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Strafford Regional Planning Commission Meeting

July 16, 2021, 9– 10:30 a.m.

Meeting Minutes

1. Introductions

David Landry called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. Introductions were given around the room.

Commissioners Present In Person: Bill Fisher, Farmington Mark Avery, Madbury, Don Hamann, Rochester, Tom Crosby, Madbury, Peter nelson, Newmarket, Evan McDougal, Wakefield, Mark Richardson, Somersworth, Rick Michaud, Somersworth, Barbara Holstein, Rochester, Mike Bobinsky, Somersworth, David Landry, Dover, Wayne Burton, Durham,

SRPC Staff Present: Stephen Geis, Jen Czysz, Mark Davie, Nancy O'Connor Zuzana Duffy, Natalie Moles, Megan Taylor-Fetter,

Commissioners via Zoom: Steve Diamond, Barrington, Stephanie Benedetti, Dover

SRPC Staff via Zoom: James Burdin

Guests via Zoom: Julian Long, Rochester

2. Public Hearing

a. Presentation of the Draft Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy


J. Burdin presented the Draft CEDS and explained it is the core plan to establish and promote our region's economic development priorities. The plan operates on a five-year cycle at the end of which the plan undergoes a complete overhaul and receives updates to the goals, themes and visioning. He added that the 30-day public comment period ended on July 15. After the the presentation, the Commissioners will be asked if they have any requests to revise any aspects of the plan but to particularly turn their attention to the proposed action items at the end of each thematic section. J. Burdin explained that once the plan is adopted, SRPC can turn the page from planning to implementation.

Questions:

W. Burton talked about baseline metrics. He also spoke on businesses and the labor force and what areas, local or outside the region, benefit from these implementations.

J. Burdin responded that SRPC compiled a large amount of information on labor force and businesses in its Data Snapshot. He gave an update on commuting patterns and how the pandemic has effected this.

S. Diamond opined that there are alternatives to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) for examining economic growth. He suggested using the Genuine Progress Indicator. S. Diamond noted the importance of including images in the CEDS document and how that can show community vibrancy.

S. Diamond touched on topics including Broadband, Housing Costs, Unemployment Benefits, Class VI roads and Vaccinations. 

J. Burdin replied that he would look at the GPI Progress Indicators.

A discussion ensued in response to S. Diamonds questions on unemployment benefits, vaccinations, and Class VI roads.

W. Burton spoke on reducing our carbon footprint and that it not addressed in the plan. He added that there is a very strong movement towards this right now, and that the technology is such that some towns are redesigning some of their power consumption with legislative backing to continue.

J. Burdin responded that this was considered but that SRPC has yet to find a consistent data source to use to convey this information,

S. Diamond stated that from a municipal perspective, it would be great if towns could see or have access to the data behind the reports.

J. Burdin responded that SRPC is looking to create an interactive data list.

J. Czysz explained that the next phase of those pieces is to have a geospatial component integrated into our ARC online data viewer portal. This first year we invested a significant amount of time in scripting the data analysis. The next phase is building out the more interactive aspect.

A discussion ensued. Members discussed the importance of working and interacting with the municipalities to move towards an effective planning process.

Exercise

SRPC staff member N. Moles presented an exercise to Commissioners to determine priorities for implementation of the CEDS plan. Their responses would be combined with those from the sustainability subcommittee. These results will be shared once completed.

3. Action Items

a. Approval of Draft June 18, 2021 Commission Meeting Minutes

D. Hamann motioned to approve the June 18, 2021 minutes as written seconded by B. Fisher. J. Czynsz informed the members that the by-laws would have to be amended before any votes could be made virtually. All in favor: B. Fisher, M. Avery, D. Hamann, T. Crosby, P. Nelson, E. McDougal, M. Richardson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, M. Bobinsky, D. Landry, W. Burton

b. Adoption of the 2021-2025 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy.

B. Fisher motioned to adopt, seconded by D. Hamann. All in favor: B. Fisher, M. Avery, D. Hamann, T. Crosby, P. Nelson, E. McDougal, M. Richardson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, M. Bobinsky, D. Landry, W. Burton

4. Discussion

a. Update on SRPC FY 2020-2022 Strategic Plan.

J. Czynsz presented the SRPC FY 2020-2022 Strategic Plan to the Commission, explaining that she would be giving an update. She explained that SRPC has expanded its circuit rider program even further, now working with the Town of Strafford. On the environmental planning side, staff have been working on grant writing and have maintained their current project level. On the hardware and software side, SRPC has updated about 2/3 of itsd computers with the remainder to be updated in FY 22. J. Czynsz shared that SRPC has updated its MTP CEDS. In FY 22, the Housing Needs Assessment will be a major focus. On the staffing end, with an office coordinator now in place staff have more time to focus on projects.

J. Czynsz updated Commissioners on the relationships, marketing and communication goals, SRPC now has an Arc Online platform, online mapping resources, and has launched a YouTube page to post meetings. SRPC is moving forward with the new website, which is scheduled for a Labor Day launch date. SRPC staff has also been working extensively with the UNH Planning Department on its Communities for Healthy

Aging Transitions (CHAT) project and hopes to continue that relationship. Coming up, SRPC is looking at re-launching its municipal roadshow program to strengthen communications and advocacy strategy.

J. Czysz update Commissioners on internal opportunities for staff, sharing that SRPC just adopted and amended telecommuting policy. Other important areas include mentorship programs. J. Czysz added that despite the pandemic, SRPC has a vibrant resiliency roundtable presentation lined up for next week. She added that SRPC is continuing to look for opportunities for Commissioner engagement.

Questions

D. Landry asked for clarification on the matrix showing updates to the strategic plan. This was clarified.

POP Update: N. O'Connor updated Commissioners on the POP! program, stating that the big launch was scheduled for next week. SRPC will be launching its Summer Passport Program which includes 8 different sites around the region. Children and families will be encouraged to go to each site to find a birdhouse, which has a stamp inside. There is also a way to log trips digitally. And win prizes.

5. Commissioner Roundtable

B. Holstein complimented the staff on the excellent work and added that SROC should be proud.

W. Burton spoke up to say that in his ten years on the Commission he has never seen a more vibrant and hardworking group. He thanked staff and J. Czysz for their hard work.

D. Hamman informed the members of the upcoming road work and detours at Strafford Square.

6. Other Business

There was no other business

7. Citizen's Forums

There were no comments.

8. Adjournment

B. Holstein motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by W. Burton. All in favor: B. Fisher, M. Avery, D. Hamann, T. Crosby, P. Nelson, E. McDougal, M. Richardson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, M. Bobinsky, D. Landry, W. Burton. The meeting ended at 10:37 a.m.