



CNHRPC Full Commission Meeting
DRAFT Meeting Minutes
Thursday, June 10, 2021
7:00pm
Zoom Meeting

Commission Attendees: Diane Adinolfo, Town of Allenstown
Michael O'Meara, Town of Allenstown
Barbara Randall, Town of Boscawen
Steve Buckley, Town of Bow
Harry Wright, Town of Bradford
Tyson Miller, Town of Canterbury
Stan Brehm, Town of Chichester
Richard Bouchard, Town of Chichester
Erle Pierce, City of Concord
Keith Johnson, Town of Deering
Betsy Bosiak, Town of Epsom
Gary Sparks, Town of Hillsborough
Susanne White, Town of Hillsborough
Clarke Kidder, Town of Hopkinton
Stephen Caine, Town of Loudon
Kathy Cruson, Town of Pembroke
Joe Schmidl, Town of Salisbury
Emilio Cancio-Bello, Town of Sutton
Ken Milender, Town of Warner

CNHRPC Staff: Stephanie Alexander, Senior Planner
Matt Baronas, Assistant Planner
Katie Nelson, Principal Planner
Michael Tardiff, Executive Director
Craig Tufts, Principal GIS/Transportation Planner
Dean Williams, Principal Transportation Planner

The meeting began at 7:02 PM, called to order by CNHRPC Vice Chair Tyson Miller. Pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, Mike Tardiff read the following statement that authorizes the CNHRPC Full Commission to meet electronically: "Due to the State of Emergency declared by Governor Sununu, and in response to Emergency Orders #12 and #23 of Executive Order 2020-04, the Central NH Regional Planning Commission is authorized to meet electronically. There is no physical location in which to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting. We will be utilizing Zoom.us for an electronic meeting. All CNHRPC Commissioners have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting; the public has

access to listen contemporaneously and if necessary, to participate in this meeting. Dial phone number (301) 715 - 8592, Webinar ID: 848 4372 3429, Password: 000813 or go to the following website address: <https://zoom.us> click "Join a Meeting" and enter Webinar ID: 848 4372 3429, Password: 000813 . If you are not able to access the meeting by calling the number provided above please call 603-226-6020. In the event the public is unable to access the meeting by phone, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled."

Speakers – Mike Reed, Director of External Affairs and John Dougherty, Vice President and General Manager – Mission Broadband

Mike Tardiff thanked Clarke Kidder for connecting him to speaker Mike Reed from *Mission Broadband*. Mike Tardiff expressed CNHRPC's interest in helping communities get started on improving broadband. He highlighted work with a few economic development communities in this field, expressing the importance of building a base and being prepared as more infrastructure improvement funding become available. He then welcomed speakers Mike Reed and John Dougherty.

Mr. Reed began the presentation by highlighting that timing for broadband discussion could not be any better. He introduced *Mission Broadband* as an entity rooted in federal funding originally designed to help health care providers in 2007-2008, then helping communities struggling with broadband was an offshoot that began two years ago.

Mr. Reed shared results to a survey launched by *Mission Broadband* over a year and a half ago that he deems still relevant and notable:

- There were just under 4,000 responses covering most of the state of New Hampshire.
- Forty-seven percent of respondents reported not having acceptable broadband in their opinion.
- Fifty-five percent of respondents were attempting to telecommute and encountering challenges, showing the importance of broadband.
- Eighteen percent reported their broadband as unaffordable.

Mr. Reed expressed that every community or political subdivision have different circumstances regarding broadband, leading to no "one-size fits all" solution. His personal favorite model is utilizing public-private partnerships with service providers. There are additional models including municipally owned networks and operated by contract, as well as completely municipally owned and operated networks.

Mr. Dougherty described a diagram shown on screen of a municipally owned and operated open access network model. He highlighted what the municipality owns, and the multiple options customers are afforded under this model. He shared that the concept behind the model is to build a network so that multiple internet service providers can participate by leasing fiber networks to users.

Steven Buckley asked how franchising procedures in RSA 53c plays a role in increasing broadband. Mr. Reed responded by concurring with a comment by Erle Pierce that it is cable television franchises.

Mr. Dougherty then described a diagram shown on screen of a public-private partnership with service providers model. He explained that the private aspect of the model is the internet service provider serves directly to the end user, and the public side is the ownership of pieces of the network. He emphasized that the goal is to assess if the network services are first available, then if they are adequate and affordable.

Through the Zoom chat function the question of "How does a municipality manage the repair and upkeep of the fiber from pole to pole?" was asked. Mr. Dougherty responded by explaining that it is an aspect of the

negotiation, but in most cases the private service provider is responsible for maintenance, however in some cases other independent companies are responsible.

Mr. Reed noted that under the public-private partnership model there is not much competitiveness and options for service. To which Mr. Dougherty stated that when considering networks, it is important to understand that there is a capital expense as well as an operational expense.

Steven Buckley asked if there are difficulties negotiating access with the owner of poles to gain access for stringing fiber. Mr. Reed suggested contacting the Public Utilities Commission, because there is guidance as well as rules.

Mr. Reed shared what has been done or was in progress in the state of Maine:

- Islesboro, Maine, built their own municipal owned network and subcontracted operation and maintenance to a private firm.
- There is plenty of work being done with feasibility studies. Groups and individual towns are performing studies, stretching to almost the county wide level.
- *ConnectMaine* is an agency in Maine just for broadband that receives funding yearly to distribute grants. Additionally, it serves as an operation in the field of broadband that the Legislature can rely on.
- Municipalities and a company are receiving USDA reconnect funding.
- Some Northern Border Regional Commission funding is being distributed.
- A few public-private partnership network models are being utilized.
- The state does participate through the *ConnectMaine* funding.
- A somewhat undeveloped effort was made for CARES funding.

Mr. Reed also shared the progress the state of Vermont has been making with broadband:

- There are some single communities operating individually to enhance broadband.
- There is a lot of emphasis in the state on Communications Union Districts that are usually county sized, including Windham and Bennington Counties.
- CARES Act funding was also used in Vermont resulting in some Broadband improvements.

Mr. Reed then discussed what was happening in the state of New Hampshire:

- There is a combination of models being used including public private partnerships.
- All levels of collaboration can be found including, single communities operating on their own, as well as multiple community coalitions, and county participation.
- The state involvement is perpetuated by enthusiasm from the governor and operates through OSI and the PUC.
- There were significant funds distributed through CARES for broadband.

Mr. Dougherty described a diagram on screen that depicts the facets of a broadband project that eventually lead to a connected community. The different facets included feasibility studies, management of deliverables, identifying funding, planning and design of the network, negotiation of partnership contracts, and financial modeling.

Mr. Reed explained that they have re-oriented their process to take advantage of the new funding opportunities more quickly. He expressed that the current opportunities for grants to enhance broadband are more bountiful than ever before, and are well worth targeting.

Mike Tardiff asks how a town that is just trying to get started can quantify broadband gaps, especially when they are aware of broadband issues generally, but cannot pinpoint specific underserved areas with data. Mr. Reed responded that they rely on available data as well as supplementary live data that can be achieved through a survey.

Emilio Cancio-Bello shared that one of the best ways to understand who has adequate broadband could be through consulting with school systems. He shared that school districts have pertinent data on broadband in order to understand which students who do not have necessary connections. Mr. Reed concurred with this concept, saying that it is worth recruiting a participant from both education and health care for any broadband committees formed.

Mike Tardiff expressed a desire to continue the broadband conversation and bringing Mr. Reed and Mr. Dougherty back in the future for a broadband specific event for towns that are interested. He then thanked both speakers for their presentation.

Introductions

Mike Tardiff suggested that introductions be saved and combined with a roll call for approval of the minutes. A quorum was noted to be present.

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Erle Pierce and a second by Betsy Bosiak, the minutes of the March 31, 2021 Full Commission meeting were approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Report of the Chair

Mike Tardiff asked Dean Williams to report on the status of CNHRPC's summer field work. Dean Williams noted that CNHRPC has started collecting traffic count data. He also shared that there are some Road Surface Management System projects ongoing, and that Matt Baronas is working on a pedestrian sidewalk infrastructure inventory for the City of Concord. Lastly, he noted that there will likely be culvert and closed drainage system data collection projects occurring in Pembroke and Bradford.

Treasurer's Report

Mike Tardiff shared that the April Treasurer's Report at the Executive Committee meeting was accepted. He highlighted that for income the Unified Planning Work Program was the largest element of work for the month, but there were also several local projects, as well as the circuit rider economic development assistance program.

CommuteSmart New Hampshire Program Update

Katie Nelson provided an update on the CommuteSmart New Hampshire Program. She noted that there have been two notable events in relation to CSNH. The first of which is a change in software for the program. Through a qualification based selection process a top software choice has been identified and the process has reached the negotiation phase. The multitude of new features this software will have were also identified. Katie Nelson also shared that the other notable update were the results from the CSNH statewide challenge for the month of May. She shared a variety of statistics in relation to how participants performed in the challenge.

Kathy Cruson asked how people will know about this software and how they will be able to access it. Katie Nelson responded by sharing that once the software agreement is reached, the next step will be doing outreach. Much of the outreach will be paired with the presentation of the fall challenge. Kathy Cruson

asked if there will be advertisement. Mike Tardiff expressed the difficulty of having advertising in the budget for the project. He shared that the strategy will likely rely on social media and employer-to-employer sharing. Additionally, the challenges are good ways to base the success of getting the word out about the software.

Stephen Caine suggested sending information about CSNH and the software to local town newspapers. Mike Tardiff agreed and added that utilizing town Facebook pages is another way to share the word. Katie Nelson pointed out that various partners across the state all have different channels they can capitalize on when getting the word out.

Proposed FY 2022 CNHRPC Work Program and Budget

Mike Tardiff reviewed the proposed work program and budget for fiscal year 2022. It was shared that the budget has come together later due to this year's circumstances. He highlighted differences in income between Fiscal Year 2021 and Fiscal Year 2022. A change in the income from EPA Brownfields Assessment Program is due in part to grant funding being directed towards cleanup grants opposed to assessment programs at the national level. Mike Tardiff shared that CNHRPC will provide administrative support for a cleanup project in Boscawen. He also highlighted a large increase in funding for the Hazard Mitigation Planning Program because there are six communities whose plans need updating.

Mike Tardiff then noted that local planning projects often come up throughout the year, making him not worried that the proposed total for fiscal year 2022 is currently lower than that of fiscal year 2021. He shared that he expects this to ultimately reach the same level of income for the year.

Mike Tardiff explained that development review income ebbs and flows, and averages around one-thousand dollars per month. He also highlighted that a big change in the proposed budget was an increase in income for planning board circuit rider and economic development committee assistance. He shared that he believes the budget estimate under that category is likely a conservative one. He also explained that the demand for this assistance is increasing each year.

For transportation planning, Mike Tardiff explained that it is the last year of CNHRPC's Community Technical Assistance Program agreement, which funds the CommuteSmart New Hampshire program. He explained that the funding was supposed to close in December, but the Commission will seek a no-cost extension to next year due to the difficulties of promoting some of the CommuteSmart New Hampshire topics, such as ridesharing, during the pandemic. He continued by explaining that the NHDOT Unified Planning Work Program is beginning the first year of a two-year cycle with similar funding levels as fiscal year 2021.

The total income level with the changes to the Hazard Mitigation and Circuit Riding programs the total Income jumps from \$636,188.25 to \$742,776.00.

Mike Tardiff then reviewed the expense side of the proposed budget, starting by showing a change in permanent salaries due to an addition of Matt Baronas as a new Assistant Planner. He then explained that the payroll taxes and benefits are based off the previous year, and that medical costs have been kept stable but, he expects a small increase in cost this year. He shared that service expenses include assistance to undertake the Concord Area Transit study and consulting engineer assistance. Additionally, brownfield assessment services have decreased for it is near to the end of that agreement. Mike Tardiff highlighted that the big difference in expenses is the pass through funding required for the CommuteSmart New Hampshire Transportation Demand Management software.

Emilio Cancio-Bello made a motion to approve the proposed budget, which was seconded by Stephen Buckley and Stephen Caine. A roll call vote was held to be done in conjunction with the election of fiscal year 2022 officers.

Election of FY 2022 Officers

Stephen Buckley announced that all current officers agreed to continuing in their same roles for the coming year, leading him to propose the following slate of positions:

- Matthew Hicks, City of Concord - Chair
- Tyson Miller, Town of Canterbury - Vice-Chair
- Keith Johnson, Town of Deering - Treasurer
- Ken Milender, Town of Warner - Member
- Clarke Kidder, Town of Hopkinton - Member
- Harry Wright, Town of Bradford - Member
- Stephen Buckley, Town of Bow - Member

Erle Pierce motioned to approve the slate of officers as proposed, which was seconded by Betsy Bosiak. A roll call vote was completed for both the proposed budget and the proposed slate of officers, and both were met with unanimous approval.

Other Business

Mike Tardiff announced the next Full Commission meeting will take place on October 14th and will be held in-person.

Adjournment

Upon a motion by Emilio Cancio-Bello, and a second by Erle Pierce, the meeting adjourned by unanimous vote at 8:20 PM.