



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, September 24, 2021
Conference Call

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

2020-2021 Officers

Meagan Tuttle, AICP
President
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Alex Weinhagen
Vice President

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

VPA Members: None

Meeting began at 10:06 a.m.

1. Agenda Modifications

None.

2. Announcements

None.

3. Minutes of August 13, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

Action: Motion approve minutes of August 13, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting as revised by M. Tuttle: 1) S. Westa. 2) A. Weinhagen. *Motion passes unanimously.*

4. Treasurer's Report for August 2021

S. Lotspeich gave the Treasurer's Report for August 2021. There was no activity in VPA's account in August. One of the two Edward Jones CDs rolled over in early September. The goal ultimately is to roll both short-term CDs into one longer term CD. VPA's checking account balance remains strong, at just above \$10,000. S. Lotspeich explained difference in interest rates for the CDs on the Treasurer's Report and also reported that VPA should not have any expenses related to the upcoming NNECAPA Conference

Action: Motion to approve the August Treasurer's Report: 1) D. Rugh. 2) A. Weinhagen. *Motion passes unanimously.*



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.

5. Committee Reports & Officer Round Table

A. Downtown Board Report

C. Sawyer gave the Downtown Board report. Essex Junction is thinking through its potential change from a Village to a City and transferring its neighborhood development and village center designations. If approved by the voters and Legislature, the “City of Essex Junction” may seek a downtown designation in the future. C. Sawyer also discussed his concerns regarding the additional \$5,000,000 authorized for expanding the Downtown Transportation Funds and whether all of that money will be able to be spent within the two- or three-year time horizon. Village Centers will be eligible for this funding, as long as they go through the Better Connections process, though all Chittenden County municipalities will follow a different procedure. C. Sawyer and other EC members expressed concerns regarding the relatively short time horizon for spending ARPA funds given limited availability of consultants and materials. Some are scrambling to come up with projects that can be funded.

B. Professional Development Committee

R. Venkataraman gave the Professional Development Committee report. The third webinar on Aging in Place was held on September 2nd. There were 50 registrants, and 25 people attended. Also, the webinars get posted on-line, and they’re being watched afterwards by at least a few dozen people. In general, the Committee feels that the webinar series was successful and would be good to continue for future years, depending on interest. R. Venkataraman will poll membership at Annual Meeting to see if it’s worth continuing. S. Lotspeich said that he enjoyed in-depth nature of the webinars, as they really allowed folks to dive deep into the topic over the three sessions. He wasn’t sure whether the webinars should replace a live event, like a spring conference, since in his experience preparing to present the webinars was a significant workload. At the least, the webinars were excellent in light of the re-emergence of COVID over the last few months and were a good fit for the times.

S. Westa asked if VPA and/or NNECAPA also sponsored other events in light of the upcoming housing conference. Traditionally, NNECAPA had to sponsor the event for it to be eligible for CM credits. At least, the NNECAPA logo needs to be part of conference materials, and VPA has traditionally sponsored other conferences, such as the VECAN conference, both financially and from the perspective in offering CM credits. A. Weinhagen and S. Lotspeich both spoke about willingness of other organizations to partner with VPA on conferences and/or webinars, whether the organizations have a planning focus, such as AARP, or not. R. Venkataraman is also working on NNECAPA Conference to ensure CM credits are in place.

C. Communications Committee

S. Westa had no report.

D. Nominating Committee

See Section 7(b) below.

E. Awards Committee

M Tuttle reported on behalf of C. Bryars that two VPA award winners also received NNECAPA awards, which will be given out at lunch on Friday of the NNECAPA Conference.

F. NNECAPA

M. Tuttle said that there are new COVID policies for attending the NNECAPA conference. While a few attendees left because of these policies, there were also new registrants to balance out those that left. NNECAPA EC has started planning NNECAPA 2022 Conference in Maine. Also, at the most recent meeting, the NNECAPA EC went through the 2022 budget and worked on renewing Nancy Kilbride's contract for a full year. As part of the budget planning process, one of the biggest changes and points of discussion was the transition from organizational memberships to individual memberships since organizational membership will no longer be offered. NNECAPA is trying to be conservative with respect to dues revenue as a result of this and similar changes. NNECAPA's budget proposal includes the current two payments to the three state Sections, one for a pro-rated share of membership dues and the \$3,000 Section base payment. Dues will stay the same for the third year after the transition, as there's little appetite for raising the amount of dues at this time; currently they're set at \$80. At the 2021 NNECAPA Conference, a number of new NNECAPA EC members will be introduced, including M. Tuttle as president and C. Bryars as Secretary.

G. Legislative Committee

See Section 6(A) below.

6. Old Business

A. Legislative Program & Committee Priorities

A. Weinhagen discussed the Legislative Committee's priorities for next Legislative session and the recent joint meeting between the EC and the Legislative Committee. The priorities haven't changed much and includes advocating for state-wide planning process (Act 250 updates, State Planning Office Study and Capability & Development Plan), proposing Chapter 117 updates related to housing and then advocate for more funding for planning (Municipal and Regional Planning Fund has basically been level funded). Climate Action Planning will be a big issue in the foreseeable future both from both energy planning and transportation planning perspectives.

The EC and Committee tried to address larger questions about where the Committee was going and how best to move forward into the 2022 legislative session. Many felt the Committee's "decentralized" approach of the past legislative session where there was no Legislative Liaison worked well, but there were concerns expressed about the ability of the existing committee membership to handle the heavy workload, especially as A. Weinhagen transfers to VPA President and has less time to dedicate to his position as Committee Chair. In general, the

Committee was in favor of continuing “volunteer” nature of VPA’s advocacy before legislative committees.

One concern with this is the “reactive” stance that the Legislative Committee has because it doesn’t often participate in the bill drafting process. As a result, it’s occasionally caught off-guard when new legislation is introduced, though the preparation of position or policy statements prior to the legislative session are key to VPA being prepared and more active, instead of reactive. S. Lotspeich also raised the issue of whether VPA should educate legislators on planning, as opposed to conducting more “lobbying” activity, which has been a long-standing question. At the joint meeting, it became clear that there are certain key issues – Act 250, Capability of Development Plan, Chapter 117, etc. – on which VPA has significant expertise, as well as a consensus on the organization’s position on these topics, at least from a broader perspective. For those areas, VPA can continue to educate and advocate for the importance of “good planning” and support for the concept. A. Weinhagen pointed out the opportunity in the next legislative session to partner with VAPDA to promote increased funding for planning. Another area of outreach is to check in with VNRC on whether we’ll continue to jointly sponsor an intern for the legislative session. Also, an outstanding issue is who will chair the Legislative Committee next year because A. Weinhagen will likely become the VPA President if membership approves the proposed Slate of Officers.

B. 2021 Bylaw Amendments

M. Tuttle, D. Rugh and A. Weinhagen worked on amendments to VPA Bylaws that will be proposed to membership at the Annual Meeting. Primary amendments are to reflect the alteration to the structure of the NNECAPA EC. The title of the former Section Representative position has changed to “Conference Representative,” which is a new name for a position on the NNECAPA EC. The former Section Representative position had too many duties, especially since their key role was conference planning. The new Conference Representative position will focus on NNECAPA Conference planning, particularly when it is the year for that particular Section to host the NNECAPA Conference. Also, NNECAPA created a new EC position that is re-named “Section Representative” to maintain two representatives from the Section on the NNECAPA EC, one of whom is focused on conference planning. The NNECAPA EC also eliminated the position of Legislative Liaison from being a voting member of the NNECAPA EC, and instead it will now be a VPA-only position. Because each Section’s Legislative Liaison has focused on state-level legislation, not regional or national matters A Weinhagen proposed that it didn’t make sense for the Legislative Liaison to be on the NNECAPA EC. Another bylaw amendment is to eliminate gender-specific terms and replace with gender-neutral language.

As far as comments on the proposed bylaw amendments, the EC discussed whether the new Section Representative and the Conference Representative should be elected or appointed. At this point the Bylaws propose that they both be elected positions. A similar discussion was had regarding the Legislative Liaison position, and whether that should be a position on the VPA EC, or rather a position that just reports to the EC like the Downtown Board representative. M. Tuttle will clarify with NNECAPA President how the NNECAPA Bylaws address these points, and the issue will be revisited at the next meeting. The EC felt that having the Legislative Liaison not be a standing EC position would work well, but ultimately, the decision is up to the membership.

7. New Business

A. Draft 2022 Budget

S. Lotspeich presented the proposed 2022 budget. He anticipated increased revenues from Section meetings and sponsorships in 2022. The budget was still presented as deficit budgeting (\$1,400 deficit is built in), but the fund balance is so healthy that it didn't raise many concerns. Also, the way the year-end actual revenue numbers work out is that VPA typically has higher revenue than expected. That was the case in 2021 since VPA received more income than expected from the 2020 NNECAPA Conference. Also, the pandemic has made it hard to predict what expenses will be, as many on-line webinars and events are less expensive to produce. The EC discussed spending some money on the 2021 Annual Meeting, but typically the annual meeting is part of a conference where there's a registration fee to offset expenses. In last year or two, the annual meeting has been a stand-alone event, and if the EC wants to encourage participation, then the annual meeting should be free. For 2021, holding a free annual meeting isn't a problem because there's an extra \$1,000 in revenue from the NNECAPA Conference and because we didn't have a standalone awards ceremony. Going forward, the EC could also make decisions on the Annual meeting each year based off that year's revenue, though membership should be informed what the EC thinks the model will be for the annual meeting going forward. Because the NNECAPA Conference is traditionally in the fall, VPA probably won't offer a full fall conference in the future, but it could always set up a small training to be held in conjunction with the annual meeting.

B. 2021 Annual Meeting Planning

Regarding the Slate of Officers, Nominating Committee members S. Westa and S. Hadd reached out to membership to solicit interest in getting new members on the EC. The Nominating Committee looked at attempting to have better regional diversity on the EC, as well as ensuring the EC is representative of a more diverse membership. R. Francis is moving off, and S. Lotspeich will serve as Treasurer for one more year to assist with training a new treasurer. R. Venkataraman has expressed interest in becoming VPA's Treasurer in 2023.

S. Westa presented a proposed slate to the EC for discussion. M Tuttle offered that we may want to reach out to members of existing committees to see if anyone is interested. After discussion, the EC felt that the slate proposed by S Westa and S Hadd represented more geographic diversity and more representatives outside municipal planning than the current EC and voted to put it forward to the membership.

Action: Motion approve Slate of Officers to present to membership: 1) E. Vorwald. 2) A. Weinhagen. *Motion passes unanimously.*

For the October EC meeting, M. Tuttle will develop a draft Work Plan for 2022.

M. Tuttle discussed the proposal that the EC postpone the Annual Meeting from November to December. The EC discussed making it a hybrid meeting with some in-person and some

attending remotely. It could be held as an early holiday party, and the EC discussed December 3rd as the potential date and Waterbury Town Office as a potential location with an after-hours event at Pro Pig or another similar establishment.

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:24 a.m. The next meeting is Zoom meeting on Friday, October 8th at 10:00 a.m.