

NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, February 24, 2022
Franconia Town Hall
421 Main Street, Franconia, NH
9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Robitaille, Chair; Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Secretary; Mark Decoteau; and Carl Martland.

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Robin Irving, Vice Chair; and Mark Dindorf.

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT: Jennifer Fish, Treasurer.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director; and James Steele, Finance Manager & Special Projects Planner.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY: Kaela Tavares, Community & Economic Development Planning Coordinator.

Call to Order

Chairperson Robitaille called the meeting to order.

- **Attendance**
Roll call was taken.

Minutes Approval

- **December 15, 2021**

MOTION: Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson moved to accept the Minutes of December 15, 2021, as presented. It was seconded by Board Member Martland.

Vice Chair Irving: Recuse

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: Yes.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes.

The motion carried. (5-1-0).

Regional Housing Needs Assessment

- **Update**

Kaela Tavares spoke about the current status of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment project. She presented a slideshow to the Board, which included a background regarding the Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

The following are some of the questions were posed to Ms. Tavares:

- Q. I know you're familiar with work with the Conservation Fund and what they're doing about workforce housing in the North Country. Are they also involved, or some of that information that they're going to be somehow included?
- A. Yes. I feel like we have at least two arms of housing work going on right now at the Council.
- Q. I know yesterday, and I just looked at it this morning, the email from NCC about the notice about the Housing Survey, and it was a link included.
- A. It did go out.
- Q. I recently started at the Land Trust and was reached out to by the Mt. Washington Valley Housing Coalition about the possibility of creating a community land trust. Have you heard about those, and do you have any experience with them?
- A. Absolutely. I think, one, I would tell you, getting involved with the Mt. Washington Valley Housing Coalition is always a good idea if you can. Community land trusts are a great tool to address housing affordability and I think they're one that we would very much like to see explored in a region.
- Q. Is your housing, is this study going to be able to identify residents versus vacation homes and rentals?
- A. Yes. And that has been a piece that we were adamant about saying that it is absolutely important for that to show up because, for the Lakes Region and for us, those make huge differences.
- Q. On the population projection really in this whole study, are you considering a single projection that you would then use throughout the State? Or will you be having different scenarios where the things that we have been talking about include population growth, the mix between second home, legal residence, and short-term visitors?
- A. Absolutely. That is a question we just debated at our Population Projection Subcommittee maybe last week.

Discussion was had regarding the difficulty of creating affordable workforce housing and the impact that it is having on the community.

Financial

- **Review of Financials**

James Steele went over the financial report. He touched on a few key points:

- Large increase of funds into the operating account, mostly dues coming in.
- \$213,000 in the positive.
- Not a lot of payables out there.

He continued to go through the rest of the financials.

Carl Martland asked if the Council is on track to devote the resources to finish the projects we have secured funding and are we on target to be able to finish the work we have committed to? James Steele commented that the only one that would be in question is UPWP due to the lapse in staffing however we will still get the work we are scoped out to do completed. Michelle Moren-Grey commented that any commitment that NCC has are on track to finish. In UPWP we are not always drawing that down and can roll into the second-year contract. Michelle Moren-Grey commented that NCC's is on track to meet deadlines.

MOTION: Board Member Decoteau moved to approve the financials, as presented. It was seconded by Board Member Martland.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: Yes.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes.

The motion carried. (5-0-0).

- **Company Credit Card Limit**

Mr. Steele indicated that the reason this is on here is because right now NCC has 3 cards, for which two have \$1,000 limits and the Planning Department's card has a limit of \$250. He went over the issues he's facing with the limits, in regards to large expenses. He requested the Board to allow the Executive Director card to have a \$5,000 credit limit to cover large expenses. Discussion was had regarding how much, if any, the limits should be adjusted on the different credit cards.

MOTION: Board Member Decoteau moved to increase the limits on the three cards to \$5,000, \$2,000, and \$1,000. It was seconded by Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: Yes.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes.

The motion carried. (5-0-0).

Other Business

- **Office Space Update**

Michelle Moren-Grey indicated that the lease is ending soon. Discussion was had regarding whether they should relocate or renegotiate the lease terms, including availability to have meetings in the location.

- **Northern Border Regional Commission SEID Grant Round**

Ms. Moren-Grey indicated that typically this time of year NBRC releases the distress criteria by application, etc. She noted that they are on a continuing resolution, so it's going to be kicked down the road.

- **Membership Status**

Discussion was had regarding Northumberland and their membership status with NCC. It was concluded that since they are no longer a member, that Robin Irving's spot would need to be replaced on the Board, as Vice Chair. Discussion was had regarding what the Secretary role entails and who could fill the Vice Chair position.

MOTION: Board Member Martland moved to appoint Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson as Vice Chair and Board Member Decoteau as Secretary. It was seconded by Chairperson Robitaille.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: Yes.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes.

The motion carried. (5-0-0).

- **Broadband Mapping**

Chairperson Robitaille noted that he's gotten an influx of questions regarding the contract award for the Coos County Mapping Study. There have been questions in regard to the contract being awarded to National Collaboration of Digital Equity & Mission Broadband of which Carol Miller is one of the team members that will be working on the project and also is the Town appointed committee member for the Coos Country Broadband Committee. The questions are concerning how the contract was approved in terms of a potential conflict of interest. Ms. Moren-Grey stated that North Country Council is facilitating the Coos Country Broadband Committee Meetings and providing the County with technical assistance in moving the development of broadband forward. As stated at the Coos County Commission meeting there were 3 proposals received that meet the criteria outlined in the RFP, all three were ranked by Ms. Moren-Grey, another North Country Council staff member and a Coos County Broadband Committee member (not Carol Miller). All three reviewers noted in the evaluation/reviews to the Coos County Commissioners that there was a potential conflict of interest. During the County Commission meeting this was discussed, as a part of awarding the contract and during this work Carol Miller was asked to step down from the Committee. Ms. Moren-Grey stated that the contract is between NCDE/MB and Coos County, North Country Council is only providing technical assistance and not making contractual decisions for the County.

Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3, II

MOTION: Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson moved to enter nonpublic session. It was seconded by Board Member Decoteau.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: I approve.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes

The motion carried. (6-0-0) entered nonpublic session at 10:43am

MOTION: Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson moved to exit nonpublic session. It was seconded by Board Member Decoteau.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: I approve.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes

The motion carried. (6-0-0) exited at 12:02

MOTION: Board Member Decoteau moved to seal the minutes of the nonpublic session. It was seconded by Member Gaetjens-Oleson

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: I approve.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes

The motion carried. (6-0-0)

Discussion during nonpublic regarding staff rates of pay/salaries as compared to the current rising cost of living was discussed no decisions nor votes take during the session.

Public Comment

None.

Adjourn

MOTION: Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Board Member Fish.

Chairperson Robitaille: Yes.

Board Member Gaetjens-Oleson: Yes.

Board Member Dindorf: Yes.

Board Member Martland: I approve.

Board Member Decoteau: Yes

The motion carried. (6-0-0).

Chairperson Robitaille adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria O'Connor, Recording Secretary
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