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STRAFFORD  
WAKEFIELD

## **Strafford Regional Planning Commission February 2021 Meeting**

Zoom Meeting

Feb. 25, 2021, 3:45 –5:30 p.m.

Meeting Minutes

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

**SRPC Members Present:** Chair Victoria Parmele (Northwood); Tom Crosby (Madbury); Bill Fisher (Farmington); Herb Ueda (Rollinsford); Evan McDougall (Wakefield); Dave Landry (Dover); Donald Hamann (Rochester); Wayne Burton (Durham); Lisa Henderson (Newmarket); Joe Boudreau (Rochester); Michael Bobinsky (Somersworth); Lindsey Williams (Dover); Wes Merritt (Durham); Peter Nelson (Newmarket); Barbara Holstein (Rochester); Mark Avery (Madbury); Mark Richardson (Somersworth),

**Guests:** Ashley Desrochers (Strafford County Public Health Network), Todd Fahey (AARP NH), Julian Long (Rochester Economic Development)

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

Chair Victoria Parmele started the meeting at 3:47 p.m.

V. Parmele called the meeting to order. She shared that due to the COVID-19/Coronavirus crisis and in accordance with Governor Sununu's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2021-02, 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 Rachel Dewey, Shayna Sylvia, Jen Czysz, Todd Fahey, David Landry, Bill Fisher, Don Hamann, Wayne Burton, Herb Ueda, Lisa Henderson, Victoria Parmele, Ashley Desrochers, Stephen Geis, Joe Boudreau, Michael Bobinsky, Lindsey

Williams, Tom Crosby, Nancy O'Connor, Alaina Rogers, Evan McDougall, Julian Long, Kyle Pimental, and Natalie Moles.

Stefanie Casella and Wes Merritt joined the meeting at 3:52 p.m.

Participants shared that they were attending the meeting and noted they were the only ones in the room where they were attending. J. Long noted he was in Virginia with his father, E. McDougall noted his wife was in the same room as him, and T. Crosby noted his wife would be in and out of the room.

## **2. Action Items**

### **a. Approval of Draft December 3, 2020 Commission Meeting Minutes**

T. Crosby **MOVED** to approve the December 3, 2020 Commission Meeting Minutes. D. Hamann **SECONDED** the motion.

The motion **CARRIED** via **AFFIRMATIVE** roll call vote of D. Landry, B. Fisher, D. Hamann, W. Burton, H. Ueda, L. Henderson, V. Parmele, J. Boudreau, M. Bobinsky, L. Williams, T. Crosby, E. McDougall, and W. Merritt.

## **3. Presentation - Let's CHAT - Planning for All Ages in New Hampshire**

V. Parmele introduced the presenters and topics, sharing that Commissioners will have the opportunity to ask questions at the end of the presentation.

A. Desrochers introduced herself, gave an overview of her organization, Stafford County Public Health Network (SCPHN), and shared her excitement on partnering on the Communities for Healthy Aging Transitions (CHAT) project. She explained her interest in looking at current trends and planning for how we can make communities healthier and more age friendly while retaining younger populations.

B. Holstein and P. Nelson joined the meeting.

T. Fahey introduced himself. He shared that he is a NH native, and grew up in the Bedford area. He practiced law for 21 years and served on his local ZBA. In 2014, he became the NH AARP State Director.

T. Fahey explained his involvement with a Southern NH Planning Commission (SNHPC) project similar to SRPC's CHAT. The effort to execute a project like this in the SNHPC region began in 2015, when multiple stakeholders realized the need to address age-friendliness in

communities. T. Fahey noted the important role regional planning commissions can play with a project like this.

T. Fahey noted the differences in approaches between the SRPC and SNHPC projects, as SRPC's partnership with the SCPHN allows a lot of the planning to take place through a health lens. He added that AARP's involvement with projects like these are to provide possible strategies communities may use or adapt, not to prescribe solutions to a community.

M. Richardson joined the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

T. Fahey explained that the towns know what they need best, and that AARP works with the communities on age-related planning initiatives. AARP has a flexible framework for providing age-friendly communities for all. It also advocates for people who are older, while understanding that communities are comprised of people of all ages.

M. Avery joined at 4:09 p.m.

T. Fahey reviewed the definition of age-friendly and livable communities.

T. Fahey explained that the AARP Network of Age-Friendly States and Communities was established as an independent affiliate of the World Health Organization Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities. This effort seeks to make places more livable in a non-prescriptive, flexible way based on the eight domains of livability. He added that we are an aging world, nation, and state and how this isn't a bad thing. If we didn't have older adults we would not be in a good spot with volunteerism, social participation, etc.

T. Fahey elaborated on the livability domains, sharing if elements of these domains are done well, we can create an age-friendly communities. He gave an example of a college campus with provides all the amenities you need in one space, and how if this could be duplicated in our cities and towns, we can make more attractive places.

T. Fahey touched on one of the AARP livability domains, communications and information. He shared anecdotes that noted gaps in communication dependent of age, access and connection to a community. He added that often, towns have services that could be better marketed so that more people know about them.

T. Fahey shared that any municipality can work towards its age friendly community certification, and how this process focuses on a continual cycle of improvement. Communities can also choose to focus more specifically on a few domains, instead of all eight.

T. Fahey noted that AARP also focuses on non-partisan support for policies for those 55-plus. This is about making places livable for all.

T. Fahey elaborated on the AARP age-friendly network, and benefits for municipalities. He shared an anecdote from Bethel, Maine about a volunteer transportation network that was an outcome of that town's AARP age friendly community efforts and how it has been sustained. He added that the Mount Washington Valley age-friendly initiative is also a great example to look at. Through their planning efforts they were able to tackle an important lack of housing issue.

T. Fahey shared that in the greater Strafford region Dover and Portsmouth are AARP age-friendly communities.

T. Fahey commented on the U.S.'s aging landscape, sharing that we are entering a time of profound and permanent change to the demographic composition in the nation. He commented on the pandemic's effect on the U.S. and how it's called attention to the need for trails and outdoor pop-up spaces. He also commented on the Silver Tsunami, noting that this isn't a bad thing, but that we need to plan for this especially with this population wanting to age in place.

T. Fahey elaborated on shifting demographics explaining the challenge as, aging population plus out-flight of millennials and young people equal a need to create age-friendly places, communities, and states. AARP's Livable Communities initiative is focused on this.

T. Fahey reviewed the steps for a community to become certified as age-friendly. One requirement is for communities to show how they are meeting the livability domains.

T. Fahey shared that AARP NH is taking a strong stance on housing this year to tackle the housing shortage with current legislation and incentives.

J. Czysz explained that SRPC can tie in with AARP's efforts during completion of the four action plans through the CHAT project. These action plans can also be used towards the requirements for AARP's Age-Friendly program.

W. Burton noted the importance of talking about Alzheimer's and Dementia as part of this conversation. He asked if there were any AARP resources for this, or if that's something AARP is working on, related to what communities can do. T. Fahey shared that he understands the importance of this as he is dealing with this on a personal level. He explained that there are caregiving resources on the AARP website, adding that the Alzheimer's Association has incredible information on their website.

D. Landry commented on how much of NH and ME (away from seacoast) have a large aging population. He asked about this statistic in other states across the nation and how this can be balanced with an influx of younger people.

T. Fahey replied that this is not wrong and how it's even more important to bring back older and younger populations alike. Many communities in the state need this. There are towns struggling, like Berlin. They are building an ATV park to attract younger populations. There is also a great rock-climbing environment around there. T. Fahey shared an example of Bethel, Vermont, where they are using creative ways to draw in younger populations.

J. Boudreau note the importance of talking about the whole spectrum, and not only 65-plus. He mentioned a program called 8 to 80 cities, and emphasized that need for young people here in NH.

T. Fahey replied that AARP is making sure to focus on the entire age spectrum. He added that it's not just about age, there are lots of other factors to incorporate like sexual orientation and inclusion.

A discussion ensued about the political will for supporting age-friendly policies.

L. Williams noted the importance of language and racial minorities and making sure that this is part of the landscape. It is important to examine what decisions have been made in the past to segregate different age demographics.

A. Desrochers noted the common theme of sustainability.

T. Fahey stated that we need a better landscape for educating people. Ashley mentioned how housing and livable wages play into this larger conversation.

Commissioners thanked the presenters as N. O'Connor introduced the next agenda item, the CHAT Forum Exercise.

#### **4. Discussion**

##### **a. CHAT Forum Exercise**

The Commissioners broke out into small groups to complete the CHAT Forum Exercise.

W. Burton noted that it would have been helpful to have the prompts for the exercise ahead of time. V. Parmele agreed.

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

D. Landry noted that having various housing options is very important. He shared that Dover is currently exploring different housing options.

L. Williams shared that two ad hoc committees had been established by the City, a stormwater and flood resilience funding committee, and a racial equity committee. She added that the City of Dover is now working with Mr. Fox Composting so that residents can dump their compost at the City's Recycling Center.

J. Boudreau commented on the CHAT project, asking about the focuses during year two. SRPC will be working with four communities on actions plans to narrow the focuses.

M. Richardson reflected on the newspaper changing and how this led to a different climate than in the past. The newspaper is not the same resource it used to be.

M. Bobinsky commented on the CHAT exercise sharing that having a notetaker was helpful. L. Williams agreed.

M. Bobinsky gave an update on happenings in Somersworth, sharing that the City has seen its highest building permit count ever. He added that the City is looking at the development of some mixed-use housing in the plaza area, and that they also received a grant to do hazard remediation at the Old Police Station.

E. McDougall commented on the low real estate stock, noting high prices. He added that the demand is incredible.

L. Henderson shared her background in aging due to her job. She commented on the built environment and added that this project is a wonderful first step. She noted the importance of the existing social infrastructure. She commented on cataloging resources in a way that's easy to access. She shared that the CHAT project should look beyond normal outlets (libraries, town halls) and that staff should think outside the box. She expressed the importance of utilizing older adult volunteers to look out for their neighbors. L. Henderson mentioned the Tri-state Learning Collaborative on Aging.

## **6. Other Business**

There was no other business.

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

There were no comments from citizens.

## **8. Adjournment**

B. Fisher **MOVED** adjourn the meeting. D. Hamann **SECONDED** the motion, of which all were **IN FAVOR**.

The meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.