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ROLLINSFORD
SOMERSWORTH
STRAFFORD
WAKEFIELD

**Strafford Regional Planning Commission Annual Meeting
Community and Education Conference Center, Frisbie Memorial Hospital
11 Whitehall Road, Rochester, NH**

June 27, 2019

FINAL Minutes

SRPC Members Present: Donald Hamann (Rochester), Marcia Gasses (Dover), Lindsey Williams (Dover), Leslie Schwartz (Durham), Jon Hotchkiss (Middleton), Victoria Parmele (Northwood), Peter Nelson (Newmarket), Tom Crosby (Madbury), Dave Landry (Dover), Wayne Burton (Durham), Barb Holstein (Rochester), Stephanie Benedetti (Dover), Joe Boudreau (Rochester), Lindsey Williams (Dover), Lisa Henderson (Newmarket), Mark Avery (Madbury), Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth), Steve Diamond (Barrington), Wes Merrit (Durham)

SRPC Staff Present: Jennifer Czysz (executive director), Kyle Pimental (principal regional planner), Shayna Sylvia (communications and outreach planner), Colin Lentz (senior transportation planner), Nancy O'Connor (program content coordinator), Stef Casella (data collection & analysis assistant), Marica Moreno Báez (GIS planner), Stephen Geis (data collection intern), Gordon Lewis (data collection intern)

Guests: Chris Scott (Sen. Jeanne Shaheen's office), Sarah Wrightsman (WHC), Susan Austin (Northwood), Bruce Woodruff (Milton), Tom Reinauer (SMPDC), Glenn Davison (NHDOT), Diane Hardy (Newmarket), Linda Smith (Northwood), Reid Weston (Dover), Dan Barufaldi (Dover), Judd Newcomb (Crede Associates), Steve Bird (Dover), Jim Campbell (Rochester); Bob Belmore (Somersworth), George Reagan (NH Housing), Jenn Marsh (Rochester), Jennifer Murphy Aubin (Rochester), Julian Long (Rochester), Rob Varney (Rochester), Kevin Kitchin (), Lucy Edwards (Northwood), Margaret Joyce (Dover Chamber of Commerce), Michael Williams (COAST), Scott Kinmond (New Durham), Shanna Saunders (Somersworth), Ute Luxem (Profile Bank)

1. Welcome/Introduction

Chair Victoria Parmele welcomed guests and Commissioners to the meeting at 11:54 a.m. She noted what a great year fiscal year 2019 was.

a. Reading of letter from special invitees

- i. Chris Scott, Office of U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Chris Scott, special assistant for policy and projects, read a letter prepared by U.S. Senator Jeanne Shaheen noting the importance of regional planning and recognizing the work of the Commission.

ii. Bobby Graham, Office of U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan

Bobby Graham, special assistant for policy and projects, read a letter prepared by U.S. Senator Maggie Hassan. Thank you to panelists and recognized SRPC's essential role.

iii. Letter from the Office of U.S. Congressman Chris Pappas

Shayna Sylvia read a letter prepared by U.S. Congressman Chris Pappas.

2. Presentation Integrated Planning Approaches for the Future – Linkages between Transportation, Housing, and Conservation Panelists: George Reagan (NH Housing Finance Authority), Michael Williams (COAST), and Steve Bird (City of Dover Planning Department)

C. Lentz shared the topic for the panel discussion, integrated planning approaches for the future. He explained that the panelists would be discussing linkages between Transportation, Housing, and Conservation.

Colin Lentz introduced each of the panelists including George Reagan, administrator of the housing awareness program at New Hampshire Housing, Michael Williams, director of operations at COAST, and Steve Bird city planner with the City of Dover.

C. Lentz began the panel discussion, explaining that round 1 was focused on regional perspectives. He shared how each of the panelists plays a different but connected role in community planning, and how the questions were created to tap into their unique knowledge to gain a varied perspective on the complex challenge of planning and building sustainable communities for tomorrow.

C. Lentz asked S. Bird to summarize his role with Dover City Planning and provide an example of how Dover is responding to the growing desire for urban amenities, less reliance on a personal vehicle, and increased conservation of natural resources. C. Lentz cited a recent UNH study found that young adults are moving to NH faster than expected.

S. Bird shared that infill development is a priority for Dover. He gave an example of a project on Second Street which was originally a parking lot before being repurposed to house a mixed-use building.

S. Bird mentioned the City's support of public transportation and transit. He shared that there is an extensive system of bus shelters in Dover's downtown. He updated the audience on Dover's upgrades to Silver Street including new benches and street furniture which make the corridor more attractive and provide seating for people waiting for the bus. S. Bird mentioned the Dover Community Trail, and the City's project to expand it. This is a great resource for exercise and for making the City more pedestrian friendly. He noted that Dover is accessible by train with the Amtrak Downeaster. People use the Amtrak to travel to Boston and Portland, or for work. S. Bird also noted that the City support bike infrastructure in the downtown.

S. Bird addressed housing in Dover, explaining that having a mix of housing types is key to attracting younger people to the city. He noted the age of city volunteers, sharing that five of Dover's planning board members are 35 or younger, which is unusual for planning boards throughout the region.

C. Lentz questioned G. Reagan, asking him to share New Hampshire Housing's mission and his role in accomplishing it. He asked G. Reagan to address some of the challenges in meeting the state's workforce and affordable housing needs, and asked about local economic development benefits that come from affordable and workforce housing.

G. Reagan gave a history of NH Housing, explaining its role in managing federal programs, housing loan programs, and home ownership programs. These programs are not only focused on first time homebuyers. He shared that the enabling legislation for NH Housing says it must provide technical assistance, education and research. NH Housing has helped over 46,000 families purchase homes. He added that NH Housing also supports affordable housing. He provided the example of Bradley Commons in downtown Dover. He noted that affordable housing is part of the fabric of any community.

G. Reagan provided an example of Railroad Square senior housing in Keene, which was built in a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district on a former brownfields site. He shared how this was great for Keene, especially considering the other businesses that opened around it, including a food co-op, hotel, high end restaurant, all within walking distance.

G. Reagan provided another example, sharing how the Town of Jaffrey was lacking density its downtown and how the Jaffrey mills housing developments have brought more people to the downtown. He noted how density attracts business, and how people living in a downtown are part of an economic engine. He added that tax credit development is a great strategy to encourage this. Affordable housing really is an important draw for towns and cities.

G. Reagan talked about the connection between the labor market and housing. He spoke to the low vacancy rate in New Hampshire and how this affects businesses that are hiring, as there are limited housing options for those potential employees. He explained that the data behind these trends is a large part of the work done at NH Housing and mentioned multiple outreach methods NH Housing takes to share this data. This includes partnering with the regional planning commissions to share information and build awareness. He added that it is important to engage and talk with people about how housing fits in and impacts a community and economic development, and vice versa.

C. Lentz questioned M. Williams about NH's unique challenges with connecting people through public transportation, adding that M. Williams grew up in NH and recently returned from working for public transit in the North Carolina and so offers a unique perspective. C. Lentz added that density is good for open space conservation and natural resources and asked if there is a specific approach to urban density that benefits public transit.

M. Williams shared that urban transit is all about moving as many people with as few vehicles. He explained that the degree of success that transit can have is not defined by the transit system, but by communities' land use and street networks. He stated that by the time a transit agency is planning its operations, it is really being reactionary to the already built environment. He added that there are ways in which urban form can develop to produce a better situation for the transit network. M. Williams shared that dense development allows transit to succeed when it occurs along linear routes. He elaborated saying the more stops that are on a straight-line path, the quicker the route is (less diversions) and the more people that are likely to ride that bus.

M. Williams used examples of routes in North Carolina and how deviating from the straight-line model, makes service less attractive. He advised that this be considered with new housing and business locations that want to be accessible via public transit.

M. Williams provided an example of one of COAST's bus routes where the bus goes to the front of big box stores, making the route longer and less attractive. He shared that building design is important in this factor to consider in addition to location. He shared helpful strategies such as having the front of the store being close to the street with parking to the side, instead of parking being between the road and the front of the store.

C. Lentz introduced round two, current trend. He asked S. Bird about what Dover doing to ensure the City stays affordable while the community grows and housing values rise. He asked S. Bird to specifically address how Dover ensures that housing value doesn't determine a resident's proximity to services and amenities?

S. Bird stated that having affordable housing has been an important concern in the City for some time. He explained that Dover tries to offer a wide variety of housing types. He stated that the City changed its zoning to get rid of the density requirement in the downtown area. He provided some examples of different housing types like the mixed use Centrix bank building and an old mill building, which was originally an incubator for small commercial and retail users until a developer expressed interest in adding apartments. S. Bird explained that the housing authority in Dover is very active and that there are affordable housing units options for both low-income families and the elderly.

S. Bird addressed another Dover zoning regulation regarding transfer of development rights (TDF). The ordinance allows developers to increase density in exchange for investing into a conservation fund benefiting the entire community. This was recently tweaked to allow for higher density where there is more infrastructure (i.e. water, sidewalks, etc.) He explained the incentives in place for TDF include incentivizing smaller units that are 1,000 square ft or smaller.

C. Lentz explained that COAST is currently working to redesign the fixed-route bus system, and how the region's spread-out, rural character presents a key challenge for providing frequent service that link communities. He asked M. Williams to describe the process and factors that go into designing a transit system that serves a place like the seacoast, where small urban centers are separated by rural areas?

M. Williams explained that re-design of the transit system should be done with three questions in mind: what do users want, what can the entity afford, and what will work in a way that is reasonable to the user. He shared that COAST is looking to speed up regional travel time and connections while meeting needs. M. Williams added that this is particularly challenging as it has about half the amount of transit that other comparable areas have. COAST is trying to spread a limited amount of resources to a large area, which is always a challenge.

C. Lentz shared how a recent discussion at the Strafford MPO Transportation Policy committee focused on the growing senior population. He asked G. Reagan to address how NH Housing is supporting and advocating for local efforts to be responsive to demographic changes (such as seniors, workforce retention, and younger generations valuing shorter commutes and more amenities close to downtowns)?

G. Reagan addressed how NH is an aging state, but interestingly enough also has a young population that is growing. He referenced a 2014 housing study saying that both millennials and seniors are looking for the same housing stock, which are smaller single-family homes. He also talked about Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and how 2017 legislation addressed this. This is another type of affordable housing that can also have other benefits like being able to care for an aging parent. G. Reagan added that ADUS are very important and each community has a different take on that. NH Housing spends a lot of time educating people on ADUS.

G. Reagan shared another piece of legislation addressing workforce housing, which was passed years ago. This is also a topic that NH Housing educates people on. He addressed incentivized zoning as a good strategy, explaining that housing options are needed as workforce housing covers a range of incomes. He shared that NH Housing has a housing solution guide that talks about these techniques, and that NH Housing also educates through a partnership with the Office of Strategic Initiative, offering conference sessions with focuses on housing and conservation.

C. Lentz introduced round 3, integrated approaches for community planning. He noted that the seacoast has amazing opportunities to fulfill a Live, Work, Play approach to life, and how this round would focus in a bit more on integrating transportation, housing, and conservation and the larger benefits we can achieve for our communities by utilizing such an approach – both in terms of greater economic benefits and environmental protection. He added that across the region, we have seen increased planning for resilience, climate change, and environmental protection, and how there are new opportunities to promote economic development. He offered the example of Senate Bill 43 which would establish a “commission to study barriers to increased density of land development in New Hampshire” and task commission members with looking at the interrelationship between density, housing affordability and land conservation.

C. Lentz shared that public transit already has measurable benefits for environmental health and economic development, but that they may not be obvious to the average person, or to municipal board or council members. He followed up asking M. Williams to highlight some of these benefits and to touch on the operational challenges around switching to newer fuel technologies like CNG or electric?

M. Williams agreed with G. Reagan’s statement that different people want different things. He elaborated saying that this is similar with transit, where the primary goal is to give people mobility through transportation options. This also has the benefit of getting people to jobs, reducing social service reliance, improving air

quality, and giving people freedom through mobility options. He added that this is all achieved by making service best for all people no matter what the trip.

M. Williams talked about the difference between an electric bus and a diesel bus. He reviewed the financial data showing that while the electric buses would be better on the environment, the financial tradeoff doesn't work for COAST at this time. He elaborated on the benefits and problems with electric buses, included factoring in charging breaks and timing. Using electric buses would mean less service, and higher cost, which isn't worth it. He stated that the main thing, maximizing primary benefits and goals, comes down to moving people from one area to another.

C. Lentz addressed G. Reagan asking him to provide some examples of how NH Housing is supporting housing that is not only affordable and gives residents access to open space, but that also uses sustainable practices that reduce the impact on the environment and natural resources.

G. Reagan reviewed NH Housing's Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program and its efforts to promote energy efficient housing. He addressed energy efficiency, offering an example of housing at Conway Pines, where there is affordable construction that uses photovoltaic and geothermal to decrease heating and cooling costs. He added that for housing to be more affordable in local municipalities energy costs need to be stabilized. He elaborated that this requires up front capital. He mentioned the importance of educating developers, talking to them about green buildings and sustainable development practices. He referenced the former conservation, housing and conservation planning program, which looked at the importance of housing and conservation co-existing.

G. Reagan shared information regarding the Municipal Technical Assistance Grant (MTAG) grant program which provides funding for New Hampshire communities who want to expand options for places to live (eg, by location, and/or design and/or price-point) and need to change their zoning regulations in order to do so. He referenced two MTAG projects in Dover and Salisbury, noting the importance of getting feedback from the community about what housing options they want to see.

C. Lentz asked S. Bird to share how Dover has balanced open space preservation and natural resource conservation, adding that in NH each town is dependent on local property taxes. He asked S. Bird to touch on examples of Dover using natural systems to support infrastructure resilience, enhance economic development opportunities, improve community services, and adapt to a changing climate?

S. Bird explained that regulations in Dover are meant to prevent sprawl. The City discourages the extension of its municipal water and sewer utilities by not giving the developer any reduction in lot size or number of units if they have municipal water and sewer. This keeps most development in areas with existing municipal infrastructure.

To answer the second question, S. Bird showed a picture of Dover's Silver Street complete street project, which features update crosswalks, street furniture, light, bike lanes, wide lanes and some green infrastructure and stormwater management techniques. The City has also updated its stormwater regulations. S. Bird explained

that the Dover Open Land Committee preserves open space by using a list of criteria when looking at parcels. This was also recently updated to consider climate change factors. Two other examples to address the second question included the City's hazard mitigation plan and its climate adaptation master plan chapter.

C. Lentz introduced round 4, integrated/comprehensive policy in action. He explained that he would be asking each panelist the same question: If we're trying to develop communities that are designed for people – with linked transportation, housing, and conservation planning – what are some policy actions that would have cross-sector benefits moving forward?

S. Bird responded that single family residential conservation or open space subdivisions are a good way to preserve some open space while also working with demand for single family house. He explained that Dover has a small area around the transportation center that is part of central business district zoning and is a transit oriented development district. It is meant to encourage mixed use development and use of public transit.

G. Reagan re-addressed that people have different housing needs. He opined for allowing detached ADUs by right, which would be a good use of land, could potentially be a good use of an existing structure, and would allow the opportunity to increase supply.

G. Reagan also suggested allowing the next incremental development by right. This was an idea of Chuck Marohn of Strong Towns. He also asked the audience to consider where multi-family developments are allowed, citing that it is often segregated from single family. This offers options.

G. Reagan suggested looking at the basis for road standards. He explained that road standards are protected so well that it is almost impossible to build affordably. He opined that road frontage requirements are important to think about.

M. Williams opined that things should be made more walkable from the road, especially along existing transit routes. He advocated for transit operating funding. He added that one way to do this would be allowing toll revenue to be used for public transit. He explained that gas tax funding can be used by COAST as match for federal grant. The transit fare for COAST can't be used as match, explaining that this devalues an important revenue source.

C. Lentz thanked each of the panelists for lending their expertise and insight. Audience members asked the panelist questions on their presentations.

3. Annual Excellence Award

J. Czysz presented SRPC's annual excellence award to the Tri-City Homelessness Task Force for excellence in regional collaboration.

The award was accepted by Deputy Rochester City Mayor Ray Varney, Dover City Mayor Karen Weston, Somersworth City Planner Shanna Sauders, Somersworth Director of Public Works Mike Bobinsky, Chair of the Task Force Jeremy Hutchinson, and members of the task force Lindsey Williams and Marcia Gasses.

K. Weston gave a speech about the effort, and the great collaboration and work that went into this process.

R. Varney noted the plan and the enthusiasm about integrating the implementation steps.

K. Weston thanked SRPC for their role early on.

V. Parmele introduced the next agenda item.

4. Action Items

a. Draft minutes of February 28, 2019 Commission Meeting

M. Bobinsky **MOVED** to approve the draft minutes of the Feb. 28, 2019, Commission meeting. D.Landry **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**. A correction was made.

b. FY 2020 Annual Budget – Approval of Executive Committee-recommended FY 2020 Budget

J. Czysz reviewed the budget and some recent contracts including the EPA brownfields grant. She explained that in fiscal year 2019 the EDA grant never came through. It is on track for FY 2020. She explained that SRPC is growing its circuit rider program. She added that the expense side of the budget is consistent with past years.

Tom Crosby **MOVED** to approve the FY 2020 budget. M. Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

c. FY 2020 Officers and Executive Committee Member Election

Lisa Henderson **MOVED** to approve the FY 2020 Officers and Executive Committee members. Barbara Hosltein **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

5. Other Business

6. Citizen's Forum

There was no other business.

7. Adjournment

Michael B. **MOVED** to adjourn. D. Landry **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**. The meeting adjourned at 1: 53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by,

Shayna Sylvia
Communications and Outreach Planner



Victoria Parmele
SRPC Chair

