



**NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL REPRESENTATIVE MEETING MINUTES**  
**Mt. Eustis Conference Room | Mt. Eustis Commons/AHEAD | 262 Cottage Street**  
**Littleton, New Hampshire**  
**Wednesday, October 20, 2021**  
**4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.**

**REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:** Mark Dindorf; Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson; Charles Goulet; Carl Martland; Sandra Butson; Raymond Gorman; Vicki DeLalla; Mark Decoteau; Jon Swan; Matthew Kelley; Robin Irving; Michele Cormier; and Jennifer Fish.

**REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT VIRTUALLY:** Paul Robitaille, Chair; and Councilor Peter Higbee.

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director and CEO; James Steele; and Kaela Tavares.

**OTHERS PRESENT VIRTUALLY:** Jack Ruderman, Manager, Public Affairs; Ben Frost, Managing Director, Policy and Public Affairs; and Michael LeVert, Principal of Stepwise.

### Call to Order

Michelle Moren-Grey called the meeting to order at 4:33 p.m.

### Minutes from July 29, 2021 Commission Meetings

Representative Gaetjens-Oleson requested a modification as to who seconded the motion at the last meeting. Ms. Moren-Grey indicated that she would go back and review the tape to include the Representative's name.

**MOTION: Representative Gaetjens-Oleson moved to approve the Minutes from July 29, 2021 as to be amended. It was seconded by Representative Martland.**

Representative Martland inquired whether the Minutes were filed with the copies of the presentations that were made, as well as the Agenda. Ms. Moren-Grey confirmed that all documents are attached to the Minutes. Representative Martland also requested that further detail be added regarding any action taken on discussions had during the meeting. Ms. Moren-Grey noted that she would go back and amend the Minutes to reflect more details and any actions that were taken, if any.

**Representative Kelley:** *I approve of the Minutes.*

**Representative Irving:** *I approve.*

**Representative Gorman:** *I approve.*

**Representative Martland:** I approve.  
**Representative Decoteau:** Abstain.  
**Representative Butson:** I approve.  
**Representative DeLalla:** I approve.  
**Representative Goulet:** I approve.  
**Representative Fish:** I approve.  
**Representative Swan:** Approve.  
**Representative Gaetjens-Oleson:** Approve.  
**Representative Cormier:** Abstain.  
**Representative Dindorf:** Abstain.  
**Representative Robitaille:** Approve.  
**Representative Higbee:** I approve.

**The motion carried. (12-3-0)**

### **Board of Directors**

- **Presentation of Slate**

*Ms. Moren-Grey provided an update regarding the most recent Board of Directors meeting, wherein Doug Grant stepped down from the Board. She noted that Michele Cormier stepped into his place for Representative, and that the position of Chair was filled at that meeting with Paul Robitaille. She added that Representative Robitaille's former position as Secretary was then filled with Representative Gaetjens-Oleson.*

*Representative Martland went over the proposed slate of Officers, as follows:*

- *Paul Robitaille, Chair*
- *Robin Irving, Vice Chair*
- *Jennifer Fish, Treasurer*
- *Benjamin Gaetjens-Oleson, Secretary*
- *Carl Martland, Board Member*
- *Mark Dindorf, Board Member*
- *Mark Decoteau, Board Member*

**MOTION: Representative Martland moved to approve the Members and Officers of the Board of Directors. It was seconded by Representative DeLalla.**

**Representative Kelley:** I approve.  
**Representative Irving:** I approve.  
**Representative Gorman:** I approve.  
**Representative Martland:** I approve.  
**Representative Decoteau:** I approve.  
**Representative Butson:** I approve.  
**Representative DeLalla:** I approve.  
**Representative Goulet:** I approve.  
**Representative Fish:** I approve.  
**Representative Swan:** Approve.  
**Representative Gaetjens-Oleson:** Approve.  
**Representative Cormier:** Approve.

*Representative Dindorf: Approve.*  
*Representative Robitaille: Yes.*  
*Representative Higbee: I approve, as well.*

**The motion carried. (15-0-0)**

### **Byway Enhancement Awards**

Representative Martland indicated that there's another round for Byway Enhancement Awards where nominations are due a week from Friday. He added that the notion is to highlight things that are done to improve the stops along the byway, whether it's for a picnic area, or whether, or whether it's to read a historical marker. He presented a PowerPoint slideshow. Discussion was had regarding the status of the marker for the log run in Stratford.

Ms. Moren-Grey noted that the nomination is an application form.

### **Other Business**

Ms. Moren-Grey stated that the other item included in the Commission's packet is the EV charging stations, the RFP from the State. She added that a couple of email blasts have been sent out regarding this opportunity, and that there is a link to the website and a recording to the webinar for anyone interested in reviewing it. She suggested reaching out to herself and Melissa if anyone needs assistance with pursuing this opportunity.

Kaela Tavares went over the current work with Business and Economic Affairs (BEA) and Housing. She indicated that one thing that's been coming along since August is work coming through BEA. She stated that they received ARPA money to support their efforts and she went over what those efforts are.

Ms. Moren-Grey offered assistance regarding the utilization of ARPA funds for municipalities.

Ms. Moren-Grey mentioned the Coos County Broadband Committee has been meeting for about a year in August. She stated that they just put an RFP out to do the broadband planning including mapping phase, and she laid out the details of the current phase and the timeline of future phases. She offered assistance with any communities interested in broadband.

Representative Swan requested that North Country Council address solid waste issues in the North Country. He went over a brief background regarding the region in terms of solid waste, as well as highlighted the issue regarding the spread of misinformation. Discussion was had clarifying accuracy of information on the internet, the allegations of the spreading of misinformation, as well as the State's planning process concerning solid waste, including the proposed landfill.

Further discussion was had regarding drafting a letter to address the proposed landfill that should go to any hearing that is held on any kind of Permits or comments on the proposed site. The Commission went over what the letter would address, including the issue that the proposed site may or may not align with regional plans and/or may or may not impact the region.

Representative Martland wanted to make note that the letter can be issued by North Country Council. Discussion was had regarding whether the NCC would be addressing one specific project, or the entire review process that the State is undertaking in terms of solid waste regulations. Further discussion was had regarding who should review and approve the letter, once it is drafted,

as well as whether it would be individual towns or the entire region being represented in the letter. It was determined that the letter be reviewed by NCC BOD.

## **Presentation - Looking Through the Window of Housing in the North Country**

Ms. Tavares introduced the speakers for today and gave a brief description of the upcoming presentation. Jack Ruderman made a presentation, with the assistance of a PowerPoint, wherein he provided a background regarding New Hampshire Housing and information regarding the current housing market in the North Country.

Michael LeVert and Ms. Tavares continued the presentation, with the assistance of a PowerPoint. Mr. LeVert went over his takeaways from the research conducted during the housing needs analysis. He noted that there were seven findings, which are outlined on the slides.

Ms. Tavares in her presentation highlighted the employers' perspective regarding employee housing. Mr. LeVert spoke about the impacts of COVID on the housing market.

Ben Frost discussed the data on the housing market through the first part of 2021. He noted that, as of September 2020, the median sales price is \$179,000, which is a 40% increase over the same period in 2020.

Mr. Frost spoke about who is purchasing and where they are purchasing the homes in Coos County. He stated that one of the major aspects of this project was looking at the local Regulations of communities in the North Country, wherein they reviewed 31 different communities that have zoning to analyze the types of Regulations they had. He went over what their review uncovered. He touched on issues that are being faced in the housing market. He went over Policy recommendations, which were outlined on the slides.

The following questions were posed from the Commission:

- Q. I was just curious if you've seen an increase in either hourly wages, or salaries, as a result from business community to obviously attract much-needed workers. Have you seen an increase?
- A. That's a great question. I only referred anecdotally in sort of bits and pieces about it. So I'm going to share the one anecdote that I've kind of heard that illustrates that some of that is starting to happen, and it's Santa's Village. The local newspapers a few months ago ran an ad saying that Santa's Village was increasing their wage rates, offering to help people find housing, and doing all of that to try and make sure they were going to be able to open this season.
- Q. If you go strictly on a supply/demand model for jobs, why wouldn't you just starve them by not providing the housing so that they wouldn't come here? Or is the incentivization of creating jobs based on the fact that there are so many people coming to the North Country?
- A. I think there's a piece to that. First of all, I don't think there's a crystal ball or even one way that addresses this. And I think we've seen in COVID, we sort of saw this speeding up of people who were moving, buying that retirement home. What's interesting is that when that pressure comes, the pressures, when we hear about them, very much they compound as you move down the income scale.

Discussion was had regarding the current housing trends, from a local perspective, and potential steps that can be taken to resolve some of the issues. Further discussion was had regarding the impact of short-term rentals to the housing market nationwide.

### **Public Comment**

None.

### **Adjourn**

**MOTION: Representative Irving moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:51 p.m. It was seconded by Representative Butson.**

**The motion carried.**

Respectfully Submitted,

Victoria O'Connor, Recording Secretary  
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