rails-to-trails programs.

A. Weidman said that Access Navigators has launched a map of breweries in New England, and there is an easy way for citizens to volunteer to help grow the database. She also shared some new initiatives on behalf of Access Navigators. A. Weidman then asked if there were any questions.

P. Nelson inquired if there is a way companies can provide information on their own. A. Weidman noted that the Portsmouth Chamber of Commerce collected this type of data, but the Chamber's data was not as detailed. A discussion ensued concerning the data collection process and verifying information.

Marcia Moreno-Baez asked about linking this data with other apps, such as Yelp. A. Weidman responded that she is familiar with an app for this type of data, called AbleRoad.

L. Henderson asked what a community's role should be in promoting accessibility. S. von Aulock said that it could be incorporated in a community's master plan. She noted the importance of making a community walkable, creating affordable housing, and paying attention to zoning.

S. von Aulock also noted the importance of partnerships. She said that Windham requires high school seniors to complete community service in order to graduate, and the town library benefits from these volunteers.

V. Parmele noted the important role transportation plays in accessibility.

S. Diamond asked what could be done with zoning and site plan review to ensure accessibility factors. S. von Aulock suggested working with developers to encourage accessible designs.

Jim Burns noted he is with Able NH and explained the group's interest in making Dover more accessible. He also noted that Uber and Lyft are beginning a medical appointment ride program.

M. Bobinsky commended the Portsmouth department of public work's role in making accessible the table mentioned by A. Weidman during her presentation. He said that these simple fixes are important. He also discussed other accessibility issues and noted there is room for improvement.

Lindsey Williams suggested that noise data collection is important and would be helpful in multiple regards, e.g., for parents with children. She asked how the work S. von Aulock and Access Navigators is doing ties in with the state plan on aging. L. Henderson noted when the next state aging plan listening session will be held.

V. Parmele thanked the speakers for an informative presentation.

4. Other Business

a. SRPC Strategic Planning

J. Czysz noted that the organization is excited to undertake this strategic planning process. She said that a survey had been sent to Commissioners and those who were not able to take it could still do so.

J. Czysz said that a full-day retreat is being planned for February. This will allow SRPC to put our best foot forward and assess how we can best support our communities. The final plan will be up for adoption at the annual meeting.

5. Citizen's Forum

There were no citizen comments.

6. Adjournment

M. Bobinsky **MOVED** to adjourn. D. Hamman **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

The meeting adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

**Shayna Sylvia
Communications and Outreach Specialist**

Minutes approved on 2/28/19

By: Victoria Parmele
**Victoria Parmele
SRPC Chair**