Bennington County Regional Commission

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**MINUTES**

**Friday - February 25, 2022**

**8:30 AM**

**Meeting Conducted via ZOOM**

Present: Nick Zaiac, Dan Monks, Janet Hurley, John LaVecchia, Dimitri Garder

Jim Sullivan (Executive Director), Bill Colvin (Assistant Director)

1. Approval of Minutes: December 17, 2021

Motion to approve the Minutes as presented by Monks. Second by Garder. Passed unanimously.

1. FY 2021 Financial Audit

Sullivan provided an overview of the Audit, completed by Love Cody. The audit was completed in time to satisfy our state contracts. The audit reveals that the Commission’s financial position is solid and our fund balance has increased to over $700,000. As noted at the December executive committee meeting, we are a bit flush with cash because of some unusual advance grant payments and money collected for the planned permanent household hazardous waste facility, but our current net position remains relatively unchanged. The reserve accounts for approximately one-half of our annual operating budget which is about where the executive committee has determined we should be. Sullivan noted that the audit does not reflect the transfer of funds from a second CD to the investment account with DB McKenna; we also are adding an additional $65,000 from a money market account this month to bring the total invested to $300,000, as per the executive committee’s original plan.

Motion to approve the BCRC’s FY 2021 Financial Audit by Monks. Second by Garder. Passed unanimously.

1. FY 2022 Budget – Mid-Year Revision

Sullivan noted that he always prepares a revised budget in January to reflect some of the changes that typically occur after the budget is approved in June. This revision reflects the retirement of Michael Batcher and hiring of Scott Grimm-Lyon. It also incorporates some changes to grant programs that have resulted in lower than anticipated revenues (at least for the current fiscal year), but those are offset through increased reimbursed spending in other areas (ARPA assistance and plan implementation, in particular). Expenses also are down slightly, due in part to the staffing transition and some other small changes in operating expenses. Overall, the anticipated surplus for FY 2022 is up slightly from the original budget approved in June.

Motion to approve the FY 2022 as amended and presented by Monks. Second by Zaiac.

Passed unanimously.

1. Annual Meeting (May 19) – Discussion

It was decided to return to an in-person meeting this year. The format will be similar to a typical BCRC monthly meeting and will be held at the Manchester Town Office meeting room to enable remote/zoom access. Sullivan will attempt to get a featured speaker on the subject of housing; it was agreed that we should try to get DHCD Commissioner, Josh Hanford, to present (either in person or remotely). Hurley will look into getting sandwiches and drinks from a business in Manchester.

With elections of officers occurring at the annual meeting, the chair needs to appoint a nominating committee. It was suggested that Charlie Rockwell, Nancy Faesy, and Dixie Zens could (again) serve as the nominating committee. All of the current executive committee members in attendance offered to serve another term to get through the executive director transition process that they are overseeing. Garder and Colvin will coordinate with the economic development committee regarding the process for their appointments to the executive committee.

There was consensus that the Bongartz Award be given to Rose Keough this year; she is retiring from having served 30+ years as Sunderland Town Clerk and Treasurer. Sullivan will work on the details.

1. Program Updates

* Community and Economic Development
  + Energizer Study: presented to Bennington Select Board; some passing interest in the property.
  + Putnam Block: new businesses opening and moving in soon.
  + Legislative: Capital Investment Program (local projects considered priorities include ideas from Bennington Museum and Southshire Meats). Additional funding proposed by the Administration and other ideas from our region are being developed.
  + Small Business Technical Assistance program: launching year 2 effort soon.
  + Entrepreneurial Support Committee: coordination with LEVER out of North Adams noted.
  + S. VT CUD: NTIA funding announcement expected soon.
  + BGS grants: two approved for region (gallery and day care).
  + Workforce Development: working with Representative James on an event to be held in Manchester.
  + Highlighted recent refugee resettlement efforts and support by BCRC staff.
* Planning Programs/General
  + March Meeting: presenters to include Lets Grow Kids regarding childcare issues, needs, opportunities and Bennington County Open Arms regarding refugee resettlement support. Also, a brief update on municipal ARPA funds.
  + Scott Grimm-Lyon starts work with the BCRC on Monday; he will be heading up the solid waste program and working on various community development and planning projects.
  + The Vermont Public Health Initiative is providing us with $50,000 for the coming year (beginning in March and hopefully to be continued) to support a 0.5 FTE position to work with our regional Vermont Health Department office and other community partners on a range of projects related to public health and efforts to promote health equity in disadvantaged communities. Callie Fishburn will be leading this effort for the BCRC and will be working closely with Rory Price at VDH.
  + Just received our first payment to initiate the “Bylaw Modernization” work for several towns and villages in the region. Will also be starting work on the comprehensive update to the Arlington Land Use Regulations.
  + A number of significant energy and climate related legislative initiatives affecting RPCs are being actively discussed; the largest would provide two-year funding for a local project manager at each RPC to oversee projects involving energy efficiency improvements and alternative heating system installations at municipal buildings.
  + Recent discussion with Sullivan, Colvin, and Stevens about the need for assistance in the BCRC’s financial office. Best approach seems to be creation of a new “grant/program management assistant” to work under Stevens’ supervision. Sullivan will be drafting a job description and ad (probably for a 0.5 FTE position, with possibility of growing into a full-time job) – ideally to start by July 1.
  + Related to staffing and meeting space, the adjacent office at 210 South, previously occupied by Adecco, is vacant and BCRC staff are using it for meetings and zoom calls. We have upgraded our WIFI and positioned the new equipment to serve both office suites. The former Adecco space is available to other businesses in the building, but we have offered to pay electric and heat given our level of use and to make sure we have priority for any future lease/lease amendment (currently use is offered at no cost to building tenants). Because of occasional flooding from standing water on South Street, rent is likely to be very affordable, but until the stormwater problem is fixed, we would have to be judicious about use of the space to avoid damage to furniture and equipment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:28 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Sullivan, Director

2-25-2022