

Bennington County Regional Commission

Executive Committee

MINUTES

August 23, 2019

8:30 AM

Second Chance Animal Center – Arlington, VT

Present: Janet Hurley, John LaVecchia, Dan Monks, Suzanne dePeyster, James Salerno,
Cinda Morse, Dimitri Garder (call-in)
Staff: Jim Sullivan and Bill Colvin

1. Minutes of June 21, 2019 were approved upon a motion by LaVecchia and a second by dePeyster on a 5-0 vote (two abstentions).
2. FY 2019 Year-End Financial Report: Sullivan reviewed the year-end financial report, recognizing Financial Director, Stacey Eggsware, for completing the reporting and preparing for the annual audit amidst ongoing complexities related to our administrative role several affiliate organizations and programs. Annual expenses totaled \$1.612 million while annual revenues came in at about \$1,607 million, leaving the BCRC in the red by just over \$5,000. This result was not unexpected, due primarily to the low indirect rate (adjusted back up for FY 2020) that made it difficult to fully draw down all program revenues. Other issues that are being addressed include lower than budgeted staff time allocated to some programs, such as Solid Waste, and higher than budgeted expenditures in certain areas (e.g., special meeting costs). A question was raised about BCRC's fund balance; Sullivan stated that looking back to 2011, BCRC's fund balance has increased from about \$336K to approximately \$583K (after the FY 20 losses are accounted for). Questions about a couple of line items (4150 – In-Kind Contributions/5500 In-Kind Match Expense, 53014 - Transportation Consultants, and "Payroll Expenses" will be looked into and answered provided).

The year-end report was accepted as presented; a formal vote will be taken after review of the FY 2019 Financial Audit when completed.

3. Section 248 Applications: Allco Renewable Energy – Stark and Warner Solar (2 x 2.2 MW) projects, located between Route 67A (Home Depot area) and Rice Lane in Bennington; one is now in development and the other is in the CPG process. The BCRC attended the local public hearings for each and has submitted a letter indicating that the projects are consistent with our regional energy plan – with a note that this assessment acknowledges the Town's determination that the projects are located in "preferred areas" for solar development and are thus consistent with the Town Plan. There is some vocal opposition, but all agreed that there is no further role for the BCRC at this time.

4. No major Act 250 Applications, although Hurley commented on the controversial Suburban Propane application at the Taconic Business Park in Manchester. The Act 250 is in recess with further information to be submitted. Particular concerns over impacts on residential properties in the area and safety at the intersection of the access road and Route 11/30, where a RR track crosses the highway as well. Sullivan will monitor the Act 250 filings and determine if input is needed on any regional issues from the BCRC.
5. Planning Program Updates

Sullivan provided an overview of new developments in some of BCRC's planning programs:

- Transportation: New initiatives
 - Transportation Climate Initiative - A multi-state program under development that is based on the "Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative," but applied to the transportation sector. We will be organizing and participating in one of a series of statewide stakeholder meetings where much of the discussion is likely to focus on how the anticipated \$20 million to \$70 million in annual revenues might best be spent in Vermont to reduce emissions from the transportation sector. Questions regarding legislative authorization were raised; will seek answers at the September 12 meeting in Manchester.
 - Northshire Public Transportation - Having heard from residents and town officials from Dorset to Winhall that more transportation options are needed, the BCRC will look into options with GMCN; a public forum on the issue will be organized and held later this year.
 - Transportation Demand and Cost Study – building on ideas presented by Joe Minicozzi at BCRC's annual dinner this year, we will look at the relative costs and benefits of development along a typical commercial strip (Northside Drive) and what tools might be available to encourage higher density mixed-use development.
 - PENDING – bike-ped project development inefficiencies (report prepared, meetings with VTrans and FHWA requested) – waiting for state agencies to get back to VAPDA with meeting date.
- Municipal Planning Projects: Plan updates completed or underway – N. Bennington, Stamford, Pownal, Dorset, Arlington, Shaftsbury, Manchester, Glastenbury. Several of these updates were driven primarily by local interest in completing "Act 174" updates associated with aspects of the plans having to do with energy. Review of plans to be scheduled for September 19 BCRC public hearings is needed.
- Municipal Bylaw Projects: Arlington, Pownal, Stamford, Woodford, Bennington. The Pownal and Bennington bylaw projects are major updates partially funded through the Municipal Planning Grant program.
- Energy: BCRC is coordinating a new statewide program with funding from Efficiency Vermont. The BCRC was awarded \$330,000 (18-month period of performance) to work with the other regional planning commissions in Vermont to improve energy efficiency, especially in the space heating/cooling and electricity sectors. The BCRC is

administering the program (\$7,500) and implementing its own work plan (\$30,000), while subgranting the rest of the funds to the other ten RPCs.

6. Economic Development Program Updates

Colvin gave an update on some of BCRC's economic development programs, including the Putnam Project – Phases I and II: With Phase I construction well underway following a very positive and well-attended groundbreaking ceremony, the BCRC's role in that phase of the project is now much more limited, but because of the role of the BCIC we still have an administrative function. Colvin also is helping BRG move through planning and toward implementation of Phase II of the project. Discussion ensued as to funding to cover the BCRC's costs; Colvin reported that he has had those discussions with BRG and has a proposal before them that will be considered at their meeting the first week of September.

The committee discussed the possibility of combining the BCRC/BCIC annual meetings next year – at time of the regular BCRC annual meeting. That meeting would include an overview of BCRC's (BCIC's) planning and economic development projects over the past year and a brief look forward. Possibly invite a speaker from a state agency (ACCD?). In addition to helping control meeting costs, the joint meeting would be a further indicator of the increasingly close cooperation between the RPC and RDC entities. All agreed to pursue the joint annual meeting for 2020.

7. BCRC September Meeting: Focus on Southern Vermont CEDS and three municipal plan approvals: *To be held at the Loose Cannon Cafe in Bennington (formerly the Brown Cow Café).*
8. Executive Director - Key Performance Indicators, based on annual goals, for the executive director were briefly reviewed. Noted that an effort should be made to check in on progress during the course of the year, rather than just at year-end in June. Sullivan will coordinate with Hurley to see how to best make that happen.
9. Other Business and Adjourn: There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:35 AM

Respectfully submitted,
Jim Sullivan – Director
8-23-2019