



Thursday, March 16, | 2:00 to 4:00 pm

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:** Paul Robitaille, Chair; Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair; Jennifer Fish, Treasurer; Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual); Mark Dindorf, Carl Martland

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director; James Steele, Finance Manager & Special Projects Planner (virtual), Kaela Tavares, Planning Director (virtual)

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### Call to Order

Chair Robitaille, called the meeting to order at 2:02. Roll call attendance was taken:

### Attendance

- Roll call was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair; Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair; Jennifer Fish, Treasurer; Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual); Mark Dindorf, Carl Martland

### Presentation, Review, and Approval of the Draft CEDS

- Kaela Tavares presented the process of five (5) year update and draft of the CEDS to the Board.

Discussion after the presentation Ms. Moren-Grey provided a brief history over the last 10 years on how the CEDS has been developed to allow entities and municipalities easier access to data supporting projects that align and or implement the CEDS. She recognized and thanked Ms. Tavares for her work and leadership in this effort. Ms. Tavares recognized that it was a true team effort and thanked the all the staff and stakeholders and CEDS Committee for their hard work.

**MOTION for the BOD to approve and recommend the full Commission approval of the Draft CEDS. Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson moved to approve CEDS and make recommendation to full commission. It was seconded by Member Dindorf**

Roll call vote was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair -(yes); Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair -(yes); Jennifer Fish, Treasurer-(yes); Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual) -(yes); Mark Dindorf -(yes), Carl Martland -(yes)

*The motion carried - 6 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention*

### Overview of Development of Regional Impacts (DRI)

- Ms. Moren-Grey provided the BOD with an overview of DRI's focusing on process, structure of State Statue (RSA), the Council's adopted guidelines for review.  
Highlights:
  - DRI's can only be declared by a local land use board and they are not declared by North Country Council.

- DRI's are declared when a local land use board has an application before them that could potentially have impact beyond the municipal boundaries / regional impacts.
- Declaring a DRI allows abutter status to the Regional Planning Commission and surrounding municipalities and provides for a process for notice and testimony in a timely manner.
- North Country Council's review of a DRI is not to be opposed nor in support of the proposed development. North Country Council follows the adopted guidelines to review all DRI's in the same manner and is only to provide comments that the local land use board may want to consider. The regional planning commission can act in an advisory role only and has no authority.
- Declaring a DRI is not the avenue for proposed development to gain support or opposition from North Country Council – for economic development project this avenue is the CEDS Committee.

Discussion:

Ms. Moren-Grey commented that the reason this is being reviewed today is due to Coos County Planning Board making the decision to declare a recent project before them a development of regional impact. Once the Council was notified staff reviewed the project in the same manner as all DRI's are reviewed with the guidelines and provided it to the Coos County Planning Board (copy of the DRI review was provided to the BOD). This review followed the adopted guidelines it did not oppose nor support the project and only provided comment on areas where the Coos County Planning Board may wish to consider during review.

On 03/08/2023 North Country Council was asked to attend the Coos County Commissioners Meeting. During this meeting Commissioner Gorman and others expressed concern that the DRI review did not provide positive nor any support for the project. Ms. Tavares reviewed with the Coos County Commissioners the role the Council has in reviewing a development of regional impact and that the responses are framed with the adopted guidance. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that Ms. Tavares reviewed this project in the same format and consistency using the adopted guidelines as any other DRI. After the meeting, the submitted review was revised to include the preamble explaining the process of DRI and confirming that the DRI does not oppose nor support the project. In addition, the preamble provided other ways to engage the Council for the support they are seeking – this is through the CEDS committee.

Ms. Tavares commented that the DRI process can be misunderstood. One take away of the meeting with the Commissioners was that they recognize and feel the incredible economic benefits that the proposed project can bring to the region and felt that the DRI comments did not talk about that. Ms. Tavares explained that they won't in any DRI review, again this is not the avenue for supporting or opposing a proposed project.

Ms. Moren-Grey again commented that Ms. Tavares did a great job at explaining the process to the Coos County Commissioners, listening/hearing their concerns,

and providing a timely revision to the DRI that added further explanation in the form of a preamble.

### Minutes Approval

- 12/15/2022 Minutes

**MOTION to approve minutes as presented. Member Dindorf moved to approve 12/15/2022 minutes. It was seconded by Chair Gaetjens-Oleson**

Roll call vote was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair -(yes); Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair -(yes); Jennifer Fish, Treasurer-(yes); Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual) -(yes); Mark Dindorf -(yes), Carl Martland -(yes)

***The motion carried - 6 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention***

### Financial

- Review of Financials February 2023

James Steele provided an overview and snapshot of the financials. It was noted that we are up to 31 dues paying communities and anticipate another 10 towns to come in. Accounts receivable includes dues for towns. We dropped in billable hours due to Presidents day, people out sick and one grant being matched by dues. There was one additional project – CDBG administration for Whitefield.

Question – regarding keeping up with workplan and did we have to move work into this year. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that we have two projects the CDS funded Housing Readiness and Regional Plan will be moved further into next FY year and beyond. USDA RBDG grant we have had to change the scope twice due to unexpected funds that overlapped with the USDA scope – we will try to revise the scope one final time. UPWP – the on-call engineering funds are close to being fully utilized.

**MOTION to accept the financials. Member Martland moved to accept February 2023 financials. It was seconded by Member Decoteau**

***The motion carried – 6 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention.***

Roll call vote was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair -(yes); Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair -(yes); Jennifer Fish, Treasurer-(yes); Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual) -(yes); Mark Dindorf -(yes), Carl Martland -(yes)

### Other Business

- Vacancy of the Treasurer

As noted in a previous meeting Ms. Fish will be leaving her position as Coos County Administrator effective the end of March 2023. Treasurer, Jennifer Fish announced her resignation as of end of the 03/16/2023 North Country Council BOD meeting and will be submitting an official letter. Ms. Moren -Grey & Mr. Steele thanked Ms. Fish for her participation and service on the BOD for North Country Council especially through the difficult years. Chair Robitaille additionally thanked Ms. Fish for her participation on the Council BOD providing continued support through the challenging times. He also

thanked her for the incredible work she has also done for the County. Jennifer's skill and support will be greatly missed.

**MOTION for Mark Decoteau fill the vacancy of Treasurer for the remainder of the term. Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson moved to appoint Mark Decoteau as Treasurer. It was seconded by Member Martland**

Roll call vote was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair -(yes); Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair - (yes); Jennifer Fish, Treasurer-(yes); Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual) -(abstention); Mark Dindorf -(yes), Carl Martland -(yes)

*The motion carried - 5 in favor/ 0 opposed / 1 abstention*

- Review of updated financial policy

Ms. Moren-Grey & Mr. Steele reminded the BOD that during the audit the auditors recommended that we strengthen our federal financial policy. Mr. Steele spend a great deal of time reviewing what our current policy is (Financial Policy adopted 07/19/2017) and incorporating and expanding the language in the draft Operating Policy. It is noted that there are threshold changes in the draft revised policy that will need to be changed in the by-laws before the draft policy is adopted (anticipated June). The threshold amounts were highlighted.

Discussion – Executive Director being able to approve purchases and contracts up to \$25,000 vs the \$10,000 – reasoning limits the number of times we would need BOD approval as the cost of doing business has increased significantly since 2017. BOD considered this reasonable.

Procurement policy – better defined federal and non-federal funds.

Quotes – in the current policy for non-federal funds this is identified at \$1,000 the draft proposed \$500 for better control over staff spending both for budgeting and best reasonable price. It is noted that the threshold for federal is \$10,000 is considered a micro purchase.

Ms. Moren-Grey – the goal is to review the draft policy, during the April work session this will be reviewed and finalized. In the May BOD meeting any by-law changes needed to align with the proposed draft operating policy will be recommended to the full commission. At the June commission meeting by-law changes will be presented for approval. The BOD can then in June (after commission meeting) approve the draft operational policy.

April 20<sup>th</sup> BOD work session was changed from 04/20/2023 2 to 4 to 04/19/2023 9:00 to 10:30.

Commission Meeting – decided June 21, 2023, 4 to 6pm

**Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (if needed)**

None was needed

**Public Comment**

Chair Robitaille asked for public comment – there was none.

### **Adjournment**

**MOTION: Vice-Chair Gaetjens-Oleson moved to adjourn the meeting. It was seconded by Member Martland**

Roll call vote was taken. Paul Robitaille, Chair -(yes); Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair -(yes); Jennifer Fish, Treasurer-(yes); Mark Decoteau, Secretary (Virtual) -(abstention); Mark Dindorf -(yes), Carl Martland -(yes)

*The motion carried - 6 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention*

The meeting adjourned at 3:53

Respectfully Submitted,  
Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director