

Bennington County Regional Commission

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

MINUTES

October 25, 2019

8:30 AM

Second Chance Animal Center

1779 VT 7A – Arlington

Present: John LaVecchia, Cinda Morse, Dan Monks, Suzanne dePeyster, Janet Hurley

Staff: Jim Sullivan, Bill Colvin

1. Minutes of the August 23, 2019 meeting of the BCRC Executive Committee were accepted.
2. Organizational Management
 - BCRC Interest Group Representation: Discussed the current interest groups represented and activity level of current commissioners. Noted that Transportation, Energy, and Economic Development are well-represented. The Executive Committee felt that the “Local Business” interest group position could be eliminated since we now have five economic development commissioners. There are vacancies in the Housing, Local Food and Agriculture, Conservation, and Public Health positions. The Executive Committee agreed to rename “Conservation” as “Natural Resources,” but to retain those four positions with new representatives. Suggestions for commissioners included: Zach Hale or Stephanie Lane (Housing), Scout Proft or Lisa MacDougal (Local Food and Agriculture), Katy Crumley, new BCCD Director (Natural Resources), and someone from the VDH Bennington office or the Northshire SVMC office (Public Health).

Agreed to eliminate the Local Business position. Sullivan will report on outreach to possible representatives for the other four open positions at the next meeting.
 - BCRC Municipal Representation and Voting

Many votes now done by ballots that can be mailed in. Suggested that the Bylaws be amended to explicitly make this an option for most BCRC actions. After discussion, the Executive Committee consensus was to investigate further; Sullivan will draft a Bylaw amendment for review at the next meeting.

Discussed some challenges with getting adequate representation from all municipalities and getting sufficient votes to pass critical measures like plan approvals. Discussion

ensued as to the possible merits of having just one voting representative per municipality. The Committee members felt that it would be worth considering, but that it would make sense to also have an alternate from each town and village that would be invited/encouraged to attend all meetings and participate on BCRC committees. Also consider an amendment that would designate the municipal planning commission chair as the BCRC commissioner for any municipality not making an appointment. Sullivan will draft Bylaw amendment language for review and discussion at the next meeting.

3. Program and Financial Highlights

- Program Changes and Funding: Several developments that will be reflected in the mid-year budget revision (December/January) were discussed.
 - The BCRC is serving as fiscal agent for the Lightning Jar and is the employer of the new director. The BCRC will receive a 10% fee to cover our indirect costs for filling this role (about \$10,000)
 - Sullivan realized that the BCRC could be recovering revenues at a higher rate from the EMPG program and has worked with the Financial Director to adjust billing procedures. The change netted an additional \$8,000 in the first quarter. An increase in the new grant amount (\$16,000 more than budgeted) will now be easier to fully recover.
 - BCRC staff has taken over work on the “Transportation Resilience Planning Tool” project from a consultant. The change will redirect approximately \$10,000 from a consultant expense to revenue to support BCRC staff time.
 - New economic development program agreements include Putnam Phase I (\$12,285), DOL Workforce (\$2,650), Norther Borders RDC funding (\$4,000), and probable funding for Putnam Phase II and a Dorset Housing plan. Overall, the newly identified funding sources significantly exceed the budgeted amounts.
- Municipal Dues: No change from last year. Sullivan will send out the budget request along with the BCRC Annual Report in November.
- Employee Health Insurance: Increasing costs resulting from BCBS rate increases and changes in employee status caused Sullivan and the Financial Director to review insurance options. Determined that by moving to MVP (in January) and basing employer contributions on a Silver HDHP “reflective” plan, we could keep BCRC costs within budget for the year. No significant change in employee benefits. With increasing costs, will need to revisit benefit levels for the FY 2021 budget.

4. Economic Development Program Updates: Colvin provided an update and answered questions on a number of programs and initiatives:

- BGS Grants awarded to HN Williams and a Bennington downtown building for a new business and maker space.
- Working Cities Challenge – possibility of a \$15,000 planning grant to support development of an application for a \$300,000 implementation grant.
- Bennington Regional Workforce Development Summit (held yesterday with approximately 65 attendees – very successful!).

- Southern Vermont CEDS is awaiting approval at USEDA.
 - Colvin presented on the Putnam Block redevelopment at the Southern New England Planning conference. Similar presentation planned for the Northern New England conference.
 - The BCIC Annual Meeting is being held at the Bennington Museum on November 7 (invitations out and more details in upcoming newsletter).
 - Discussed the just-announced Energizer factory closing. Potential for the BCRC to take the lead on some building reuse studies (several other possible sites: National Guard Armory in Bennington, County Courthouse in Manchester Village,...).
5. Next Full Commission Meeting: November 21 in Dorset
 6. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:50 AM.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Sullivan