**Bennington County Regional Commission**

Executive Committee

**Meeting Minutes**

May 9, 2017

8:30 AM

Chauncey’s Restaurant – Arlington, VT

Present: Janet Hurley, Suzanne dePeyster, Meg Cottam, Daniel Monks, Jim Sullivan

1. Preview of Annual Meeting and Elections

Sullivan reported that preparations for the meeting are going well.  We have about 60+ registered so far.  Ballots for the election are coming in slowly, but that isn’t unusual – will follow up with commissioners next week if need be.  Ellen Stimson is the main speaker, Dan can announce (as his last official act as chair) the election results, and Sullivan will talk briefly about BCRC, past, present, and future (10 minutes).  Seth Bongartz has been asked to send in a few words talking about his father’s appreciation of the BCRC and regional planning – will insert those into Sullivan’s remarks.

1. Third quarter financials with projections through the end of the year (June 30) were reviewed. It appears that we are about $15,000 behind in revenues (on a $1.35 million budget) and expenses are running about $7,000 ahead of the budget, so our projected net is about $23,000, as opposed to the $45,000 we had budgeted.  We’ll have to aggressively work on a few grants that have been slipping and get our invoices to make that target, but we should be in ok shape for the year. Particular items to track and pay attention to next year include EMPG, “Mega” grant (HMPs), BCSWA funding, WIB, energy projects, and Southern VT Economic Development Zone (and related BCIC concerns). The committee accepted the financial report by consensus and will look for a draft budget by mid-late June.
2. Energy Planning and Act 174

We submitted our recently adopted regional energy plan, along with our comprehensive regional plan, to the Public Service Department for a “Determination of Compliance” a couple of weeks ago.  The PSD is working to schedule a hearing in our area at the end of the month.  The hearing is required, although we just need to be sure that the reviewers at PSD have a clear understanding of how we addressed the required standards (we explained it all quite clearly in our submittal).  There may be BCRC/energy plan opponents at the hearing so the committee wants to be sure to have some local and statewide support at the hearing. Sullivan will notify commissioners, local energy committees, and statewide partners when the hearing is scheduled.

Work on town energy plans is moving along.  The Bennington mapping work has been most successful and will hopefully be used as a model for other towns.  Sullivan is going to try to have a draft plan done for Bennington to review by the end of May and then turn around one for Dorset by the end of June.  Catherine is working on an energy plan for Sunderland.  We’ll start Manchester and Pownal (at least) this summer.

1. Act 250:  The only big project coming down the line appears to be an expansion at Bromley Mountain.  Sullivan read the Regional Plan language and it appears to have anticipated such a thing so it shouldn’t be a problem.  As a project with “substantial regional impact,” however, we will be involved in hearings.

Section 248:  It looks like the “Chelsea Solar” case in Bennington is going to court and the adjacent “Apple Hill” probably won’t move anywhere until the issues in the Chelsea case are settled.  In the meantime, the same company is going to be filing an application for a project behind the Home Depot in Bennington.  The town has identified the location as a preferred site so there shouldn’t be too many issues, but opponents of ECOS Energy (the developer) are likely to oppose the project, too.  Expect there will be hearings and BCRC will participate – but first, we’ll receive and review the plans, which we haven’t seen yet in final form.

1. Other Business

Computer Hack: BCRC’s server was hacked, along with several desktops that are connected to the server, and all files were corrupted. Fortunately, the vast majority of files were backed up remotely at RCS (IT contractor). Discussion ensued as to how to prevent such problems in the future. Agreed to attempt to eliminate duplicate and unnecessary files and save all data in the future. Also will be changing and regularly modifying passwords. Should perhaps consider storing all files remotely/cloud backup. Sullivan will work with RCS and recommend a comprehensive approach.

Amtrak Shuttle: There has been some disagreement with VTrans over the handling of the Amtrak Shuttle project, mostly over stop locations and some service details. Working to resolve those and make sure that the service operates as a direct connection to passenger rail and is promoted as such. Sullivan and Pauline Moore (Manchester) will participate on the selection committee. Meetings on May 26 and June 5.

Meeting adjourned at 10:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

James Sullivan