

# Bennington County Regional Commission

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Friday - April 29, 2022**  
**8:30 AM**  
**Meeting Conducted via ZOOM**

Present: Janet Hurley, Cinda Morse, John LaVecchia, Nick Zaiac, James Salerno, Dimitri Garder  
Jim Sullivan and Bill Colvin (staff)

1. Approval of February 25, 2022 Minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes as submitted by Morse. Second by Zaiac. Passed unanimously.

2. Staffing Needs and Prospects

Sullivan discussed the need for a Financial and Project Management Assistant. Just advertised this job as a part-time (0.5-0.6 FTE) position and are hoping to get a good response. The position was deemed necessary, and made financially viable, by several new grant programs about to get underway, including three grants related to various public health initiatives, the Bennington Armory building reuse study, a Dorset housing study, and an "Afterschool and Summer Expanding Access" grant to a nonprofit (Sage Street Mill) where the BCRC will be serving as fiscal agent (our fee will be up to \$14,925). Our administrative and project management capacity hasn't kept up with the growth of new programs so we are hoping this move will help with existing workload and timeliness of reporting while also presenting future opportunities for the BCRC to assist other organizations that need fiscal agent support to receive grants.

Morse discussed the potential value of ultimately having a high-level financial director to help with overall organizational planning and management. Hurley agreed and discussed the potential for supporting additional training, as needed, for the Financial Manager. She also stated that the BCRC shouldn't hire staff on a PT/hourly basis, with limited access to benefits, if possible.

Sullivan reviewed the pending Municipal Building Energy initiative which seems likely to pass both houses of the Legislature, so planning is underway to determine how to best handle the work. The program would be overseen by VT BGS and would provide funding for retrofits (energy audits, weatherization, and heating system changes) at eligible municipal buildings, with RPCs essentially serving as local project managers. Because we don't yet know the number of projects in our region, or when various aspects of the work would begin, and because of the

nature of the work, it makes sense to split this effort between existing staff (Callie Fishburn's evolving role as regional energy coordinator) and a contractor. Callie would provide outreach to municipalities and local energy committees to identify eligible buildings and interest while a contractor would deal with technical aspects of RFPs for energy audits and construction and coordinate directly with the energy and building contractors.

### 3. Office Needs

With new staff and already making use of the vacant office space next door, Sullivan has had further conversations with the building manager about leasing that flood-prone space (which is nice, but for the occasional flood that occurs when there is a particularly intense thunderstorm that overwhelms the stormwater system on South Street). Have asked for some improvements to address the flooding – including replacing carpet with tile in the most susceptible part of the office suite and addition of a door that would restrict flooding into the main part of the office. Colvin noted the need for the space for staff and for meetings that already are happening regularly in the adjacent suite. BCRC's wifi has been upgraded and positioned so that it covers the space, and our TV (used for presentations) has been moved into that room. Sullivan trying to meet the building manager on site and is seeking to negotiate a rate, lower on a sf basis than what is paid for the currently leased space. Hurley also reminded everyone that space is available in the Manchester Town Offices for BCRC staff as needed. More to come....

### 4. Annual Meeting - May 19

We will be meeting in the Kilburn Meeting Room at the Manchester Town Office and will be purchasing sandwiches from Zoey's Deli in Manchester (thanks to Janet on both counts!). A remote option will be available. Vermont's Commissioner of Housing and Community Development, Josh Hanford, has confirmed that he will be joining us to speak on housing issues and our Bongartz Award recipient, Rose Keough of Sunderland, plans to attend. There will be a Director's report to highlight accomplishments from last year (maybe the last couple of years given pandemic-induced isolation) and a look ahead, focusing on some of the new initiatives the BCRC is taking on, from public health to housing to municipal energy, and everything now being viewed through a "DEI" lens. Sullivan will confirm with Janet that the meeting zoom link works and will also coordinate to pick up and pay for the food.

### 5. Budget Outlook for FY 2023

Sullivan noted that the BCRC has received several new grants (those noted above and a few more that are underway), our VTrans transportation grant is supposed to increase due to a boost in the base and an add-on project about regional bike routes, and our ACCD planning grant may go up as much as 40%, or \$90,000 (recent bulletin: ACCD got their fingers in the mix and, as a result, our increase will be closer to \$60,000 – good, but not what we had expected). We also have about \$800,00 in savings (money market and investment accounts, although approximately \$140,000 of that total is pre-paid pass thru money that is committed to contractors). With that, and no major revenue reductions, we should be ok for the new PT administrative position and expanded office, as well as reasonable raises for staff. Noting the 8+% inflation, but also noting that we can't sustain across the board salary increases at that level, Sullivan said he is looking at a 4% salary increase (slightly higher, merit based, for a couple of staff) as well as a 3% end-of-year bonus. All noted that compensation levels need to

recognize staffs' value to the organization and the inflation pressures this year, without getting the BCRC into a financial bind for FY 2024.

## 6. Program Updates

- Community and Economic Development: Bill summarized and answered questions regarding:
  - Public Health projects and staffing (3 new grants)
  - Putnam Phase II (open house, housing options forum, coming feasibility and funding work – with new BCRC agreement in place)
  - Armory Reuse Study
  - Dorset Housing Study
  - Northshire and Bennington Career/Job events
  - Southern Vermont Economy Summit
  - Made note of Jonathan's certification in economic development; outstanding achievement that is a culmination of several years of work and study
- Planning Programs: Jim summarized and answered questions regarding:
  - Solid Waste program and Scott Grimm-Lyon's work on the HHW facility and events
  - Emergency Management – Allison Strohl's work on municipal hazard mitigation plans, upcoming maternity leave, and two flood hazard/resilience grants just approved for areas along Bourn Brook and Lye Brook in Manchester
  - Ongoing technical planning work for most towns and villages
  - Municipal consultations completed (6)
  - Municipal bylaw updates underway (3 of 9 "bylaw modernization" projects started and the Arlington comprehensive bylaw a priority for Cat Bryars)
  - Sage Street Mill summer/after-school art and gardening grant (BCRC fiscal agent)
  - New transportation project management jobs in Shaftsbury and Dorset

## 7. Other Business and Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jim Sullivan  
Director