

Central NH Regional Planning Commission  
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**CNHRPC Full Commission Meeting**  
**Approved Meeting Minutes**  
**Thursday, April 12, 2018**  
**7:00pm**

**Attendees:** Michael O’Meara, Town of Allenstown  
Chad Pelissier, Town of Allenstown  
Ed Cherian, Town of Boscawen  
Stephen Buckley, Town of Bow  
Harry Wright, Town of Bradford  
Tyson Miller, Town of Canterbury  
Ann Davis, Town of Chichester  
Matthew Hicks, City of Concord  
Allan Herschlag, City of Concord  
Keith Johnson, Town of Deering  
Ken Swayze, Town of Dunbarton  
Gary Sparks, Town of Hillsborough  
Susanne White, Town of Hillsborough  
Clarke Kidder, Town of Hopkinton  
Susan Rauth, Town of Webster  
Craig Fournier, Town of Webster

**CNHRPC Staff:** Michael Tardiff, Executive Director  
Dean Williams, Transportation Planner  
Katie Nelson, Regional Planner  
Stephanie Alexander, Senior Planner

The meeting began at 7:04 P.M., called to order by CNHRPC Chair, Tyson Miller (Canterbury).

**Presentation: John Porter, UNH Extension Professor/Specialist, Emeritus**  
**Topic: Overview of New Hampshire’s agricultural economy and current agriculture-related regulatory issues.**

Mr. Porter began his presentation by introducing himself to those present. He provided a brief overview of agriculture in NH by describing how agriculture is protected by State law (mentioning RSA 672:1, III-B) and its economic contributions by presenting data from the 2012 Census of Agriculture related to NH and Merrimack County. Mr. Porter noted that the value of crops in Merrimack County is fairly high due to the high number of larger growers located in the county.

Mr. Porter then described how Towns can be farm friendly and welcoming to agriculture, including interpretation of ordinances, farmers’ markets, agricultural commissions, and by buying local emphasis.

As an example, Mr. Porter noted that he lives in the Town of Boscawen and is an active member on the Town's Agricultural Commission. He noted that part of the commission's duties include providing background information (related to agriculture) to the Planning Board as well performing site walks for the Planning Board when needed.

Common fears related to agriculture were described, including noise, odor, pollution, and pesticide use. Mr. Porter mentioned that many of these fears are managed by best management practices (BMPs) set and regulated at the state level, which are continuously monitored through scheduling reporting. He encouraged communities to view the positives of agriculture, which include preserving open space, purification of air and water, mitigation of floods and run-off, preservation of soils, and pollination of crops and natural vegetation.

The final portion of Mr. Porter's presentation was a discussion on why agriculture deserves special considerations and what considerations could be made by Town Boards and officials. Mr. Porter explained the tight margins farms face, including product prices set by the government (milk) and how pricing is affected by big box stores and large grocery chains. He also noted the general national policy of cheap food which can be difficult for farms who are trying to make a profit.

Five topics were presented that could be considered by local boards and officials to encourage agriculture in a community. These topics included buildings, parking lots, employee housing, fire codes, and signage. Discussion on these topics occurred with the following questions and comments:

- Barns are typically not for the public and are generally used to house animals, which can call for some exceptions in the national Building Code Appendices. They are also unique in that the structure is typically simple and may be easily moved based on the farm's need. It was noted that this only applies when the barn is not open to the public and if the public used the barn at any point these exceptions may no longer apply.
- BMPs are typically followed to reduce noise and other oppositions. These BMPs are not national but rather were created for NH and is published by the NH Department of Agriculture.
- In some cases parking lots are often used seasonally and have a limited number of customers so formal design and maintenance standards may be waived. It was noted that if the farm has a high volume of visitors with a high volume of traffic these exceptions may no longer apply.
- Farms often want employee housing nearby, which may be contrary to multiple dwelling zoning or dwelling type permitted (i.e. mobile homes). Possible exceptions could be to approve these dwelling as seasonal or temporary, or regulated to be removed once vacant. It was noted that dwelling units would still have to meet suitable conditions for public health, safety, and welfare.
- Sprinkler systems can be extreme for buildings that are not accessible to the public and many of which are not conducive to sprinkling. Fire codes should be followed for the protection of animals.
- Signage can be critical to a farm's success, are often seasonal, and may need to use other people's land or right-of-way. Many communities prohibit off premise signs, which can be challenging to a farm that may not be located on a main roadway. It was encouraged that farms apply for the State's blue sign system that is located on major roadways.
- Dairy farming is the biggest user of open space and there is concern about the lowering number of dairy farms in NH. One of the biggest challenges dairy farms are facing is that the price of milk is based on a national measure and can cost a farm more to produce than it can sell it.

- Many farmers markets are running out of farmers to participate in the market as it is costly for a farmer to be away from their farm for that time. CSAs have become more popular as they provide the farms more money up front and allow the farmer to spend less time away from their farm.
- Different opinions on solar farming were mentioned, noting water absorption in grass and occupying fertile land.

Mr. Porter finished his presentation by passing out a bookmark with the link to a resource kit called “Preserving Rural Character Through Agriculture” located on the UNH Extension website.

## **Business Meeting**

### 1. Introductions

Introductions were made around the room.

### 2. Minutes of the January 11, 2018 Full Commission Meeting

The minutes were reviewed, and a motion was made to accept the minutes.

*M/S/P Clarke Kidder/Matt Hicks/Passed Unanimously*

### 3. Report of the Chair

Mr. Tardiff provided the report of the Chair, summarizing recent and current projects underway by CNHRPC staff. These projects included various local Master Plans, including Hillsborough, Loudon, Bradford, and Hopkinton, and continued work with CommuteSmart NH.

### 4. Treasurer’s Report

Mr. Tardiff provided the treasurer’s report, stating that the Commission is expected to be in the black at the end of the fiscal year and is currently on track with projects current underway. A question was asked regarding the difference for the EPA Brownfields Assessment Grant on the March 2018 Profit and Loss YTD Comparison. Mr. Tardiff noted that a big portion of this funding is passthrough to consultants and any remaining funding will be carried over to the next fiscal year. It was also noted that Sam Durfee has left CNHRPC and has taken a position with the City of Concord.

### 5. CNHRPC FY 2018 Work Program Update

Mr. Tardiff noted that the application submitted on behalf of CommuteSmart NH for CTAP funding had been delayed, but it is hoped that the funding will be available at the start of the next fiscal year.

### 6. Staff Reports

Katie Nelson provided an update on CommuteSmart NH, stating that the third annual Commuter Challenge is scheduled this year for May 14<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. Participants are encouraged to log their trips online in the trip logger and also attend the Commuter Breakfast on National Bike to Work Day, Friday May 18<sup>th</sup>, at 7-9 AM at the State House Plaza. Ms. Nelson also stated that CommuteSmart NH has started a monthly newsletter that will cover topics statewide. Attendees are encouraged to sign up for the newsletter on CommuteSmart’s website.

Dean Williams stated that he is currently collecting turn counts at Pages Corner in Dunbarton and at the intersection with Cracker Barrel in Hopkinton. Staff will be busy working this summer on the Regional

Transportation plan, including various public input sessions. He also noted that work is expected to begin on the Regional Coordinating Council Plan that focuses on public transit and the need for transit for seniors. Mr. Williams also mentioned that traffic count letters have been distributed to all communities and traffic counts are expected to begin by early May.

Stephanie Alexander provided an update of the five hazard mitigation plan updates currently underway, including the Towns of Boscawen, Bow, Bradford, Epsom, and Webster. These plans are currently in the last stage of development. Updates for the Towns of Henniker, Warner, Sutton, and Salisbury are expected to begin in the fall.

7. Other Business

No other business was mentioned.

8. Adjournment

A motion was made to adjourn, and the meeting was adjourned at 8:17 P.M.

*M/S/P Harry Wright/Keith Johnson/Passed Unanimously*