



**North Country Council
Board of Directors Meeting
August 10, 2016
Mount Eustis Commons, Littleton, NH**

Board Present:

Bill Andreas, Randolph
Chris Thayer, Sugar Hill
Vicki DeLalla, Stratford
Ben Oleson, Lancaster
Bob deAngeles, Dalton

Guests:

Neil McIver, Plymouth
Jo Lacaillade, Haverhill
Robin Irving, Northumberland
Carl Martland, Sugar Hill

Staff:

Barbara Robinson
James Steele

Called to Order: The meeting was called to order at 9:34 am. William Andreas, Chair, thanked everyone for attending, welcomed prospective Board Members, and asked each person at the meeting to introduce themselves indicating the town they represent.

The Minutes from July were then reviewed. There was discussion regarding the level of detail needed. It was agreed that the real need for detail is in the resolutions in the minutes and quotations tied to people is not necessary. Bob indicated that he was not noted as present in the minutes.

Bill entertained a motion by Ben to approve the minutes as corrected. Bob seconded, unanimously approved by all Board Members.

Business Items:

Staffing Organization:

Barbara noted that the front office is being realigned to address changes in staffing.

Committee Reports:

Bill provided a general overview of committees, their importance to North Country Council and its communities—

- The Executive Committee is comprised of the officers of the Board of Directors.

- There are a number of committees that pertain to the operations of the council itself in which Board Members are engaged.
- There are also a number of additional committees that are driven by their specific region or purposes and NCC has a representative on those committees.

Bill also noted that NCC representatives from the region's communities have traditionally been called Reps but are actually Commissioners of the planning commission. He then called for Committee Reports.

Committee Reports:

Finance Committee

The audit which is still in process is going well. Monthly financials will be reviewed by the Board at the next meeting.

Loan Committee

NCC is actively engaged in placing the RLF to another entity since it is not economically sustainable for NCC to manage the fund long-term due to cost of administration and other factors.

Chris added that because of these reasons and because of the strategic planning NCC has done in the past this process is a realignment of not only NCC's mission, but a revolving loan fund where there are other worthy organizations in the region where it is in their wheelhouse. NCC is seeking to transfer the RLF provided they are interested, provided the government entities allow us to do this, thereby helping NCC commit to what we focus on and what we do well—which is: planning, community support, and economic development. So, it is a realignment of our mission, which in a lean organization we want to make sure we are fulfilling our mission and service to our communities first and foremost—to be sure the goal is to be 100% focused on our 51 communities paying-in since they see the value of planning through projects and services.

Bill added that there is only one other planning commission in New England that has its own Revolving Loan Fund and that is located in Central Maine. The reality is: NCC could not grow the fund to justify adding specialized staff.

The loan committee, as discussed here, is to help businesses either in start-up or up-and-running and struggling to maintain, grow, and move forward. NCC has one current business that is having some financial difficulty but all the other businesses we are working with are current at this time. Barbara has reached out to several different parties who may be interested in the transfer of the fund. However, NCC's hands are very much tied by EDA in terms of what they will accept. So when the parties have their proposals in place, NCC will then reach out to EDA to begin the process with them.

Personnel Committee

Chris, Chair of the committee, provided an overview and update:

The Committee did not meet in July. The next meeting is scheduled for August 29th at 3:00PM at NCC offices. The Personnel Committee deals with personnel issues, policy manual updates, and policies themselves—to be compliant. In addition, the committee provides support to the Executive Director as Barbara navigates the fact that we have a small dedicated core staff of planning experts that the community values and the challenge she spoke of as having financial constraints. The Committee has

continued to look at structure, and NCC has recently hired some terrific planners that have taken the place of planners that have left our region. In addition, we are looking at a proposal for a retirement policy that will be much more beneficial than it is today—both for current staff, but also to potential staff in the recruitment of staff. The committee is also entertaining 457b proposals with the intention of bringing forward for consideration retirement planning options that are mindful of employee value. In addition, the committee also looks at health insurance that is also fair for NCC as a municipal entity— not as a non-profit. Barbara added NCC is changing the health insurance plan year to be in alignment with NCC's fiscal year. Chris also noted that the committee serves as a sounding board for personnel issues which occur sporadically to apply policy and talk through with staff.

Other Committee Reports

New Hampshire Association of RPCs (NHARPC)

The next meeting will be in Concord to scope the goals going forward. NHARPC been a good association for monitoring legislation in Concord that are pertinent to Regional Planning Commissions. There is often a review of legislation and what has been helpful in the past. Chris noted that this is an excellent committee for Commissioners to engage and help their region and communities since two Board Members or a Board Member and a Representative/Commissioner can serve on the committee.

Connecticut River Joint Commissions (CRJC)

The CRJC met in June and will be meeting in the coming week. This meeting will include a presentation from the Nature Conservancy on a new program that they developed on monitoring river levels and the effect on resources. The CRJC is also monitoring of the TransCanada Dam relicensing on stretches of the river, moving forward with educational efforts related to the river and the watershed tributaries, the potential proposal of a mobile exhibit on the Connecticut River Watershed and support through funding of river cleanup days...there are a variety of policy, program and education initiatives going on besides the normal business of financial reviews. Chris noted that the majority of the work done by the commission is by 5 or 6 local river advisory committees. Both commissioners and board members are always welcome to attend those meetings.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

Next CEDS meeting will take place September 9th in at the Woodstock Station. The CEDS committee is mandated by our CEDS plan as being an EDA designated Economic Development District. It provides an opportunity for Economic Officials, interested parties, and Regional Leaders to provide updates, and also to work economic development projects through a process.

Bill noted that NCC is an economic development district in addition to being a regional planning commission, and over the year's millions of federal dollars have funneled into the area for infrastructure primarily but also projects. Others involved include other federal agencies. The primary one, though being EDA. Anyone is encouraged to attend the CEDS committee. It is a very active committee and they have subcommittees as well for particular projects. CEDS is not limited to the number of people it can have. Chris recommended looking at the CEDS plan which speaks to the breadth and depth of the CEDS activities. The CEDs plan gets a complete update every five years and an annual update of projects each year. Chris added that it is one of the best ways that the congressional representatives stay in touch with the work of the council and the region. Barbara noted that the plan is available on the NCC website.

Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

Ben noted that there was a good meeting & presentation on road surveys and a pilot program through DOT at the last meeting. The focus is toward developing a process and offering for all the regional planning commissions who took part in training and development in their regions can use. There is hope of development of an easy to use process which can be rolled-out to a broader area which will be quite a benefit to the communities...they also talked about culverts and other types of critical infrastructures at the meeting. The TAC will be reviewing 10-11 projects in the coming months for the Federal funding for municipal projects where letters of interest were submitted and the committee prioritizes the projects and sends this information on to DOT—which they review and then fund based on what they have the money for. Ben added that the Planning Commissions through the TAC gets to have a say in what is important in the region and what might not be.

Dartmouth Regional Technology Center (DRTC)

Bill provided an overview of the DRTC project incubator for tech companies and the collation between Grafton Economic Development Council (GEDC) and NCC and the DRTC which was formed to help provide a network for those seeking business incubation opportunities. During the first phase of the project a building was constructed that cost about 7 million dollars (mostly EDA funded but there were also funds from USDA, BFA and other agencies involved in funding that project). Subsequently, about 4 years ago there was an expansion at the DRTC since it was full and they built another building 60-70K sq. ft. for phase-two of the project with another 6-7 million dollars in federal funding. The DRTC is 'owned' by NCC and the GEDC. The value of that is 1\$ because it is all federal money and it is not any of our money, but a lot of our time and expertise went into it as well as from GEDC. Bill also noted that there has been a change in governance over the past couple of years. The owners of the buildings caused a change in the Board, so the original goal of economic development was re-emphasized.

Barbara added: on Thursday 8/11 there will be a celebration at the DRTC for the completion and opening of the bridge between the two buildings. NCC, DRED, GEDC and the DRTC will be actively seeking ways to bring some of the businesses up to our region as they move forward with the long term vision.

Bob inquired if there is a process moving forward to actively cultivate ways to facilitate the economic development councils and others to toward getting the businesses to move up here...putting a screening on the front-end and a trigger on the back-end to get the companies to move up here. Barbara agreed that this is a good focus, but at this point the DRTC board is in the preliminary stages of making that happen—since businesses of the incubator tend to want to stay in the Hanover-Lebanon area and since almost all the businesses are technology and/or medically focused and connected with Dartmouth in some way.

Bill added the DRTC is NCC's biggest project at 14 million dollars.

Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund

This Advisory Committee is currently dormant. There will be no update until the 2017 grant writing funding cycle Nov-Dec. There is the intention for the fund to spend itself dry, but there are still significant monies available. It was suggested that this may be a good committee for Ben to consider.

Rail and Transit

No report. Rob Nadler from Albany is currently the NCC Representative on this committee whenever the governing body decides to activate the advisory committee.

There was then discussion regarding the benefit of trail transportation for northern NH. Key highlights of the discussion include:

- Options other than for tourists versus the development of a well-planned bus transportation system to serve the region.
- Whitefield is looking at the potential of connecting the Mountain View Grand to the Mt. Washington Hotel via rail.
- Rail is a critical infrastructure in manufacturing related contexts such as in Northumberland. The mill-site is purchasing the train station and the whole industrial park will be consistent with that whole cultural aspect. They will be creating a hub there and filling and transporting off the rail. Robin noted it has the potential to be really huge for Northumberland.
- Rail planning is a long term process and there is opportunity for NCC and others to support this effort.

Informational/Questions/Other Business:

Board Membership updates

Bill provided the following overview:

Board members are elected by the Commissioners and they meet quarterly. There are annual terms. Board meetings are generally monthly by statute must meet 6 times per year. In terms of how the work gets done. First and foremost, it is the staff. They are doing the work, they are coordinating it, and they are involved in most every aspect of what goes on.

From there, it is the committees that do a lot of the heavy lifting as well—especially the committees that are not just made of NCC members and from the committees they make recommendations and the Board approves the recommendations. If it is budgetary, then it goes to the commissioners—the work plan for the coming year is also approved by the Commissioners. So, in terms of going on the board, the Board can appoint interim Board Members to fill vacancies that have occurred. But then, they are confirmed at the annual meeting. In order to be a Board Member members have to be an appointed commissioner by their town.

The planning board, typically, but not always makes a recommendation to the select board for commissioners. Each community and each county can have two commissioners to represent their communities and the counties and if a town has more than 10K people they can have a third (which is one town (Berlin) in our region). Ultimately it is typically the select board that makes the decision.

Bill entertained a motion moved by Ben seconded by Vicki to appoint recommended members to the Board:

Neil MacIver, Plymouth

Jo Lacaillade, Haverhill

Robin Irving, Northumberland

All approved.

Note: Carl Martland, Sugar Hill will consider this opportunity to serve and contact his Select Board.

Representatives/Commissioners Meeting August 24th

A sample packet was provided of the materials for the upcoming Reps/Commissioners meeting on 8/24/15 including the proposed work plan, and budget. Regan Pride will give a presentation on solid Waste. NCC Commissioners/Representatives will be voting on NCC updated Bylaws at the August meeting.

NCC's Annual meeting will take place at the Common Man Inn in Plymouth October 27th to celebrate the accomplishments of the organization with engaging presentation(s). Don Birx, President of PSU, will be the Keynote speaker—

The Business Meeting for Representatives/Commissioners Meeting October 27th will also take place during this event

NCC is looking to have a strong board in the New Year. We have some seasoned people cycling off the board after many years of valued service because they have new responsibilities that conflict or because they are retiring. The NCC Commissioners/Representatives will be voting on the new Board of Directors at the Annual Meeting.

Bill then called for a motion to Adjourn. Ben so moved, Earl seconded. Approved by all. Meeting Adjourned at 10:51 a.m.

Respectively Submitted,

Barbara Robinson