

STRAFFORD

Regional Planning Commission

**SRPC Commission Meeting Minutes
December 2, 2021
3:45-5:30 p.m.
150 Wakefield Street, Suite 12
Conference Room 1A
Rochester, NH**

1. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman David Landry called the meeting to order at 3:54 p.m. and stated this meeting is being held as a hybrid meeting with members and staff attending in person and remotely.

Commissioners attending in person: Donald Hamann, Rochester; Peter Nelson, Newmarket; Richard Michaud, Somersworth; Barbara Holstein, Rochester; Joe Boudreau, Rochester; Michael Bobinsky, Somersworth; Mark Richardson, Somersworth; David Landry, Dover

Commissioners participating remotely: Leslie Schwartz, Durham; Victoria Parmele, Northwood; Evan McDougal, Wakefield; Stephanie Benedetti, Dover; Lindsey Williams, Dover; and Wesley Merritt, Durham

Staff attending in person: Jennifer Czysz, Executive Director

Staff participating remotely: Megan Taylor-Fetter, Shayna Sylvia, Kyle Pimental, Nancy OConnor, Stephen Geis, Jackson Rand, Kathy Foster, Autumn Scott, James Burdin, Natalie Moles

Presenters: Bill Boulanger, Deputy Director of Dover Community Services of the City of Dover; Rayann Dione, Flood Mitigation and Resilience Specialist, NHDES

Guests: Amber Hall, City of Somersworth Engineer; Jackson Kaspari, Sustainability Coordinator, City of Dover

D. Landry stated according to State Statute and Commission By-Laws, an in-person quorum of at least half of the dues paying communities who have made appointments is required to conduct the meeting. D. Landry stated that as Chair of the Commission he can declare a quorum with unanimous approval of those present in person. A vote was taken with D. Hamann, P. Nelson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, J. Boudreau, M. Bobinsky, M. Richardson, D. Landry voting unanimously in favor.

1. Business Items

a. Approval of the Minutes of September 23, 2021

D. Hamann **MOVED** to approve the minutes of September 23, 2021, **SECONDED** by B. Holstein. A roll call vote was taken: D. Hamann, P. Nelson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, J.

Boudreau, M. Bobinsky, M. Richardson, D. Landry, S. Benedetti, L. Williams, W. Merrit and E. McDougal all in favor with L. Schwartz and V. Parmele abstaining, **Motion passed.**

b. Approval of the FY 2022 Mid-Year Budget

J. Czysz stated some high-level items have changed from what was adopted in June. She explained the Budget is looked at in December to make any necessary changes as needed. On the revenue side, many contracts carry forward between multiple years, so when fiscal year was closed out at the end of June, adjustments were made to reflect actual dollars remaining on each contract. The EDD Planning Grant Dollars have been broken out into separate contracts. A substantial item has been added which is the Regional Housing Needs Assessment Grant.

J. Czysz continued the review and explained on the expense side, the main changes are adjustments in the personnel category. At the time the budget was adopted, there were positions open which have now been filled. We now have set numbers for this fiscal year. Under financial services outsourced contracts, that number has been significantly reduced due to the hiring of Kathy Foster who was contracted for accounting services has now sold her firm and works directly for SRPC as the financial manager. Other adjustments were based on the number of bodies and squaring up the budget with all the individual contracts.

D. Landry welcomed K. Foster to the SRPC staff.

D. Hamann **MOVED** to approve the FY 2022 Mid-Year Budget **SECONDED** by M. Bobinsky. A roll call vote was taken: D. Hamann, P. Nelson, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, J. Boudreau, M. Bobinsky, M. Richardson, D. Landry, S. Benedetti, L. Williams, W. Merrit, L. Schwartz and V. Parmele, E. McDougal in favor. **Motion passed** with a unanimous vote in favor.

c. HB 1275 Municipal Representation on RPCs

J. Czysz explained this is a bill that has been put forward and is coming from several different representatives primarily from the Nashua, Manchester areas. It proposes to change the apportionment of commissioners from each community. Currently all communities with a population of up to 10,000 are entitled to one commissioner, populations of 10,000 to 25,000 are entitled to an additional one and communities with a population of over 25,000 are entitled to one more commissioner. Under the proposed revision to the statute, all communities would be entitled to one commissioner, communities with a population of 10,000 or more are entitled to one more and 1 one more for each additional 10,000. For SRPC, all communities would lose one commissioner except Dover and Rochester would keep four.

Discussion. L. Schwartz asked what the required date for a response is. J. Czysz answered the first hearing is anticipated in January. The Bill will be heard by Municipal and County Government. L. Schwartz, recommended to create a task force to study the various elements involved and to give a recommendation to the committee.

P. Nelson opined that the bill is simple and streamlined and he does not have a problem with it. The downside is there is no back-up for smaller communities limited to one commissioner. This bill as proposed would cause smaller communities to lose out.

Discussion ensued with members expressing concern that sometimes it a struggle to assemble a quorum so with fewer representatives, it potentially would become even more difficult. Members questioned the reasoning behind this bill and would like more information.

J. Czysz explained the director and deputy director of Southern NH Planning Commission in Manchester met with Representative Wilhelm, one of the sponsors of the bill, to gain a better understanding of the bill and the general thought was that bigger communities should have better representation. J. Czysz explained that all of the RPC directors are scheduling a meeting of NHARPC during the month of December to collectively speak with representative Wilhelm.

M. Bobinsky **MOVED** to recommend a no vote of HB1275 **SECONDED** by T. Crosby. A roll call vote was taken: D. Hamann, R. Michaud, B. Holstein, J. Boudreau, M. Bobinsky, M. Richardson, D. Landry, S. Benedetti, L. Williams, W. Merrit, L. Schwartz, V. Parmele, and E. McDougal in favor. P. Nelson, opposed. **Motion passed with a majority voting in favor.**

J. Czysz stated she will keep the Commissioners up to date with any new information that becomes available.

2. Resiliency Roundtable Presentation and Discussion

Stormwater, Flooding, and Community Preparedness: How can we make our communities more resilient? Learn about a new flood mitigation funding opportunity and innovative solutions already underway in the region.

K. Pimental began the presentation by giving background on the resiliency committee. SRPC started convening these resilience subcommittee roundtables to provide opportunities for conversation with commissioners and the public on interesting topics like sustainability and hazard mitigation. Typically, there are speakers followed by the floor is opening for discussion, questions and answers. K. Pimental introduced the presenters Bill Belanger, Deputy Director, Dover Community Services and Rayann Dionne, Flood Mitigation and Resilience Specialist.

K. Pimental explained when talking about storm water flooding and emergency preparedness, climate change is going to exasperate these issues. K. Pimental gave examples including more rainfall and sea level rise, groundwater rise and coastal storm surge. He stated that anecdotally, this science is consistently updated, and the numbers are trending up. K. Pimental shared photos of flooded tidal areas stating that they are a useful tool for planning. He concluded that SRPC has engaged in planning, outreach and engagement, regulatory updates, and natural resources protection.

K. Pimental welcomed Rayann Dionne as the first presenter.

Rayann Dionne stated she recently joined the NHDES Coastal Program as Flood Mitigation and Resilience Specialist and over the next 18 months will be supporting and managing the Coastal Projects 2021 NOAA Project of Special Merit called the Flood Smart Seacoast Project.

R. Dionne explained the goal of the Flood Smart Seacoast Project is to build regional capacity and coordination for greater coastal community, environmental, and social

resilience in New Hampshire. She explained the project will work towards the goal by establishing a regional technical assistance partnership focused on coastal flood plain management and hazard mitigation and by providing direct technical assistance to communities. The project partners are Homeland Security & Emergency Management, the Office of Planning and Development, Rockingham and Strafford Planning Commissions, UNH Cooperative Extension and NH Sea Grant. Most tasks will be kicked off in January 2022.

R. Dionne outlined the project tasks including incorporating the Coastal Flood Risk Guidance into local plans and land use regulations, identify more stringent floodplain regulation and support scoping hazard mitigation plans. Other tasks include working with FEMA on a community rating needs assessment, updating the 2018 menu of higher Floodplain Regulation, develop a portfolio of Eligible Coastal Hazard Mitigation projects and design and pilot a just and equitable flood mitigation and relocation program.

R. Dionne added she is excited for things to get underway and is looking forward to working with SRPC. Additionally, she is hopeful that increased focus and support will help coastal communities increase their resilience and move the needle forward. R. Dionne asked for questions or comments.

L. Williams commented, from a Dover perspective, we are excited to work together and take a step forward.

K. Pimental remarked part of this project will ready communities for hazard mitigation grant applications. He added in his experience the biggest hurdles fall on the administrative side of things. K. Pimental encouraged commissioners to take this information back to their communities.

R. Dionne added this project will bring untapped resources to light.

M. Richardson spoke about the infamous Mother's Day flood and how the Salmon Falls River flooded. Officials in Hampton were considering releasing water from the dam which would have flooded Rochester and Somersworth. Ultimately that did not happen. He added that this is a case where communities could work together.

M. Bobinsky stated that the City of Somersworth, with the assistance of SRPC, filed a grant application for a Salmon Falls Road design to accommodate for flooding. M. Bobinsky asked how this program works to help with pre-disaster mitigation grants.

R. Dionne answered the hope is to perform initial groundwork for communities including identifying projects, gathering grant material, and preparing for when funding becomes available. R. Dionne concluded her presentation by offering commissioners to reach out to her with any questions or concerns.

K. Pimental introduced Bill Boulanger, Deputy Director, Dover Community Services.

Bill Boulanger shared a presentation on storm water maintenance projects completed and planned for in the City of Dover. B. Boulanger shared snapshots of a project at a new home which included installation of catch basins to stop storm water from damaging the home as well as a rain guard to saturate storm water into the ground. It is

not meant to capture all the water but to slow it down so that it does not affect the Berry Brook.

B. Boulanger described a new project the City undertook as part of the Urban Street Tree Plan included in Dover's Coastal Resilience Grant. The project involved installation of a tree filter with the purpose to treat storm water in an urban core. Additionally, the city installed a media box upstream of the tree box which acts like a catch basin and treats the storm water before it flows into the tree box.

B. Boulanger explained as part of the MS4 permit, the city is required to perform additional storm water management tasks. This includes cleaning out catch basins more frequently and sweeping the streets of organic matter to keep nitrogen and phosphorus from reaching streams and rivers. B. Boulanger stated that the city is working on public education to prevent residents from depositing organic contaminants into the streets.

The City hired a consultant for Henry Law Park to put in an above ground treatment system if possible. Another requirement of the of the MS4 permit is to test all the outflows for illicit connections. B. Boulanger stated the city is working hard towards accomplishing the requirements of the MS4 permit to receive credit from the EPA. He stated that the city also produced a media video for Dover as part of the Urban Street Tree Plan prepared by SRPC and asked K. Pimental to further explain.

K. Pimental explained the Urban Street Tree Plan, part of Dover's Coastal Resilience Grant, was submitted in 2020. There are three components to the project which include an urban street plan, updating a complete streets policy and stormwater installation and outreach.

J. Kaspari commented he would like to see information on the tradeoff between the process for leaf litter pickup vs emissions from diesel-based equipment. He suggested incorporating higher credits for the use of equipment with less emissions.

Kyle explained that city staff time in conjunction with installation were part of Dover's in-kind match. K. Pimental shared a draft of Dover's community outreach video on stormwater treatment featuring B. Boulanger.

K. Pimental stated that the goal is to share this information with other communities and stated we are all in this together.

D. Landry thanked the presenters.

3. Program Update and Other Business

a. Economic Development District program updates

J. Burdin updated the committee on the implementation progress of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) He stated staff has been putting together work plans for five or six of the implementations which staff prioritized during an activity conducted in July. SRPC just submitted a new grant application to continue the Brownfields Project through to 2025. SRPC is building on recreation mapping projects and is looking to expand those efforts into public art and community vibrancy features. In July, CEDS was adopted as a five-year plan and over the next

four years SRPC will be completing one-year updates. SRPC recently submitted 20-30 letters of support for various communities for the CARES Act and ARPA. With CARES act assistance, SRPC is working on a records digitization project which will be available to SRPC municipalities in the near future. J. Burdin ended by saying more information will be coming in January.

b. Letter to the Governor

D. Landry stated that in response to recent discussion on the direction Covid is taking, SRPC is composing a letter to the Governor requesting reinstatement of the emergency directive which allows boards and committees to conduct business with remote participation. D. Landry stated it makes sense given that it is challenging to convene a quorum as a result of the current condition.

J. Czysz added that she is seeing numerous committees and boards having to cancel because they cannot convene a quorum.

4. Commissioner's Roundtable

M. Bobinsky shared that the City Somersworth received 6 proposals for development of a solar array site on at Blackwater Road superfund landfill location. He added this is the 3rd try and over the last 3 years the city has not been able to get the project off the ground. The city interviewed all 6 firms that submitted proposals and is now in the process of narrowing those down.

L. Williams shared Dover City Council held a workshop focused on updates to the tri-city homeless master plan. The strategies outlined in the plan include affordable housing and transportation. L. Williams stated she will share a link to the recording when it becomes available noting it might be useful to other communities.

5. Citizen's Forum

There was no Citizens comment

6. Adjourn D Hamann, M, Bobinsky second. The motion **CARRIED** via affirmative roll call vote of the committee member.