



NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL ANNUAL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

**AHEAD Conference Room Mt Eustis Commons | 262 Cottage Street Littleton
Wednesday, July 24, 2024 | 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

Representatives Present: Mark Decoteau (virtual), Vicki DeLalla, Charles Goulet, Mark Dindorf, Sandra Butson, Michele Cormier, Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Paul Robitaille, Ray Gorman, Gil Rand, Tim Sappington, John Carpenter, Stan Judge, Carl Martland, Jon Swan, Cassandra Mason, Dan Whittet, Steven Schwartz, Pat Garvin

Guests: Jay Poulin HEB Engineering, Rip Patten Credere Associates, Dave Walker Hart’s Location Board of Selectman

Staff Present: Michelle Moren-Grey; James Steele, Taylor Roy, Countney Bowler, Angela Cleveland (virtual), Nick Altonaga (virtual).

Call to Order & Welcome

Representative & Chair Robitaille welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 4:08 pm.

A round table of introductions was made.

Minutes from November 30, 2023 Commission Meeting Approved

MOTION Representative Comier moved to approve the minutes. Representative Judge seconded it. No discussion. All in favor. Motion Carried

Representative & Chair Robitaille turned the meeting over to Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director of North Country Council.

Ms. Moren-Grey reviewed the agenda and welcomed new representatives to the full commission meeting.

Overview

History & Role of Regional Planning Commissions

Ms. Moren-Grey provided an overview of the history and role of Regional Planning Commissions (see attached presentation). Ms. Moren-Grey reminded the group that the Council’s outreach material has a list of the Council’s services.

Questions: Representative Swan asked if we are aware that HB 1221 was signed by the Governor that adds landfills to DRI. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that yes we are aware that it passed.

Highlights of FY2024

Ms. Moren-Grey provided highlights of FY 2024 work plan. Reminding the group that this is not a comprehensive list, of the work plan Ms. Moren-Grey reviewed the following:

- NH CDFA, CDBG Grant Administration
- Local Contracts (master plan updates, capital improvement plan updates, land use planning support)
- Technical assistance and project development service’s for NBRC applicants and grantees
- Housing Opportunity Planning Grants – wrapping up this last round and looking forward to the next potential round
- Regional – Update of the Regional Plan, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), Ten Year Transportation Plan project solicitation and support to the National Collaborative for Digital Equity for the facilitation of Coös County Broadband Committee & broadband work in the county

- Climate Resiliency HUB – through the work of North Country Rising and Collaborative work through EDA Grant lead by Stacey Doll the Climate Resiliency HUB was developed by Stacy and Cathlin Lord.

Review FY2024

Mr. Steele provided an overview of FY2024 financials and reviewed the snapshot (attached) noting the following:

- Sixth year that the Council has been on the positive side
- October of 2023 there was a loss as a result reduced billable time due to unforeseen staff extended medical leave and timing of audit bill.
- Added an insured sweep account to protect funds over \$250,000 threshold for being insured.
- Net position positive \$318,352, five years ago the net position was negative \$165,000.
- Local portion of revenue has increased to 30% historically this was around 10%.

Approval of FY25 Draft Budget & Work Plan

Mr. Steele presented the FY2025 draft budget (attached) reviewing sources of revenue and expenses, changes and pending projects/contracts.

Question – how are municipalities assessed for membership dues? The formula is based on population, valuation and amount that is needed to be raised. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that since start of COVID the Council has reduced and held dues at that discounted rate.

Federal grants are they secured and are they federal FY year? Yes, they are secured and currently active running on different FY years depending on funder and grant type.

MOTION Representative, Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson moved to approve the FY2025 draft budget as presented. Representative Dindorf seconded it. No discussion. All in favor. Motion Carried.

Ms. Moren-Grey introduced two guest consultants: Jay Poulin from HEB Engineering – HEB Engineering is the Councils current on-call engineer support though the UPWP contract. Rip Patten from Credere Associates was the Council's environmental engineering firm throughout the past Brownfield Grant.

Nomination of Officers

Representative & Board Member Martland presented the slate of officers:

- Paul Robitaille – Chair
- Ben Gaetjens-Oleson – Vice Chair
- Mark Decoteau – Treasurer
- Carl Martland – Member
- Mark Dindorf – Member

Representative & Board Member Martland ask if there are any other nominations- none

MOTION Representative & Member Martland moved to approve the slate of officers as presented. Representative Butson seconded it. No discussion. All in favor. Motion Carried.

Representative & Board Member Martland thanked the officers for their continued participation.

Update of the Regional Plan

Ms. Cleveland, Planning Coordinator, introduced herself and provided the group with update of the regional plan and progress. Ms. Cleveland reminded the group that as an RPC we are tasked with development of a coordinated plan. The update of the regional plan is being supported through a grant via HUD and assistance through Stratford RPC. All nine RPC's are updating regional plans during the same timeframe. Currently the

Council has two surveys that are live, and we are attending existing events to gain input from residents & businesses (to date we have attended three events). We are asking what people appreciate about the region and what they want to see changed or improved.

Ms. Traylor Roy, Planning Assistant distributed the survey to the group.

Representative Swan commented on the permitting Grantie State Landfill are there any thoughts regarding impact to traffic patterns, transportation and regional plan. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that this has the potential to come out in the feedback received through the current active surveys. Currently we have not been engaged in conducting traffic surveys around this.

Ms. Moren-Grey reviewed opportunities for participation through committees.

Question regarding incorporating single town's Master Plans into the regional plan, while we won't necessary incorporate individual Master Plans into the regional plan they will be looked at for like themes for incorporation.

Ten Year Plan Update

Mr. Altonaga, Transportation Planner, provided an update about the ten-year plan process. The TYP is a two-year cycle and we just finished solicitation of TYP Projects and received 19. These will be reviewed against the criteria and ranked to be reviewed and approved by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The top two to three will be moved to engineering for conceptual design. In the late fall the top ranked project goes to NHDOT for review.

Regional Traffic Counts are underway the Council conducts between 160 to 170 counts for NHDOT. Local counts can be requested by contacting the Council. These counts provide data to support local planning and project efforts.

Mr. Altonaga reminded the group of other data collection the Council can assist with such as traffic calming projects, road surface management and stream crossings.

Member Martland commented that the Regional Transportation Plan does have identified freight routes and the proposed GSL is not located on a freight route.

Discussion occurred regarding EV Charging Corridors in the region.

Comment regarding climate change an impact on local road infrastructure. Mr. Altonaga commented on the projects, services and outreach to communities that incorporate this information.

Ms. Moren-Grey – recognized Cathlin Lord and Kevin Driscoll that are not here who conduct traffic counts and support a majority of the transportation fieldwork.

Other Business

Northern Border Regional Commission – Catalyst Grant round is open reach out to the Council if you are looking for project coaching, idea development and technical assistance.

NHBEA Office of Broadband Initiatives – 196m for NTIA BEAD funding to be awarded in support of broadband investment. The BEAD Challenge is happening if there is a location that is unserved or underserved, submitting a challenge is recommended. For questions reach out to Ms. Moren-Grey.

Ms. Moren-Grey shared the new guide book for representatives in the materials and thanked Courtney Bowler, Planning Assistant, for her work on this material and support behind the scene to make things happen.

Representative Swan commented that with the current round of permitting for GSL and that it runs counter to what North Country Council's work represents, Representative Swan still welcomes a letter to NHDES, NHDOT, Army Corp Engineers in opposition to the GSL project.

Representative and Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson recognized the North Country Council staff for another positive year and commenting that it was not that long ago that the Council was not in the black and it was challenging times. Thank you to the great work of the current staff but also for the staff that have stuck with it through the challenging & tough times to get the Council to where it is today.

Representative and Chair Robitaille thanked the Representatives for their dedicated participation to their municipalities as well as the work of the Council.

Public Comment

none

MOTION Representative Dindorf moved to adjourn. Representative and Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson seconded it. No discussion. All in favor. Motion Carried

The meeting Adjourned 5:56 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director
