



Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Friday, February 11, 2022
Conference Call

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

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E. Vorwald, AICP
NNECAPA Section Representative

At-Large Members

Greta Brunswick

Chip Sawyer
VT Downtown Board Rep.

Ravi Venkataraman, AICP

Sue Westa, AICP

VPA Members: S. Murray

Meeting began at 10:04 a.m.

1. Agenda Modifications

None

2. Announcements

None

3. Minutes of January 14, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting

Action: Motion to approve the minutes of January 14, 2022 Executive Committee Meeting as amended: 1) E. Vorwald. 2) C. Sawyer. *Motion passes unanimously.*

4. Sponsor Brainstorming

NNECAPA is attempting to increase the number of sustaining sponsors for the coming year and asked VPA to nominate 2-4 stronger candidates as possible sustaining sponsors. The requested contribution is roughly \$2,500-\$4,000. Sustaining sponsors provide broad-based funding for Chapter activities, and in return for their donation, sponsors get on-going exposure through webinars, email blasts, newsletters and conferences. Two Rivers Ottuaquechee Regional Commission has been a sustaining sponsor for two years now. In response to NNECAPA's request, EC members suggested a number of potential sponsors both for NNECAPA and for VPA events.

5. Intern Cost Sharing

Brian Shupe at VNRC has asked VPA to increase its contribution to the



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.

legislative intern, who reports to VNRC and the League of Conservation Voters. VPA's \$2,000 contribution has been level-funded since 2016. There may be some extra funding available in VPA's budget since VPA won't have a Legislative Liaison in 2022. VNRC did not ask for a specific increase in contribution level. VPA will reach out to VNRC for an update on the costs of Legislative Intern annually and then look at whether VPA's contribution is equivalent to the value it receives. The EC recognizes the value of having the intern, but it needs a better perspective on who contributes to the intern's compensation before deciding to increase its own contribution to the intern's compensation.

6. H.492 Position and Legislative Protocol

H.492 proposes to switch appeals of District Environmental Commission decisions on land use permits to a new administrative panel called the Environmental Review Board, instead of to the Vermont Superior Court Environmental Division, which is where appeals go currently. Appeals from the decisions of the new Environmental Review Board would go directly to the Vermont Supreme Court, just like current appeals from the Environmental Division's decisions.

Draft testimony from VPA's Legislative Committee was circulated about two weeks ago that would be provided by P. Hough, and the EC decided to delay presenting the draft testimony until the EC could discuss the organization's stance in more detail. Previously, there was little consensus among VPA membership on the issue of appeals of Act 250 District Environmental Commission decisions, except that members generally felt that the current appeals route is time-consuming and does not reflect the original goals of the permit reform legislation that was passed fifteen or so years ago. This delay and hesitation on the EC's part led some to question whether VPA's legislative protocol needs to be revised. As of the EC meeting, H.492 had not left the House Natural Resources Committee, and the House Committee specifically asked for VPA's testimony on the bill and what the organization's view was regarding the route for appeals of District Commission decisions. VPA's previous position on this issue was that the routing for appeals of District Commission decisions needed to be studied, and that's happened with four bills being presented in the Legislature on this topic. The Legislative Committee feels that the EC should support to H.492.

The EC had a long and wide-ranging discussion regarding its concerns. This dialogue touched on the procedure that VPA uses to weigh in on legislation, the need to keep in mind that the EC represents the entire membership, the fact that taking very pointed and specific positions is challenging given the wide range of views among membership, and individual EC members' specific views on H.492.

Action: Motion for VPA to generally support what's in the current version of H.492 regarding changing the appellate process for Act 250 permits and for VPA members who testify to offer improvements based on previously approved VPA positions on such legislation: 1) C. Sawyer, 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes with 7 Ayes, 3 Nays, 1 Abstention.*

In the future the EC will consider making changes to its legislative protocols, including a discussion of possibly deferring more to the Legislative Committee's position on the bill.

7. Committee Reports & Officer Round Table

A. Treasurer's Report for January

S. Lotspeich gave Treasurer's Report. There was no activity in January. S. Lotspeich did true up the 2022 Budget to reflect the balance of the checking account at the beginning of 2022. S. Lotspeich is meeting with Bruce Walbridge, VPA's financial consultant, to discuss consolidating the two short-term CDs VPA invests in into one single CD.

Action: Motion to approve the January Treasurer's Report: 1) M. Tuttle. 2) D. Rugh. *Motion passes unanimously.*

B. Downtown Board Report

C. Sawyer gave the report. There was a short Downtown Board meeting in January. Chip reported that the Board approved Hartford's growth center renewal, which had been delayed a number of months due to COVID-related issues.

C. Professional Development Committee

R. Venkataraman said the Committee decided on a hybrid workshop model in early June that focuses on energy planning. The Committee is reaching out to potential participants for the workshop. An in-person event will likely be held in Hartford or Woodstock, closer to the Route 4 corridor and the middle of the state to make it more accessible for all members. The Committee plans to do a field trip as part of this event to look at things like utility corridors serving solar panels, etc. The Committee wasn't sure whether to charge a fee for this event, which will likely be a half-day seminar, and it is hoping that it will be a low overhead event at a facility with no reservation or use charge. The Committee plans for VPA to provide snacks, refreshments and/or coffee but no formal meal. The Committee will seek sponsorships for this event to off-set any costs.

Also, R. Venkataraman and S. Westa had a conversation on how best to clean up the website, as well as to welcome and orient new members to the organization. The EC discussed adding a section to the website that has materials to welcome new members and get them up to speed on what the organization does. R. Venkataraman and S. Westa will collaborate on this project.

R. Venkataraman raised the issue of whether to also try and convene a seminar or workshop on municipal cannabis regulation. A. Weinhagen suggested that VPA advocate for VLCT to host and organize such a workshop in the coming weeks.

C. Communications Committee

S. Westa eliminated the "Projects" page of the website but otherwise did not have anything to report.

D. Nominating Committee

S. Westa had no report.

E. Awards Committee

C. Bryars gave the Awards Committee report. There were 5 project nominations, 2 citizen planner nominations and 2 professional planner nominations. Those nominations will be forwarded to NHPA for review and to recommend winners to the EC. The EC will discuss timing of the awards process, and whether it should be shifted back in the calendar year, at an upcoming meeting when there's more time.

F. NNECAPA

S. Wraight says 2022 NNECAPA Conference planning is underway, and NNECAPA is looking at keynote speakers and focusing sessions on areas where specific AICP credit is needed. E. Vorwald said NNECAPA will soon have its annual leadership retreat with the whole NNECAPA EC, which is an important event this year since there's been almost a complete turnover on the NNECAPA EC since 2021. The NNECAPA EC has spent a lot of time recently orienting new EC members. The national APA Conference is in San Diego at the end of April. There will also be a separate hybrid version.

G. Legislative Committee

See Item 6 above

8. Other Business

None.

9. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m. The next meeting is the on Friday, March 11th at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom