



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 12, 2021
Conference Call

Executive Committee members present: M. Tuttle, A. Weinhausen, S. Lotspeich, D. Rugh, D. White, C. Bryars, R. Francis, C. Sawyer, R. Venkataraman, E. Vorwald and S. Westa

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Rod Francis
VT Downtown Board Alt.

Chip Sawyer
VT Downtown Board Rep.

Ravi Venkataraman, AICP
Professional Development
Committee Chair

Eric Vorwald, AICP

Sue Westa, AICP

VPA Members: None

Meeting began at 10:00 a.m.

1. Agenda Modifications

None.

2. Announcements

M. Tuttle will be running for NNECAPA President in 2022, and as a result, will be stepping down as VPA President at the conclusion of this year. Also, the NNECAPA is still looking for a VPA member to serve on the EC this coming year, so if any members are interested, they should contact M. Tuttle.

3. Minutes of February 11, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

S. Lotspeich suggested some revisions to the minutes.

Action: Motion to approve the minutes of the February 11, 2021 Executive Committee meeting as revised: 1) A. Weinhausen. 2) C. Bryars. *Motion passes unanimously.*

4. Treasurer's Report for February 2021

S. Lotspeich gave the Treasurer's Reports for February 2021. There was some activity in February. The Capitol Copy mailbox fee increased from \$60 to \$90 for six months. Also, M. Tuttle subscribed to Survey Monkey for one month at \$99 for the legislative activities survey. The checking account balance is still very healthy. S. Lotspeich explained how the Edwards Jones CD worked since the Treasurer's Report makes it look like the CD is losing money, but it is not. Instead, VPA has to pay a fee to



A section of the
**Northern New England Chapter
American Planning Association**
nne.planning.org/sections/Vermont

The Vermont Planners Association (VPA) is a non-profit advocacy and educational organization of planners and related professionals. We are dedicated to advancing community planning in Vermont at the local, regional, and state levels, to foster vibrant communities and a healthy environment.

purchase the CD, which is then invested by Edward Jones in the bond market. This in turn generates the yield on the investment. M. Tuttle noted that VPA has not received the membership dues payment from NNECAPA yet, but it will be coming soon.

Action: Motion to approve the February Treasurer’s Report: 1) D. White. 2) D. Rugh. *Motion passes unanimously.*

5. Committee Reports & Officer Round Table

A. Awards Committee

C. Bryars gave the report and aside from recommending award winners, she noted that A. Graminski is stepping off the Awards Committee to take a new position in Sommerville, MA. As a result, C. Bryars and D. Rugh are the only two members on the committee, but more are needed to assist with the awards process.

B. Professional Development Committee

R. Venkataraman reported that the Committee is planning three webinars. The first will likely be on Aging in Place. The second is likely to focus on Rural Aging in Place, which will look at planning for and developing accessory dwelling units. The last topic will probably relate to comprehensive planning for aging in place, such as at senior and assisted living communities.

C. Communications Committee

S. Westa has been updating VPA’s website with Legislative Committee and EC minutes. M. Tuttle said that she and S. Westa are seeking news, notes and other information for the next edition of NNECAPA’s Yankee Planner newsletter.

D. Nominating Committee

S. Westa had no report.

E. NNECAPA

D. White reported that 2021 NNECAPA Conference planning is on-going. A survey was distributed to poll membership to see if there is interest in traveling to Burlington for the conference. Early results indicate that the NNECAPA membership is optimistic about attending the conference, so the conference planning committee will continue its work with the expectation that the conference will be held in-person as planned. Calls for sponsors and programming are to go out in the coming weeks.

F. Legislative Committee

A. Weinhagen reports that there was a flurry of activity at the Statehouse this past week because the date of the EC meeting is the Legislature’s “cross-over deadline” for non-financial

legislation. Next week is the cross-over deadline for financial bills. After this week, the Committee will have a better idea of which bills will be more likely to pass this year. As part of his work on the Committee, R. Francis is compiling a summary of VPA's past positions on the Act 250 Reform legislation to assist with future testimony on that legislation. The Committee is tracking H.140, which is an Act 250 Reform bill, but it will not make crossover and won't pass this year. Another bill being tracked is S.133, the project-based TIF bill. S. Jensen has been testifying on this legislation, and it is expected that this will make cross-over because Sen. Sirotkin is pushing for it to move forward. C. Bryars commented that the format of the new, weekly Legislative Committee reports has been excellent, and the "group effort" in creating the Committee's reports has not gone unnoticed.

G. Downtown Board Report

C. Sawyer stated that the February Vermont Downtown Board meeting was cancelled at the last minute somewhat without explanation. There were a few Village Center designations to be considered, and Berlin's New Town Center application was also up for consideration. M. Tuttle reported that at least one VPA member expressed a concern about the procedure for how applications get before the Board, especially when DHCD Staff does not necessarily agree with an application either in whole or in part. Also, there were concerns expressed that some board members from State agencies participate both in review of the application and then can vote for it as a member, or designated member, of the Board – e.g., some parties act as a reviewer of applications and as voting Board members. It was suggested that VPA discuss this process with other organizations on the Board because some feel there are issues with how the Board handles applications.

However, C. Sawyer noted that there have been a number of applications that the Board has considered that DHCD has expressed concerns about prior to their reaching the Board. It was suggested that after the Board hears the Berlin New Town Center application, C. Sawyer should note that VPA membership has raised these concerns with the Board's process, specifically regarding DHCD Staff's role in determining when an application is complete. The statute is not clear who gets to decide whether an application is complete, and in some instances, DHCD has been a stronger "gate keeper" than in other instances, depending on the nature of the application. The Town of Berlin's application was complete at the end of 2020, but it still has not had a hearing before the Board. The timing of awarding a designation also affects project's eligibility for funding, so there are real impacts from DHCD Staff's or the Board's delay.

6. Old Business

A. Legislative Program and Ad Hoc Committee Update

M. Tuttle reports that the Ad Hoc Committee has survey results. There were seventy-three total respondents, and about half said that they did not participate in legislative activities. M. Tuttle is working on a summary report. In general, the survey results indicated that respondents have significant levels of trust in, and support of, VPA's legislative activities and its sense of planning policies. Responses did not raise concerns regarding VPA's activities on some of the more controversial legislation last year. In general survey responses indicated that VPA was on the

right track, and it was apparent that the organization's efforts to keep membership informed of pending legislation is valuable from the respondents' perspective. Interestingly, survey respondents view VPA as both a planning technician organization and a planning advocacy organization. Of the respondents that only chose one, they viewed VPA as more of an organization for planning technicians. A third track was evident too. Some said VPA can be a technical advisor and then advocate for "good planning" such that its role was not really one or the other. The responses will next be shared with the Legislative Committee and then the entire membership. Overall, when it comes to VPA's legislative activities, there is a lot of support for the course VPA leadership is following.

B. NNECAPA Retreat

M. Tuttle reported that planning for the NNECAPA retreat scheduled for two half-days in April is moving forward.

On April 1st, there are three topics. The first is to streamline the process for finalizing the reorganization and combining all of the different aspects from each section into one, universal system for all sections. Also, making the transition from organizational memberships to individual memberships is also going to be key in the coming year or so. The EC is discovering that the NNECAPA EC's process for items like tracking membership and organizing events is not as smooth as it could be. Different systems can be integrated, or the organization can select different software for organizational and membership management. From the perspective of APA, NNECAPA has organizational categories that do not quite match up with APA's membership categories. However, when organizational memberships are phased out at the end of 2021, the NNECAPA and APA membership tracking/registration systems should become more integrated. Also, VPA has a separate rate for retired members that does not match APA's membership registration categories.

The second topic is financial policies. It is less significant, but leadership wants a policy for group rates for things like NNECAPA webinars that is consistent across the board.

Membership management is the last piece, especially as NNECAPA moves to phase out organizational memberships at the end of 2021. Also, there will be a discussion of what the dues amount will be in 2022. The \$80/year rate was only agreed to until the end of 2021. The new rate will be an important factor as NNECAPA plans for losing organizational memberships and trying to get those who are currently members through an organizational membership to renew as individual members.

For the April 8th session of the NNECAPA Retreat, the discussion will focus on structure of the NNECAPA EC and how the NNECAPA EC members are selected by the Sections. This will include a focus on how Section Representatives are selected. Also, there will be a discussion of how best to integrate student members into the organization now that VPA has 10 new student members.

The Retreat will also discuss a contingency plan for the 2021 NNECAPA Conference especially if reimbursements are needed. There's also unfinished work regarding the awards process. The

NNECAPA Awards and APA Awards processes do not exactly match up from a category perspective because APA made a number of changes. While VPA and NNECAPA aligned their two awards process about 5 or so years ago, so VPA's award winners can seamlessly transition to NNECAPA awards nominees, the same is not true for NNECAPA winners being nominated for APA awards. Lastly, there will be a discussion regarding NNECAPA scholarship for AICP exam and two sponsorships. D. White, R. Venkataraman, S. Lotspeich will all join M. Tuttle at the Retreat.

C. VPA Policy and Procedure Manual

M. Tuttle discussed updating VPA's policies and procedures manual now that NNECAPA has updated its own similar document. S. Lotspeich and D. Rugh will review. A number of "legacy VPA members" will be assisting to fill out the VPA history section of the policies and procedures manual.

7. New Business

A. 2021 Awards Selection

C. Bryars led off the discussion and stated that normally the EC follows NHPA recommendations as to award winners absent special circumstances. This is to assist in insulating the EC from allegations of favoritism. During this discussion, the EC members voted on the recommended winners from NHPA and decided to bestow a "Career Achievement" award in 2021 too. A number of EC members abstained from voting for award winners in certain categories when they were connected to the nominee or submitted the nomination.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:56 a.m. The next meeting is a Zoom meeting at 10:00 a.m. on April 9th.