



## Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, August 13, 2021  
Conference Call

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

*VPA Members:* None

*Meeting began at 10:04 a.m.*

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Alex Weinhagen  
Vice President

Steve Lotspeich, RLA  
Treasurer

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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

### 1. Agenda Modifications

None.

### 2. Announcements

VCGI has put together [Census 2020](#) population-level change mapping at the municipal level for entire state. Housing data is now available, but not mapped by VCGI.

### 3. Minutes of July 16, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

*Action:* Motion approve minutes of July 16, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting: 1) E. Vorwald. 2) A. Weinhagen. *Motion passes unanimously.*

### 4. Treasurer's Report for July 2021

S. Lotspeich gave the Treasurer's Report for July 2021. July was a slow month. Financial advisor at Edward Jones purchased two more short-term (1-month) CDs with Citibank and Westfield Bank MA. There is interest from VPA in consolidating these funds and moving them to a longer-term CD if interest rates improve for the longer-term CDs. Currently have a little over \$10K in the checking account.

*Action:* Motion to approve the May and June Treasurer's Reports: 1) C. Bryars 2) A. Weinhagen. *Motion passes unanimously.*



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

## **5. Committee Reports & Officer Round Table**

### **A. Downtown Board Report**

C. Sawyer sent the Downtown Board report to the EC by email. No questions or comments.

### **B. Professional Development Committee**

R. Venkataraman gave the Professional Development Committee report. Committee is in process of planning the third and final webinar in this year's series. The session is called, "Aging in Place: Affordable Housing in Downtown – Not Just a Planners Pipe Dream" and will attempt to wrap together previous topics and provide a conclusion. Panelists from VHFA, Waterbury, and Brattleboro. Next week details will be released for registration. Planned for Sept 2<sup>nd</sup> at 10am.

PD Committee composition is R. Venkataraman, D. Schibler, S. Lotspeich, S. Haiju, and C. Damiani.

### **C. Communications Committee**

S. Westa reported. PD webinars are now posted on the website under trainings.

### **D. Nominating Committee**

S. Westa reported. Outreach has commenced for new EC slate. Current EC members and full VPA membership have been polled for interest and have received one inquiry about interest in at large position. Most of EC members wish to remain, except for R. Francis who will step down. EC will need a new Downtown Board Rep. alternate to take R. Francis' place.

The legislative liaison position remains unfilled with no prospects, and there are two open positions for at-large members. Nominating committee (S. Hadd and S. Westa) is generating ideas for new members and doing outreach. All current EC members are encouraged to think about potential members from existing committees and from planning colleagues around the state.

It was clarified that the past president position can act as an at-large member or standalone based on interest for other at-large members; that the legislative liaison and downtown board rep positions are two-year positions that run concurrently with the legislative biennium; and that the NNECAPA rep is a three-year position, so D. White is on the hook until 2023.

### **E. Awards Committee**

C. Bryars gave the Awards Committee report. Award certificates and letters have gone out and plaques have been ordered. Will follow up with S. Lotspeich about billing and reimbursement.

### **F. NNECAPA**

M. Tuttle reported that conference planning committee is working hard to pull together all the details for October, including refining the program and contracting for a social hour event. Nancy Kilbride is reporting increasing registrations and sponsorships. COVID policies will be revisited at the next conference planning meeting.

APA Chapter elections for national and regional officers are not yet closed. It was clarified that full APA members can vote for all NNECAPA officer positions, but Chapter-only members can only vote for officers that don't sit on national APA boards.

## **6. Old Business**

### **A. Legislative Program & Committee Priorities**

A. Weinhagen discussed the Legislative Committee's priorities for next Legislative session. Structure of leg. committee will stay the same as last year assuming no one steps forward for the leg. liaison position. Committee has been reviewing draft priorities document and individuals will take the lead on each priority area for 2022 session. Position papers will be drafted by October. AW is still identifying priority area leaders. Emphasis on reaching out to partner orgs, and follow up with K Gallagher who is new Sustainable Communities Director at VNRC.

EC will be invited to fall leg. committee meeting tentatively set for Sept 20<sup>th</sup> at 2pm is tentative date. Leg Comm will meet biweekly on 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays. Make sure to schedule joint meeting with EC to be no later than middle of Sept.

Questions about the future form and purpose of the legislative program were discussed:

1. Question of whether or not we want to have a leg liaison. We haven't had one for a year. Legislative program without the liaison was successful last year. Weekly reporting was even more detailed than in the past. Noted that with decentralized model, leg. committee, members feel more engaged. Question about whether or not this much volunteer capacity can be sustained over time. Legislative comm. is prepared to follow same model for this year. A. Weinhagen reported that he works much less as the leg. committee chair than when he was the leg. liaison. There was an open question of whether leg. liaison stipend should support other committee members' work.
2. Do we want to continue with the legislative intern? How valuable is this position, and does it create any conflict with legislative priorities of the funding partners?  
R. Francis has questioned if it is appropriate to share this position with other org(s) that have different leg. priorities. EC members expressed general consensus that any conflicting interests with VNRC and VT Conservation Voters do not affect the type of simple reporting work the intern performs. Intern is valuable, if not indispensable. Leg. committee relied on the intern more in the past year with the leg. liaison position unfilled. The intern is the "person in the room" who provides daily, very detailed reports on specific bills and priority topics. These detailed reports are turned into the weekly VPA membership reports. There is some overlap with legislative reporting from VLCT and similar groups, but some insights provided by intern are not replicated elsewhere. Small amount of money for significant benefit.

EC members suggested ideas to improve leg. program investments. VPA budgets \$1K stipend for leg liaison plus travel expenses and \$2K contribution for intern. Total annual leg. program costs are budgeted at \$3,350, but this amount is never spent down. E. Vorwald asked if budgeted costs could be used for VPA to hire an independent lobbyist. S. Lotspeich reported that this was VPA's model 15 years ago. Professional lobbyists generally work for various groups, so need to find someone with compatible interests and expertise. C. Bryars observed that VPA has expressed need to better collaborate with partners on leg. priorities so VPA should think strategically about how a departure from existing intern agreement with allied orgs would impact this priority. A. Weinhagen agreed that VPA could inquire about whether a lobby group could work with our budget. The decentralized legislative model from last year worked, but it is not ideal model for successful lobbying. Relationship building and becoming go-to contract for legislators and committee chairs is easier when it's one person.

M. Tuttle pointed out that the leg. program survey results should inform how VPA invests in the legislative program. Number one priority for VPA membership is the detailed reporting on activities in the legislature. Number two priority is to serve as a technical resource to legislators. Number three is advocacy/lobbying. M Tuttle expressed the opinion that the highest priorities to fund leg. program need to be leg. reporting and ability to provide technical assistance. It is hard for VPA to throw lobbying efforts at legislature because of our diverse membership and limited resources. It may not be possible or wise to aggressively advocate for specific legislative outcomes.

For Annual Meeting budget, VPA should keep budget items for legislative work to be able to reimburse folks as needed. R. Venkataraman distinguished between planning for the coming legislative season and planning for the leg. program in the long run. Reality check on need to model program for capacity of VPA leadership over time. M. Tuttle emphasized that if legislative program costs were increased the VPA budget would run a deficit and model would need to contemplate other ways to make revenue too.

The conversation concluded by noting that discussions about the future form and purpose of the VPA legislative program have been iterative for some time. While there has been more nuance as the conversation progresses, not hearing consensus for major changes to leg. program for upcoming leg season, but acknowledge the point that there will be ongoing discussion for what program needs 5-10 years out.

## **B. Equity Planning**

C. Bryars and S. Westa reported that since the last EC meeting they spoke with leadership of CCAPA about how that group interfaced with the [Desegregate CT](#) movement in the past year. This conversation was motivated by apparent interest from DHCD and VHFA in developing a VT equivalent of the [Desegregate CT zoning atlas](#) to motivate further statewide zoning reforms. VPA's experience supporting but critiquing bill S.237 put VPA in the uncomfortable position of testifying against zoning reforms intended to advance equitable housing access. If new zoning reform bills emerge in the future, does VPA as a whole want to approach the topic differently? What can we learn from other chapters facing similar dilemmas?

C. Bryars and S. Westa spoke with Rebecca Augur, President of CCAPA. Main characteristics of the Desegregate CT movement include:

- Charismatic leadership and truly grassroots movement for statewide change. Sara Bronin is the founder and is also a trained lawyer and architect who brought the focus on zoning regulations as a barrier to diverse, affordable housing development.
- Movement initiated in June 2020 with a survey that polled stakeholder groups to determine where there is support for changes to advance affordable housing.
- In the fall of 2020, worked with Yale and UConn law students to develop a [zoning atlas](#).
- In May 2021, a zoning reform bill drafted by Desegregate CT passed the CT legislature.

Curious about how CCAPA reacted to this statewide zoning reform movement given tensions VT planners have experienced with similar statewide reform initiatives in VT. Takeaways:

- CCAPA EC decided early on that they had to be clearly supportive of the Desegregate CT movement on the whole but would avoid weighing in on specifics of zoning reform.
- CCAPA leadership participated in several public ways to express general but strong support. Some CCAPA members spoke out as individual planners as well. Definite pushback from some CCAPA members and individuals in leadership, but ultimately the zoning reform bill that passed was palatable to overwhelming majority of planners.
- Most controversial provisions of the zoning reform bill did not ultimately pass, as CCAPA predicted would happen.

Potential lessons and differences between CT context and VT context:

- Desegregate CT has built a truly [diverse](#) and grassroots movement championed by a single, charismatic leader with legal and architectural expertise and excellent connections. Current interest in statewide zoning reform in VT appears more centralized among DHCD, individual legislators, and statewide housing organizations like VHFA.
- Leadership of Desegregate CT and partner orgs already have a lot of technical expertise on zoning reform, so CT legislature did not rely on CCAPA to provide technical insights. VT legislature would likely look to VPA to weigh in on the specifics of zoning reform if it is pursued further.
- CCAPA president shared an excerpt of the AICP code of ethics when she contacted CCAPA membership about the organization's general support of zoning reforms. Relatively low AICP membership among VT planners means this strategy for consensus building may not translate as well in VT.

Some discussion of other ways in which CT and VT environments are distinct and recognition that housing organizations, especially VHFA, are most prominently concerned with the topic of zoning reform.

## 7. New Business

### A. 2021 Bylaw Amendments

M. Tuttle presented proposed changes.

1. Rename NNECAPA section rep to “Conference Representative” to better reflect primary role of that position.
2. Change voting members for NNECAPA EC. Each section chapter can designate someone on EC as member of NECAPA EC. In the past, the model has been for the conference rep and legislative liaison to be voting members with NNECAPA.
3. Make the legislative liaison an appointed position rather than elected. Legislative liaison will not be a voting member on NNECAPA EC.

EC members should email M. Tuttle with questions about proposed amendments since voting by the EC on the amendments needs to occur soon.

## **8. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 12:10 p.m. The next meeting is Zoom meeting on Friday, September 10<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 a.m.