

Bennington County Regional Commission

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Friday - June 24, 2022
8:30 AM
Meeting Conducted via ZOOM**

Present: Janet Hurley, John LaVecchia, Nick Zaiac, Dan Monks
Jim Sullivan (staff)

1. Approval of April 29, 2022 Minutes

Motion to approve by LaVecchia. Second by Monks. Passed unanimously.

2. Staffing Update

Jan Buananno accepted the part-time Financial and Project Management Assistant position and will be starting in July. She will be working 20 hours per week assisting BCRC's Financial Manager, Amanda Stevens, with various time-consuming jobs so that Amanda can stay on top of regular reporting and invoicing for our major agency programs. Jan also will take primary responsibility for administering a few projects where the BCRC is serving as grantee and/or fiscal agent for small non-profits that do not have capacity to receive grant funds from certain sources.

The budget for the new fiscal year includes a new full-time planning position (to begin in October when the new expanded Transportation Planning Initiative budget kicks in). The focus of the position will be on transportation and land use, but we will put GIS skills front and center in the job ad since we need more GIS capacity to serve projects across all planning and economic development program areas.

3. Office Update

With new staff members in the offing, and the need for continued access to an in-house conference room, Sullivan has pursued a lease for the adjacent, currently empty, office space that was vacated last year by Adecco. We have asked for a few physical improvements before we move in: because of the occasional flooding problem (for which we hope we have both short and long-term solutions), the carpet is to be removed and replaced with some type of waterproof flooring; to create a separation between a conference room in the front part of the room and the workstations in the back, we've asked for a low wall to be extended, with glass panels to provide access to the front windows/light, and a doorway added. We'll also need to

run a few phone lines and get some new office furniture and equipment – all included in the FY 2023 budget.

We have developed a rotating schedule to have staff in the Manchester town offices beginning in July (we'll publish the schedule) – thanks to Janet et al for hosting so that we can make it easier for folks in the Northshire to drop in for meetings.

4. FY 2023 Comprehensive Work Program

Highlights from the program:

- Winding down some of the COVID Response and Recovery work, including the municipal technical assistance work now that the US Treasury has greatly simplified the process for local governments.
- Ramping up work on the new permanent household hazardous waste facility.
- Supporting the newly reconstituted Regional Emergency Management Committee.
- Overseeing construction work on several local transportation projects, providing project management service on new scoping studies for bike-ped improvements in Dorset and Shaftsbury, identifying transportation project priorities using the new VTrans prioritization program, and developing regional bicycle corridor plans and project ideas.
- Work on several municipal plan updates and continuing “bylaw modernization” project work.
- Building evaluation and reuse study for the Bennington National Guard Armory building.
- Housing study for Dorset.
- Economic development study for Pownal.
- Expanded workforce development/internship efforts with new partners.
- Continued support for broadband expansion as well as needed water and wastewater infrastructure to support development in villages and surrounding areas.
- Three new public health projects:
 - Unaccompanied youth and public sanitation facility needs in Bennington;
 - Cooperative project with other RPCs to look at methods for addressing health inequities;
 - Identification and implementation of projects to address public health needs in a targeted area in Bennington.
- New brownfields assessments work, much of which is enabled by new funding through the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development (as opposed to the US EPA).
- Updates to flood hazard areas and maps.
- Helping towns and villages access funding for energy efficiency improvements (weatherization, changing out heating/cooling systems, EV charging, solar generation,...) for municipal buildings.
- Assessment of diversity, equity, inclusion issues as they pertain to our regional plans and policies.

Motion to approve the FY 2023 BCRC Comprehensive Work Program by Monks. Second by Zaiac. Passed unanimously.

5. FY 2023 BCRC Budget

The total budget amount is up considerably this year, primarily due to a long-overdue increase in the “core” planning grant from ACCD, three new public health grants, some pass-thru grant funds, and an increase in the annual “TPI” grant from VTrans. The roughly 40% core increase was hoped for, almost lost, and then rescued at the last minute by some strong advocacy by VAPDA’s representatives in the state house. The biggest pass-thru grant was a nearly \$200,000 grant to the BCRC on behalf of Sage Street Mill (BCRC is retaining about \$14,000 to cover our administrative costs). There also are two “flood resilient communities” grants that will fund consultant projects in Manchester (\$5,000 to BCRC for admin). The TPI grant saw an increase in the base grant plus additional funding for a special bike-ped planning project. Our new part time financial/project management assistant and full-time planner will allow us to fully access these grant funds and use them to build our programs to offer similar/expanded services to our municipal and other “customers.”

On the expense side, there is a 4% raise for most staff (6% for Callie who has taken on a lot of new responsibilities and 8% for Jonathan as he has really been instrumental in the growth of our community and economic development program). While the raises are well-below the inflation rate, it would be difficult to justify across-the-board 8+% increases without future certainty regarding sustenance of all revenue sources at current levels. Given the fund balance and available cash, however, Sullivan included a sizable bonus to kick off the new year. Discussion ensued as to the best way to provide increased compensation, given inflation and other conditions: a larger base raise or the bonus. Pros and cons were discussed. Decided to leave as proposed in the budget.

Other expense items of note include an increase for the new office space and some office furniture, equipment, and software licenses. Sullivan included the current salary for the executive director as an estimate to carry forward for the new director (assumed mid-year start), but those salary line items can be adjusted with the January mid-year budget review.

Motion to approve the budget as presented by Monks. Second by Zaiac. Passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Sullivan
Director