



## **2020-2021 Officers**

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Alex Weinhagen  
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Steve Lotspeich, RLA  
*Treasurer*

David W. Rugh, Esq.  
*Secretary*

Vacant  
*Legislative Liaison*

David E. White, FAICP  
*NNECAPA Section Representative*

## **At-Large Members**

Catherine Bryars, *Awards Chair*

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*

# **Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, April 9, 2021**  
Conference Call

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

**VPA Members:** None

*Meeting began at 10:03 a.m.*

## **1. Agenda Modifications**

None.

## **2. Announcements**

None.

## **3. Minutes of March 12, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting**

*Action:* Motion approve minutes of March 12, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting: 1) S. Lotspeich. 2) R. Venkataraman. *Motion passes unanimously.*

## **4. Treasurer's Report for March 2021**

S. Lotspeich gave the Treasurer's Report for March 2021. VPA received its two annual income payments from NNECAPA in March. One was the \$3,000 Section "base payment" with the pro-rata membership payment of \$564. The other check was for VPA's share of the 2020 NNECAPA conference revenues in the amount of \$1,273.19.

S. Lotspeich described the status of VPA's CD with Edward Jones. D. Rugh asked about extending the CD or adding additional funds now that the operating account balance is quite healthy. If VPA was making another type of investment, other than a certificate of deposit, VPA would need an investment policy. S. Lotspeich said it appeared appropriate to add some additional funds to the CD. The EC discussed whether to increase amount of CD and/or invest in a CD with a longer term. Interest rates are so low that the benefit of a longer term CD is minimal compared



A section of the  
**Northern New England Chapter**  
**American Planning Association**  
[nneplanning.org/sections/Vermont](http://nneplanning.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.*

to the flexibility afforded to VPA by a short-term CD. The consensus from this discussion was to keep the short-term CD but add funds to it.

*Action:* Motion to add \$5,000 to VPA's short-term CD: 1) A. Weinhagen. 2) D. Rugh. *Motion passes unanimously.*

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

## 5. Committee Reports & Officer Round Table

### A. Legislative Committee

A. Weinhagen noted that VPA has been asked to testify on H.306/S.96. This bill proposes a study committee for a State Planning Office. Proposed testimony was in the VPA EC agenda packet. The Legislative Committee produced a one-page presentation on the bill and summary of VPA's proposed testimony. D. Schibler will take the lead on circulating VPA's position paper and testifying before the Legislature.

*Action:* Motion to approve position paper and testimony on H.306/S.96: 1) E. Vorwald. 2) R. Francis. *Motion passes unanimously.*

A. Weinhagen next described VPA's proposed testimony on S.101. This bill pertains to the modernization of housing and municipal bylaws. VPA testified on this bill back in February before the Senate. Since then, the bill has passed the Senate and is being considered in the House Natural Resources Committee, which asked for VPA to testify again. S.101 establishes a new focus within existing statutes for the Municipal Planning Grant program. It endeavors to encourage municipalities to update their bylaws to promote more housing. Originally there was new funding tied to the bill to fund these municipal bylaw improvement efforts; however, the Senate Appropriations Committee stripped the funding from the bill before it passed the Senate. Some have asked what the point of the bill was if it lacks funding to encourage municipal bylaw improvements since the Agency of Commerce and Community Development could just add housing promotion as a priority in the MPG application process. Beyond the bill's focus on bylaw modernization, there's new provisions to handle duplicity between municipal and State wastewater permitting in towns where there is municipal sewer service. The EC discussion then shifted to the density standards in the bill because the bill ties the receipt of funding to certain standards that are intended to promote housing. Such standards include allowing duplexes where single-family dwellings are allowed uses, addressing walkability and adopting a minimum density standard of four units per acre or 0.25-acre minimum lot sizes. These numbers are carried over from S.237 which was considered in the 2019-2020 legislative session. DHCD would like to see more density than 4 units per acre, but EC members noted that the standard works in some places, but not in others. Nonetheless, it has become the "de facto" standard DHCD has relied on as a minimum density for compact settlement patterns and award of funding.

The EC also discussed the timing of American Rescue Plan Act (“ARPA”) funding and whether the deadlines are sufficient to allow municipalities to go through the statutory planning process, which can take a year or more. In addition, if ARPA funding is allocated to RPCs, their assistance to towns needs to be timely in order for municipalities to take advantage of the funding. The EC felt that re-instatement of the funding portion of the S.101 is significant and that the organization needs to advocate heavily for it. It was noted that VPA’s position and testimony would make Sen. Sirokin happy, as well as VPA’s other partners like VLCT, especially since MPG program funding has been essentially flat over the last 7 or 8 years. In addition to the funding piece, the Legislative Committee and the EC suggested a few other tweaks to the bill language that provides standards or criteria for eligibility for funding. For example, currently communities are eligible for funding if they have both water and sewer service in the area, but the Legislative Committee and EC would like to see that eligibility be based on a municipality’s provision of either water service or sewer service, but not both. The EC also discussed that S.101 expands the Downtown and Village Center Tax Credit Program to include Neighborhood Development Areas. This expansion allows developers to access tax credits through the Neighborhood Development Area program, but in the process, the legislation does not raise the cap on the amount of tax credit funding available. The problem with not raising the cap is that the bill would increase competition and pit requests for tax credit funding in more urban communities that have Neighborhood Development Areas against requests from rural communities that do not have Neighborhood Development Area designations.

*Action:* Motion to approve proposed VPA testimony on S.101 1) E. Vorwald. 2) R. Francis.  
*Motion passes unanimously.*

## **B. Downtown Board**

C. Sawyer submitted his report via email. The Town of Berlin’s New Town Center application is going to be considered by the Downtown Board at its April meeting after being first reviewed at the Board’s March meeting when voting was deferred. D. Rugh noted that C. Sawyer was going to evaluate Berlin’s New Town Center application against statutory standards, which is the correct analysis and the proper way to reach a decision. D. Rugh also noted that the EC designated C. Sawyer to make these decisions, and that we trust his judgment to reach the right conclusion as VPA’s representative on the Board.

## **C. Awards Committee**

C. Bryars gave her report. Due to workload reasons, the Committee has been slow in getting award winner and nominee letters and certificates together. The award winners have been notified, and the Committee has a goal of getting the letters, certificates and press release out the door by the next EC meeting, if not sooner.

## **D. Professional Development Committee**

R. Venkataraman is organizing three Aging in Place webinars in the coming months. The Professional Development Committee is gathering speakers, and a handful have been lined up for all three sessions. The Committee was curious about whether it would be acceptable for

sponsors to allow VPA to use their webinar platform to host the webinars. The Committee was also curious about whether to charge fees for the webinars. The EC thought that offering the webinars for no charge was fine because it makes them more accessible and equitable, especially if the webinar is going to be shared with other state sections for free. Also, offering the webinars for free would be a great membership benefit that could be advertised as a membership benefit. For example, by becoming a member of VPA, you will get access to at least \_\_\_ number of webinars that are eligible for AICP credits. It was noted that this year offering webinars for free is not problematic because the overhead is so low. M. Tuttle noted that in future years, however, VPA needs to be cognizant that its operating budget usually shows a +/- \$1,500 per year loss, and these types of events are typically looked at as needing to be either revenue-neutral or revenue-generators. One option in the future is to make webinars free for members, but non-members need to pay a fee. Another option is to generate some income through sponsorship of the webinars.

#### **E. Communications Committee**

S. Westa has been updating website and has solicited four articles for the Yankee Planner newsletter and a few updates for its Grapevine.

#### **F. Nominating Committee**

S. Westa had no report.

#### **G. NNECAPA**

D. White reported that the 2021 NNECAPA Conference planning committee has been meeting every couple of weeks. A call for proposals and ideas has been distributed, as well as a call for sponsors. N. Kilbride also had a meeting with the Hilton to be sure the parties are on the same page, and the meeting went well. In addition, Governor Scott's recent changes to cross-state travel restrictions and re-opening the economy means that things appear to be on-track for an actual live conference event. For NNECAPA Retreat discussion, see Section 6(A) below.

### **6. Old Business**

#### **A. NNECAPA Retreat – Post Retreat Updates**

M. Tuttle described retreat that was held via Zoom over the last two Thursdays. The structure of officers on the NNECAPA EC was discussed at the Retreat. Right now, the Section Representative and Legislative Liaison are voting members of the NNECAPA EC. Because the Legislative Liaison position is more state-oriented, as opposed to region-wide, it didn't make sense for them to be voting members of the EC. Instead, since NNECAPA has placed the Section Representative in charge of conference organizing, it recommended splitting the position and giving one position a new title, likely as Conference Representative. This will mean the Conference Representative will take the place of the Legislative Liaison as a voting member and then the Section Representative will remain a voting member, but with different duties.

Other issue that was discussed at the Retreat was the NNECAPA and VPA document library and how best to store historic resources. VPA had been using Dropbox for this, but there are some limitations to it as a tool for the resource library, especially due to the size of the library. Instead, NNECAPA will likely begin to use Google for Non-Profits as the platform for storing such materials instead of Dropbox. As part of this effort, S. Hadd has offered to close the loop on VPA's historic files and library, including past financial records, tax reporting and other related documents. The timeline of any platform migration is still to be determined.

The NNECAPA Policy and Procedure Manual was also discussed at the Retreat, as well as the need for the Sections to have their own such Manuals. M. Tuttle, S. Lotspeich and D. Rugh have agreed to take up this task in the coming months.

## **7. New Business**

### **A. Updates to Comprehensive Energy Plan & Act 174 Standards and Policies**

C. Bryars stated that the Department of Public Service is commencing the process of updating the statewide Comprehensive Energy Plan as well as the Act 174 standards for renewable energy goals. C. Bryars wondered how best to reach members for their input on this update and whether she should use the EC, reach out to the broader membership, or conduct more targeted outreach to solicit thoughts from those planners who have specific expertise and interest in energy standards and energy planning. It was suggested that more targeted outreach was appropriate now, but if response was tepid, then reaching out to the broader membership would be acceptable.

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m. The next meeting is a Zoom meeting at 10:00 a.m. on May 14<sup>th</sup>.