

## **Strafford Regional Planning Commission September Meeting**

Zoom Meeting

Dec. 3, 2020, 3:45 –5:00 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

**SRPC Staff Present:** Alaina Rogers, Colin Lentz, Jackson Rand, James Burdin, Kyle Pimental, Nancy O'Connor, Natalie Moles, Rachel Dewey, Stephen Geis, Stefanie Casella, Shayna Sylvia, Jen Czysz

**SRPC Members Present:** Barbara Holstein (Rochester); Bill Fisher (Farmington); Dave Landry (Dover); Donald Hamann (Rochester); Evan McDougall (Wakefield); Herb Ueda (Rollinsford); Leslie Schwartz (Durham); Lindsey Williams (Dover); Lisa Henderson (Newmarket); Peter Nelson (Newmarket); Richard Michaud (Somersworth); Stephanie Benedetti (Dover); Steve Diamond (Barrington); Victoria Parmele (Northwood); Wayne Burton (Durham); Wes Merritt (Durham)

### **1. Welcome/Introductions**

Filling in for Chair Victoria Parmele, Dave Landry started the meeting at 3:50 p.m.

D. Landry called the meeting to order. He shared that due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-23, this Committee is authorized to meet electronically. There was no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to the meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order: each member in attendance (via Zoom) confirmed their participation and name, and that they were the only one in the room (if connecting with video), or on the phone (if connecting with audio).

Those in attendance at the start of the meeting included James Burdin, Shayna Sylvia, Natalie Moles, Kyle Pimental, Herb Ueda, Dave Landry, Lisa Henderson, Richard Michaud, Lindsey Williams, Evan McDougall, Wayne Burton, Stephanie Benedetti, Jen Czysz, Bill Fisher, Alaina Rogers, Stefanie Casella, Don Hamman, Shayna Sylvia, Jackson Rand, Rachel Dewey, Colin Lentz, Stephen Geis, Wes Merritt and Leslie Schwartz.

Steve Diamond joined the meeting at 3:52 p.m. Peter Nelson joined the meeting at 3:53 p.m. Barbara Holstein and Victoria Parmele joined the meeting at 3:54 p.m.

### **2. Action Items**

#### **a. Approval of Draft September 24, 2020 Commission Meeting Minutes**

P. Nelson **MOVED** to approve the September 24, 2020 Commission Meeting Minutes.  
D. Landry **SECONDED** the motion.

The motion **CARRIED** via affirmative roll call vote of H. Ueda, D. Landry, L. Henderson, R. Michaud, L. Williams, E. McDougall, W. Burton, S. Benedetti, D. Hamann, P. Nelson, W. Merrit, B. Holstein, V. Parmele, and S. Diamond. B. Fisher abstained.

#### **b. Approval of the FY 2021 Mid-Year Budget**

D. Hamann **MOVED** to approve the FY 2021 Mid-Year budget. Leslie **SECONDED** the motion.

W. Burton asked if there are restrictions on revenues. J. Czysz responded that the biggest change to the budget is the addition of CARES Act grant. This supports the work of SRPC's new economic recovery coordinator, N. Moles. There is no restriction. J. Czysz elaborated that SRPC does have a buffer with some contracts being spread over multiple years. She added that if SRPC doesn't use all the funds, some are eligible for carryover.

The motion **CARRIED** via affirmative roll call vote of H. Ueda, D. Landry, L. Henderson, R. Michaud, L. Williams, E. McDougall, W. Burton, S. Benedetti, D. Hamann, P. Nelson, W. Merrit, B. Holstein, V. Parmele, B. Fisher and S. Diamond.

### **3. Presentation - Current SRPC Environmental and Economic Development Programs and Initiatives through a Resiliency Lens**

D. Landy reviewed the presenters and topics, and shared that Commissioners will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

S. Casella introduced herself and explained she would be updating Commissioners on the Resiliency Subcommittee. She commended commissioner involvement in this initiative. The group has been meeting twice a month, and has nominated J. Boudreau as the Chair. The group has also made a prioritized list of area and topics they want to address.

S. Casella shared that those involved have done a great job of getting into what resiliency means in relation to the region. The group created a skills matrix, or a self-evaluation of Commissioner skills, expertise and interests, so SRPC staff can identify groups and individuals in the future to assist the Commission's work in certain areas. While created by the Resiliency Subcommittee, this resource will be used by the commission as a whole for future projects.

W. Burton asked if SRPC has the diversity of industries in the region to create resiliency in situations of businesses closing. This will be discussed at future subcommittee meetings. This

lends itself to the larger question, is the workforce of the seacoast diverse enough for the type of industries?

J. Czysz added that when working with the resiliency subcommittee, members noted the need to have a better understanding of what SRRPC is doing for internal projects. That is the reason for the structuring of this meeting.

D. Landry introduced K. Pimental, principal planner. He will be joined by A. Rogers, environmental planner to talk about SRPC's environmental projects. K. Pimental noted this was a great opportunity for staff to update Commissioners on what they've been working on.

K. Pimental updated Commissioners on SRPC's work on the Newmarket Water Resources Chapter, which was an update to its 2009 plan. This was adopted by the town in November 2020, and included news sections on surface and groundwater resources, wetlands, floodplains, potential threat to water resources, and an implementation key/matrix.

K. Pimental shared SRPC's role in the NH Coastal Adaption Workgroup's King Tide Photo Contest. He reviewed what a King Tide was, and how this contest is held to draw attention to the effects of sea-level rise. This is used as an educational opportunity. There were new participation categories this year which encouraged creativity, and expansion of locations for photographs.

K. Pimental encouraged Commissioners to participate next year.

K. Pimental reviewed the Wagon Hill Farm Project. SRPC was a partner on this project along with UNH, NHDES, the Town of Durham, the UNH Stormwater Center, and others. This project has multiple funding sources and has been ongoing for several years. This partnership allowed stakeholders to find the best approach to building back the shoreline along the Oyster River, and finding a solution to prevent further erosion.

SRPC played a larger role in designing an educational kiosk about the living shoreline project. S. Sylvia, communications and outreach planner, led this effort. The kiosk is installed at along the Oyster River at Wagon Hill Farm. K. Pimental encouraged Commissioners to visit.

K. Pimental introduced A. Rogers.

A. Rogers reviewed a project she is working on along with GIS planner Jackson Rand and planning technician Stephen Geis. This project is intended to show where our regional recycling and waste is going. Staff are currently gathering data for this effort

A. Rogers introduced the Sunrise Lake Watershed Management Plan. This is being completed for the lake in Middleton. SRPC has partnered with Geosyntec Consultants on this project. The

project scope includes setting water quality goals, improving lake quality, and reducing toxic algal blooms and phosphorus loads.

A. Rogers reviewed an ongoing project with Durham, the Climate Adaptation chapter. SRPC is writing the town's new masterplan chapter looking at climate risks, comprehensive planning initiatives, and recommendations.

A. Rogers shared that SRPC is also working on a groundwater modeling project in Durham.

K. Pimental updated the Commission on the Durham Permeable Reactive Barrier (PRB) project. A PRB is a trench back filled with wood chips to remove nitrogen from septic systems. It is a cost-effective solution. For this project, there is one in Durham, and another in Brentwood. As these areas are often next to wetlands, the implementation did require a conditional use permit from the town. In Durham, the site is off Durham point road and the PRB should be installed in January. This process was complicated and did take longer than expected, this has been noted to NHDES (the funder).

K. Pimental reviewed some ongoing projects in Dover including the Urban Street Tree Plan, an update to the City's Complete Streets Policy, and Stormwater Design and Outreach. These projects are outcomes of Dover's Climate Adaptation Plan.

K. Pimental noted that J. Rand created a useful ArcOnline dashboard to manage data for the Urban Street Tree Plan. This project has also been unique in its use of volunteers for data collection. K. Pimental shared that C. Lentz is working with the Dover's Transportation Advisory Committee and Police on the Complete Streets Policy Update.

K. Pimental reviewed SRPCs work on the Dover Floodplain Development Ordinance Update. A. Rogers is also working on this.

A. Rogers updated Commissioners on some upcoming projects. These included the Model Buffer Regulations project, the Living Shoreline Project and the Dover Coastal Resilience Project FY22: Building Resilience Through Equity.

The Model Buffer Regulation project is a partnership with RPC, and is intended to give communities options for designing buffers that make the most sense for the areas they want to protect. This will be a toolkit for communities to use.

A. Rogers gave an overview of the Coastal Resilience project which will build resiliency by diversifying community input on climate change planning conversations. Specifically, the project will allow stakeholders to audit City policies and procedures to assess equitability, and allow project staff to engage with people who are often left out of these conversations

K. Pimental updated Commissioners on the Living Shorelines project. This is funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and will allow SRPC staff to continue work on living shorelines throughout the Great Bay Estuary in partnership with other stakeholders. K. Pimental commended Durham for their contribution of match funds to make this possible. He reviewed SRPC's role in the project - looking at potential sites for living shorelines in Dover, Durham, Newmarket, Newfields, and Stratham,

D. Landry asked how municipalities can get involved and engaged in these projects. He commented on the value of SRPC showcasing these projects at a greater scale. A discussion ensued about the value of SRPC and sharing organizational knowledge, expertise and services on a greater scale.

S. Diamond addressed W. Burton's earlier comment on economic and resiliency sharing he would bring this up at the next resiliency committee meeting. He invited W. Burton to join the next meeting.

J. Czysz introduced James Burdin, senior regional planner and N. Moles, economic recovery coordinator to talk about SRPC's economic programs. J. Burdin shared that the economic program is different than normal this year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

J. Burdin introduced the topics he and Natalie would be covering the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), COVID-19 Response Activities, the EDA CARES Act funding, and the regional Brownfields project.

J. Burdin shared that in Jan. 2020 SRPC held a regional workshop for all three core plans. This was to inform the CEDS update which eventually was put on hold with the pandemic. Data analyzed would not have reflected current trends with employment, etc. He added that this year has been more about reacting instinctively.

He explained that SRPC also now has its EDA funding and is able to get back on track with its CEDS update. He noted some differences with the CEDS update including a focus on brevity and make a concise and usable document.

J. Burdin shared that SRPC staff have been working on a data dashboard document that contains information useful to all core SRPC plans. This data will be presented in snapshots, making the information more digestible, and have the benefit of being in one document and not spread out over three.

J. Burdin updated Commissioners on the CEDS outline. The tentative plan is to organize this document around a series of issue briefs such as access to broadband, access to housing, etc. Staff have also discussed looking at trends through a pre and post-COVID lens.

Staff are working on a follow-up survey to the regional workshop considering how things have changed. Nancy O'Connor, equity and engagement planner, will be distributing that.

J. Burdin explained that project solicitation for the CEDS update would be happening in the coming months. He added that non-profits and municipalities benefit from listing projects in the CEDS as it allows them access to certain funding sources.

J. Burdin shared that SRPC wants this version of the CEDS to have more elements of an action plan for the organization.

J. Burdin shared another program of SRPC, its Seacoast Economy Calls. This has been a weekly resource for regional economic development stakeholders to meet and discuss strategies and tools for businesses and other entities in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. These transitioned from SRPC's monthly economic development brownbag lunches.

J. Burdin reviewed another tool that was an outcome of the pandemic, Mighty Small. This directory style website was created by SRPC's Data Analyst Rachel Dewey in partnership with local business owner, Emmett Soldati.

J. Burdin updated Commissioners on SRPC's receipt of EDA CARES funding. He explained that this supported hiring Natalie Moles, SRPC's new economic recovery coordinator.

N. Moles introduced herself. She shared that her main role is to establish direct contact with businesses and municipal stakeholders, and to provide direct technical assistance. She is also able to help with the development of resiliency plans.

N. Moles explained that she will also be drafting recovery and resiliency components of the CEDS. Other projects N. Moles will be assisting with include Explore Moose Mountains and Mighty Small.

J. Burdin introduced SRPC's regional Brownfield program. He explained the definition of a Brownfields site, and how with its second EPA Brownfields grant SRPC is able to assess sites through its consultant, Nobis.

He added this second round of funding also allows SRPC to do more cleanup planning. This opens the door to other marketing or economic development work. He explained how SRPC and Nobis were able to help with a Phase I assessment of the Scenic Theater and Salinger block in Rochester, which has now been sold to Chinburg Properties for development.

Unique to this round of funding, SRPC and Nobis were able to do some design work, and conceptual ideas for sites.

J. Burdin reviewed some other Brownfields sites, and some unique opportunities to assess what could go into some of those spaces.

L. Henderson commended SRPC on pivoting its approaches to economic development planning in response to the pandemic. She noted that during a crisis also come unique opportunities. L. Henderson shared that tools like Zoom have made regional collaboration easier, and helps connect people with time and travel constrains. In line, broadband has become more important in this regard.

B. Holstein commended J. Burdin and the SRPC staff behind the Seacoast Economy calls. She opined that these meeting are productive and a great resource. She recommended regional towns not represented join the calls.

L. Williams stated that the information provided at this meeting was very useful. She asked about the Commissioner role in sharing the info on the Seacoast Economy calls. J. Burdin shared how Commissioners can help connect others to these calls and other resources in response to the pandemic.

S. Diamond questioned SRPC's role in providing outreach on emphasizing health and safety practices for businesses during the pandemic. A conversation about COVID precautions took place.

#### **4. Discussion**

There was nothing covered under this agenda item.

#### **5. Commissioner's Roundtable**

P. Nelson shared that Newmarket diverted 35 tons of compost this year.

W. Burton shared his experience with an incubator in Salem, in relation to a discussion earlier in the meeting.

W. Burton updated Commissioners on ongoing development in Durham.

#### **6. Other Business**

There was no other business.

#### **7. Citizen's Forum**

There were no comments from citizens.

#### **8. Adjournment**

P. Nelson **MOVED** adjourn the meeting. W. Burton **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:25 p.m.