



## VPA Annual Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 3, 2021

Hybrid In-Person in Waterbury and Zoom Conference

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

### 2020-2021 Officers

Meagan Tuttle, AICP  
President  
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Alex Weinhausen  
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:* D. Mallach, D. Crites, K. Gallagher, S. Hadd, S. Wraight, T. Bamford and S. Jensen

*Meeting began at 2:00 p.m.*

### 1. Call to Order

M. Tuttle welcomed all members and Executive Committee members to the 2021 Annual Meeting. The 2020 and 2021 planning awards were presented at the start of the meeting. Also, planners in attendance introduced themselves at the start of the meeting.

### 2. VPA Year in Review

M. Tuttle provided an overview of the organization's activities this year, including the challenges of 2021. VPA consists of roughly 185 members, who are now members of the Vermont State Section of NNECAPA. VPA is in the third year of its transition to being a full State Section. In 2022, VPA's organizational membership registration will go away. NNECAPA has helped VPA tremendously with a targeted membership campaign that focused on bringing in younger members and other planners in rural parts of the three NNECAPA states. The campaign was particularly successful in bringing in student members. Kudos to N. Kilbride, NNECAPA's administrator, who's work was key to the success of the campaign.

As a NNECAPA State Section, the three state section leaders continued the tradition of an annual retreat in the spring. Through the retreat, NNECAPA EC structure change was proposed to better represent membership.

#### A. NNECAPA Year in Review

Lots of new members coming on the NNECAPA EC. Ben Frost, Sarah



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.*

Marchant and Carl Eppig are stepping down, while M. Tuttle and C. Bryars, will become president and secretary of NNECAPA, respectively. The hope is for a return to in-person events in 2022. APA's 2022 Conference and NNECAPA 2022 in Maine are planned to be in-person. NNECAPA will send folks to both those events. The 2022 NNECAPA Conference is set for October 17-19 in Sunday River, Maine at the Grand Summit Hotel.

2021 NNECAPA Conference on Virtual Reality had over 200 attendees and was seen as being very successful. Over 50 session proposals, with 15 in-person sessions and 4 mobile workshops with a virtual keynote regarding trends that will shape planning. Kudos to the 2021 NNECAPA Conference Committee who did a great job in difficult circumstances.

## **B. Legislative Committee Year in Review**

A. Weinhausen, Chair of the Legislative Committee, gave the Legislative Committee Year in Review. 2021 was the first year of the biennium when lots of legislation gets introduced but not much legislation typically passes. The 2021 session was entirely virtual via Zoom, so the typical hallway conversations and meetings did not happen. Having a remote legislative session did, however, increase engagement and participation in the legislative process. VPA, VT Conservation Votes and VNRC shared a legislative intern who monitored a large number of bills, but again, very few passed. Act 4 (S.14) was a technical corrections bill to 2020's S.127, which fixed language regarding private covenants' restrictions on ADUs or existing small lots, resolving a significant problem. Act 41 (S.102) on-farm composting was exempted from Act 250 review though it's prohibited from designated centers, unless otherwise authorized by the host municipality. ACCD's Legislative Year in Review is a great summary, as well as a good reference for what happened during the 2021 Legislative Session. There was a lot of action this past session on the budget bill and the transportation and capital funding bills. Due to availability of COVID relief funds, there was a lot of special one-time funding for capital projects in these bills. The Downtown Transportation Fund grant better connections program received a one-time, \$5 million increase in funding, and \$1.5 million was allocated for the Better Places program. Municipal bylaw modernization program received roughly \$650,000 to incentivize housing construction. RPCs received \$800,000 for pandemic response, \$1 million for implementing energy plans and energy planning and then \$300,000 to assist in allocating and implementing funds from ARPA. The Legislature also allocated about half of Vermont's ARPA money. \$100 million went to VHCBC to address housing and homelessness in the state. \$8 million went to Village wastewater infrastructure to help implement growth.

Looking ahead, next year includes funding discussions, as well as work on housing and climate action. The recently released state climate action plan contained over 200 action items, and this may serve as the basis for climate legislation in 2022. Also coming in 2022 is rulemaking from the Cannabis Control Board, and two of the five rules they need to implement for retail cannabis sales have been released, with three more to come in next few months. These rules have significant impact on how municipalities will write rules for cannabis, if at all.

It is expected that there will be three focus areas in the 2023 legislative session. The first is funding with the second half of ARPA coming in and funds to implement the federal infrastructure bill will be available too. Also, the State Education Fund will have a \$90 million surplus, thanks in large part to federal stimulus and revenue coming in at a much higher level

than before. The second focus area will be the State's Climate Action Plan, and the third will be dealing with the housing crisis in terms of both building more housing and addressing homelessness and low-income housing.

VPA expects there will be six legislative priorities for the organization in 2022: funding, housing, climate action, capability and development plan, Act 250 reform, and statewide planning office study.

The discussion then turned to changing the Legislative Liaison position from elected to appointed. This was proposed as a VPA Bylaws amendment, which passed unanimously and allows the EC some flexibility to address situations like when the Liaison resigns due to a job change, etc. Previously the VPA Legislative Liaison was on NNECAPA EC and would attend all NNECAPA meetings, as well as state section EC meetings. However, the focus on legislation at NNECAPA was at the state level, while APA handled national legislation. Because the focus of each section's legislative liaison is on state legislative issues, the EC thought it made more sense to appoint them from within the EC.

M. Tuttle described legislative survey and responses in light of changes to the organization's legislative program. A consistent problem is that legislation and the legislative process moves faster than VPA has the ability to sometimes. VPA's legislative program is largely successful, and the Legislative Committee is tweaking operation, becoming de-centralized and asking individual members take the lead on various issues. This will continue in future years, and VPA will continue to monitor the Legislature. Next year, VPA will endeavor to work on developing priorities with position papers from the start, instead of being more reactive.

Even with the switch from a voter-approved position to an appointed position, the legislative liaisons for the three state sections will still participate on the NNECAPA policy and advocacy committee. The relationship of Chapter and APA will be communicated through the Chapter President. The NNECAPA Legislative Committee is a coordinating body with APA.

### **C. Vermont Downtown Board Year in Review**

C. Sawyer provided an update on the Vermont Downtown Board in 2021. The Board met remotely all year long with only one in-person meeting. Generally, the Downtown Board oversees the state's designation programs. There are now over 220 Village Centers in Vermont (16 added and 13 renewed in the past year). In 2021 there were 23 new designated downtowns with one boundary adjustment. There are nine Neighborhood Development Areas with two added in 2021, and there was an amendment made to the NDA rules to decouple historic property registration from local design review, which was advocated for by the historic preservation committee. As of the end of the year, there were six growth centers, and three New Town Centers, with one new New Town Center conditionally approved in 2021.

As far as grants are concerned, the Downtown Board awarded over \$565,000 in downtown transportation funds to seven projects, and there were nine applications for funding with roughly \$692,000 in grants requested. Approximately \$4 million was awarded in Downtown and Village historic tax credits to thirty-three projects (there were sixty-six applications, requesting over \$6 million in funding). Also in 2021 the Legislature allocated \$5 million in Covid-19 funds to the

Downtown Transportation Fund, more than tripling the funding amount over three years. It is anticipated that it will take two years to dole out all this funding. In the next year or two, there may be an update and review of all the designated areas. It's said that this is going to happen every year, but this year, there's motivation to take a comprehensive look at all the various designation programs.

#### **D. Professional Development Committee Year in Review**

R. Venkataraman gave an overview of Professional Development Committee's work in 2021. VPA hosted a webinar series on Aging in Place over the summer, which was successful and beneficial to membership. The Committee also provided significant support to the 2021 NNECAPA Conference, which would not have been possible without partners, including AARP, Mad River Planning Council, SE Group and others. In 2022, VPA may return to in-person spring conference, or it's possible that a hybrid event will be held, as opposed to a new webinar series.

#### **E. Awards Committee Year in Review**

C. Bryars gave a review of the 2021 awards. She also reviewed the 2021 VPA Award Winners: Mark Bucher Professional Planner of the Year M. Tuttle; Plan of the Year: Middlesex,; Citizen Board of the Year: Middlesex PC; and Project of the Year: Rupert Village Revitalization Project. Rupert and M. Tuttle also won NNECAPA's 2021 Project of the Year and 2021 Professional Planner of the Year awards, respectively. C. Bryars thanked all members for submitting nominations and for working with the Awards Committee through the challenges that the pandemic presented. She said she looked forward to the 2022 process returning more to "normal."

#### **3. Draft Work Plan for Year Ahead**

M. Tuttle went over the Executive Committee's draft 2021 Work Plan and highlighted the changes from 2020. Two primary areas of focus for the organization in 2021 will be legislative activities and trying to increase membership.

#### **4. Approval of Minutes of 2020 VPA Annual Meeting**

M. Tuttle presented the minutes of the 2020 VPA Annual Meeting for approval. There was no discussion.

*Action:* Motion to approve the minutes of the 2020 VPA Annual Meeting: 1) A. Weinhausen. 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

#### **5. Bylaw Amendments**

D. Rugh summarized the results of bylaw amendment vote – 16-0 in favor. There were significantly fewer ballots this year, but the amendments created the new Conference Representative position, replacing the former Section Representative position. to handle the NNECAPA Conference organization process, particularly when the conference is to be held in

Vermont, and it replaced the formerly elected position of Legislative Liaison with a new Section Representative position to represent VPA on the NNECAPA EC. The VPA Legislative Liaison will now be an EC-appointed position, and they will no longer serve on the NNECAPA EC. Also, the amendments attempted to employ gender-neutral language in the Bylaws.

## **6. Adoption of 2022 Operating Budget**

S. Lotspeich gave a presentation on the 2022 Operating Budget. Going into 2022, VPA is in a strong financial position. 2020 revenues were lower and expenses were much lower than expected due to lack of in-person activities. The 2021 Budget predicted a \$8,700 balance end with transfer of \$5,000 from the operating account to investment/reserve. VPA's investment totals \$13,000 in a short-term CD. S. Lotspeich always tries to balance the budget, but in 2022 a deficit budget is proposed due to strength of balance forward. NNECAPA gives VPA a share of membership revenue in 2021 of roughly \$3,500, and VPA also expects a share of revenue from NNECAPA Conference, and it anticipates that a workshop will be less expensive than a full-blown conference because will be hybrid and neither fully remote or fully in-person. Even though it's not clear whether there will be a Legislative Liaison, VPA did vote to keep the stipend in the budget, as well as the cost-share for the legislative intern with VNRC and League of Conservation Voters during the legislative session. S. Lotspeich thanked N. Killbride for her efforts in the implementation of accrual method accounting in 2021. Going forward in 2022, S. Lotspeich will be training R. Venkataraman for being Treasurer in 2023 as S. Lotspeich plans to step down.

*Action:* Motion to approve the 2022 Operating Budget: 1) D. Rugh. 2) C. Sawyer. *Motion passes unanimously.*

## **7. Election of Officers – Slate of Officers**

M. Tuttle proposed Slate of Officers, which is a little different this year with the new Conference Representative position. The EC and M. Tuttle thanked S. Hadd and S. Westa for compiling EC as the nominating committee. The new EC members for 2022 are G. Brunswick and S. Wraight. There were no nominations from the floor.

*Action:* Motion to approve the 2022 Slate of Officers: 1) S. Jensen. 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

## **8. Other Business**

None.

## **9. Adjourn**

*Action:* Motion to adjourn: 1) E. Vorwald. 2) R. Venkataraman. *Motion passes unanimously.*  
The meeting was adjourned at 3:50 p.m.