

Strafford Regional Planning Commission
Executive Committee Meeting
150 Wakefield Street, Conference Room 1A
Rochester, NH 03867

July 16, 2021
Meeting Minutes

A roll call was taken to account for Committee members present in-person: Donald Hamann, Rochester; Tom Crosby, Madbury; David Landry, Dover; Bill Fisher, Farmington; Michael Bobinsky, Somersworth, Wayne Burton, Durham; Barbara Holstein, Rochester; Peter Nelson, Newmarket

Staff members present: Jen Czysz, Executive Director; Stephen Geis, Planning Technician; Megan Taylor-Fetter, Office Coordinator; Kyle Pimental, Principal Planner (via zoom)

Excused: Chair Victoria Parmele, Northwood

1. Welcome/Introductions

D. Landry called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m.

D. Landry welcomed Megan Taylor-Fetter to the staff of SRPC.

D. Landry seated B. Fisher as a voting member.

2. Actions Items

a. Approval of the Minutes of June 18, 2021

D. Landry asked for a motion to approve the June 18, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes as written. B. Fisher moved seconded by M. Bobinsky. All in favor: D. Hamann, D. Landry, T. Crosby, M. Bobinsky, B. Holstein, Bill Fisher, W. Burton, Durham; P. Nelson.

b. Acceptance of the Draft June Financials

J. Czysz reviewed the June Financials, explaining that they are still in draft form and subject to change as the process of closing out fiscal year 2021 is not yet complete. Once payroll is reconciled, the accrued vacation line is expected to increase.

J. Czysz noted that the bank balances look low but once invoices are processed for the end of the fiscal year, that number will increase. SRPC is also awaiting a payment from one of its funders and upon receipt will be sending out a large payment to one of its consultants.

J. Czysz reviewed the credit card balances and explained year end charges on office equipment and technology. She explained the numbers reported in the contract revenue in advance lines, explaining that SRPC is awaiting payment from one of its funders. She further updated them on the budget, payments we are awaiting, and for dues payments to come in.

J. Czysz reviewed the profit and loss statement. There are dues that weren't expended and the year-end indirect was low. DOT doesn't allow mid-year indirect rate negotiations and therefore the higher rate was retained.

D. Landry asked if the communities that do not pay dues ultimately submit a written statement to which J. Czysz replies yes.

D. Landry asked the Executive Committee to entertain a motion to accept the June Financials subject to outstanding changes. D. Landry commended J. Czysz her presentation and asked what the procedures are for accepting these changes.

J. Czysz answered that the revised fiscal year-end financial statements will be presented at the August meeting for final approval. The revised statements will also be part of the audit process which begins in September and is expected to be completed by October.

D. Hamond motioned to accept the June 2021 Financials subject to outstanding changes, seconded by M. Bobinsky. All in favor: D. Hamann, D. Landry, T. Crosby, M. Bobinsky, B. Holstein, Bill Fisher, W. Burton, Durham; P. Nelson.

c. Authorization of Certificate of Vote

J. Czysz presented the Annual Grant and Contract Authorization to the Executive Committee for a vote of approval. She explained the importance of authorizing the Executive Director to sign contracts throughout the year. She also noted that with each state contract an officer of the Commission must sign a certification that this authorization is in effect and that certification is notarized and sent to the state with the contract.

B. Holstein motioned that the Executive Director, or in his or her absence, the acting Executive Director, be authorized to file applications with federal, state, and local governmental units and their agencies to implement the FY 2022 work program of the Commission, and to execute agreements to receive funds for such purposes.

B. Fisher seconded the motion. All in favor: D. Hamann, D. Landry, T. Crosby, M. Bobinsky, B. Holstein, Bill Fisher, W. Burton, Durham; P. Nelson

J. Czysz reminded the Executive Committee that the DOT contract is the largest and that is presented to the Executive Committee for a vote to accept. The Committee is also updated monthly on what contracts are up for approval.

d. Approval of SRPC Telecommuting Policy

J. Czysz outlined the proposed Telecommuting Policy and Agreement, stating that it will be an appendix to the existing Employee Handbook. She explained that since employees were now returning to the office, this policy presents a clear and transparent process for continuing telecommuting. It ensures a fair and equitable system for employees and maximizes flexibility. She added that employees are required to provide a photo of their workspace to ensure that it is safe and ergonomic.

M. Bobinsky asked what the process is if an employee's home work-space is not acceptable. J. Czysz answered that she will communicate with staff and work with them to come up with a solution. Solutions during Covid included employees bringing their office chair home and receiving incentives for home office purchases funded by HealthTrust Wellness Coordinator dollars.

M. Bobinsky asked how many employees are still working from home and if a vote to approve this procedure is needed today. J. Czysz responded that the goal is have this policy approved by August and set and finalized by September; to use the summer as a transition period. We are still operating under the Covid -19 Telecommuting Policy and about ½ of the staff still telecommute.

D. Landry stated that as a procedural document, the SRPC telecommuting policy is likely to survive regardless of what happens or how many employees take advantage. He opined that it should be adopted sooner than later; the pandemic came on fast so it is good to be prepared for future events. Having a policy in place allows employees to know their options and makes sense from an operational standpoint.

D. Hamman added that from conversations he has had with J. Czysz, he understands that employees are more productive working from home.

P. Nelson moved to accept the Telecommuting Policy and Agreement as written, seconded by W. Burton. All in favor: D. Hamann, D. Landry, T. Crosby, M. Bobinsky, B. Holstein, Bill Fisher, W. Burton, Durham; P. Nelson.

3. Updates and Discussion

a. Draft Fiscal Year 2022 Executive Director Organizational Goals

J. Czynsz explained that she is bringing her goals before the members a little earlier this year. She added that typically the process is two months, but that today she would be giving an introduction to her goals, to hear any proposals and make any changes. Next month it will be brought back for approval with changes. J. Czynsz outlined her goals including the new website launch which will take place Labor Day Weekend. Staff has been working hard on developing this new website. Another goal SRPC has been working on is to offer planning visualization and design services.

J. Czynsz reviewed her goal to post an RFP for IT services.

J. Czynsz said for SRPC's Housing Needs Assessment she is working with eight other Regional Planning Directors to secure funding; there are a few opportunities out there.

J. Czynsz stated that SRPC is continuing to modernize and carry forward some of the technologies that we implemented over the past year. This will continue in FY 22.

J. Czynsz outlined some of the other goals including resuming her roadshow to communities. She explained that now that we have an office coordinator to take over some of these responsibilities, staff is freed up to accomplish other goals. She added that updating the Employee Handbook and formalizing and the Continuity of Operations Plan are also on her list of goals.

J. Czynsz touched on some of the internal goals including staff development, cross training staff and building leadership opportunities. This is important in making sure all staff have the opportunity for professional development conferences now that they are back. In addition, she aims to set regular check in meetings with staff to ensure they are hitting their targets.

J. Czynsz stated that an additional goal is to maintain the current positive financial position and focus on fiscal year 2023 with grant writing and new contract development.

B. Holstein asked how it is handled if an employee is working from home but then calls in sick?

J. Czynsz answered that she expects honesty from her staff and that staff is good about communicating with her and other staff members via the Teams Chat as to when they are working and when they are out or sick. Jen added that SRPC is

looking to implement a paid time off policy to replace the current separate sick and vacation time policy.

A discussion ensued about sick time while telecommuting and switching to a paid time off policy. There was agreement that at this time nothing needs to be added to the policy at this time, but that the E.C. would like to revisit this in the future. Members that spoke on the subject of a PTO policy expressed approval on looking into this change.

b. Awards, Contracts, and General Business Update

J. Czysz shared that on the Contracts update, the big annual items were approved by Governor and Council. She stated that the FTA 5305e, which is a Special Transit Planning Grant that we can apply for, was rolled into the UPWP and we are partnering with Rockingham Planning Commission. SRPC will be leading this effort, with a sub-contract to Rockingham Planning Commission.

J. Czysz stated that the EDA Partnership Planning funding will be online in early August.

J. Czysz updated the members on the awarded contracts and stated that there are a few things in the works we are just waiting for final decisions. The DES Coastal Program Project of Special Merit has been approved by NOAA. DES holds the grant SRPC is a sub-recipient.

J. Czysz elaborated on the Housing Needs Assessment mentioned earlier, explaining that SRPC has submitted congressional appropriation requests through Senator Shaheen's office. Subsequently, Taylor Caswell, the Commissioner for the state's Business and Economic Affairs Department has reached out to all 9 regional planning commissions. He has submitted requests for each region to receive \$50,000 for housing needs assessments and \$50,000 for economic development work. Funds would be coming from GOFERR and ARPA. The economic development planning would be all 9 regions working together to develop metrics across the state to measure economic development. She add that there is also funding available for Broadband planning.

J. Czysz updated the board on the CDBG-CV Grant SRPC is writing for the Community Action Partnership of Strafford County. This money would support renovating the Gaffney House into affordable senior housing.

J. Czysz reiterated the FY2021 indirect rate, explaining that it might increase depending on final vacation and payroll amounts. The final rate will be calculated next week.

4. Adjourn

D. Hamman MOVED to **ADJOURN** the meeting. M. Bobinsky **SECONDED** the motion. All in favor: D. Hamann, D. Landry, T. Crosby, M. Bobinsky, B. Holstein, Bill Fisher, W. Burton, Durham; P. Nelson.

The meeting ended at 9:00 a.m.

Minutes Respectfully Submitted by
Megan Taylor-Fetter
Office Coordinator