



VPA Annual Meeting Minutes

Friday, December 9, 2022

Hybrid In-Person in Middlebury and via Zoom

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

2022 Officers

Alex Weinhausen
President
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Catherine (Cat) Bryars, AICP
Vice President

Steve Lotspeich, RLA
Treasurer

David W. Rugh, Esq.
Secretary

Meagan Tuttle, AICP
Past President

Sarah Wraight, AICP
NNECAPA Conference
Representative

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: J. Murray, M. Hamelin, M. Kane, T. Bamford, S. Morgan, M. Boulanger, N. Atherton and C. Dillard

Meeting began at 3:05 p.m.

1. Call to Order

C. Bryars called the meeting to order.

2. VPA Year in Review

C. Bryars as Vice President provided an overview of the organization's activities this year with a PowerPoint presentation.

A. NNECAPA Year in Review

S. Wraight & E. Vorwald provided the NNECAPA update and noted that in 2023 there will be a significant number of new members on the NNECAPA EC. M. Tuttle and C. Bryars, will become President and Secretary of NNECAPA, respectively. The 2022 Fall Conference at Sunday River was well attended, and the 2023 NNECAPA Conference is to be held at Wentworth-by-the-Sea, Newcastle NH. It will be held on November 6-8, 2023. This means it's on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, which is different than past years. Calls for proposals for 2023 are coming up soon. There are approximately 500 NNECAPA members, and in 2022, organizational memberships were phased out. Vermont will be hosting the 2024 NNECAPA Conference at the StoweFlake in Stowe.

VPA was pleased to have in-coming NNECAPA President M. Tuttle at Annual Meeting. VPA is one of three state sections in NNECAPA, which is now one cohesive organization which were previously four different organizations, some under APA and some not. Usually Vermont is roughly 30% of entire NNECAPA membership. NNECAPA dues will be



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.

level for 2023. The Chapter is undergoing long-range financial planning and conferences are getting more and more expensive and are requiring larger up-front deposits (what was once \$1,000 is now \$15,000). The organization is focusing on how NNECAPA and national APA can engage harmoniously going forward and how NNECAPA members can benefit from APA professional development. In addition, NNECAPA looking at other ways to generate revenue and stabilize its financial situation, though it is better off today than in prior years. NNECAPA had reorganization as its priority in its most recent 2016 strategic plan, and now that reorganization is complete, the strategic plan will be updated. NNECAPA hosts an annual officers retreat where the strategic plan will be a primary topic for discussion.

B. Legislative Committee Year in Review

D. Schibler is the in-coming Chair of the Legislative Committee and gave the Legislative Committee Year in Review. The Committee took a little summer break, but it has developed position papers and legislative priorities for 2023.

From the 2022 Legislative Session, the big takeaways were funding, housing and rental housing safety. Act 250 reform was attempted, but compromise could not be reached on the most significant changes and so some smaller changes were enacted, including a new, higher 49-unit limit for priority housing projects.

Looking forward to 2023, VPA legislative priorities are Climate Action, Housing, Funding for Planning, focusing on Statewide Planning Goals and participating in what are expected to be a number of legislative studies including of Vermont's designation programs and additional Act 250 reform

The Committee's position papers will be presented to and approved by EC before distribution. Increasing funding in the Municipal Planning Grant program is a significant goal because there's currently insufficient funds available to attract consultants to do the work needed for MPG-grant-awardees. Another goal is to update the various natural resources and other mapping programs as part of state-wide planning program. VPA will also continue pushing for a State Planning Office that's been long dormant, and the Committee is highlighting need for a coordinated office to work both among and with state agencies and among regional planning entities.

VPA continues to share a legislative intern with VNRC and Vermont League of Conservation Voters. The position of Legislative Liaison remains vacant, and the EC is looking for a volunteer for that position, though D. Schibler is Committee Chair.

The organization discussed how membership often has broader interests than the Committee members, which sometimes makes it challenging for VPA to take a position on key legislation because there's no consensus among membership on those issues. The EC has had this discussion in the past, particularly where votes on issues have been split. As a result, the EC often take a position that focuses the discussion on the broader issue if there's no agreement among EC members or membership on more specific or significant issues.

C. Vermont Downtown Board Year in Review

C. Sawyer provided an update on the Vermont Downtown Board in 2022. In 2022, there are 229 village centers, 10 were added, 15 were renewed, 4 were amended and 1 was removed. There were 23 designated downtowns in 2022, and the Board had several check in reviews this year. There are now 11 Neighborhood Development Areas with 2 new in 2022. Also, there are 6 growth centers with one check-in review in 2022, three New Town Centers with Berlin's being approved in 2022.

The Board awarded over \$2 million in Downton Transportation funds to 15 projects. Unusual in 2022 was that there was more funding than requests for funding for these projects. All applications were funded using an extra \$5 million in COVID-19 relief funds. The Board also awarded \$4.3 million in downtown/village tax credits. Similar to the transportation grant award process, there was more funding from the Legislature in 2022 and fewer projects than the amount of funding available. So, left over grant funds will roll over into next grant round. Also, 2022 was the first year the Board awarded tax credits to Neighborhood Development Areas. There were approximately \$2.5 million in remaining COVID-19 relief funds, and in 2023 the Legislature ordered a funded consultant review of all of the state's designation programs. The reports are set to be ready in January 2024.

D. Professional Development Committee Year in Review

R. Venkataraman gave an overview of Professional Development Committee's work in 2022. Spring workshop in energy planning and implementation on June 16th included VPA's annual awards presentation. The Committee also worked on NNECAPA Conference planning, including the 2022 NNECAPA Conference at Sunday River in Maine. The Committee is working on planning another spring workshop, and it was noted that the Committee needs more volunteers.

E. Awards Committee Year in Review

C. Bryars gave a review of the 2022 VPA Awards process. The timeline kicks off after New Year's Day. This year's Project of the Year was Williston's Taft Corners Vision and Form-Based Code. The Citizen Planner of the Year was Steve Kraft in Springfield. The Plan of the Year was the CreateVT Action Plan. The Mark Blucher Professional Planner of the Year was Tom Kennedy, now the Director of Community Development for the Mt. Ascutney Regional Commission. It was noted that the CreateVT Action Plan also won the NNECAPA Plan of the Year, and that the Committee needs volunteers.

F. Communications and nominating

S. Westa gave update and has been doing website updates and working to solicit news for Yankee Planner.

For the Nominating Committee, there were two openings on the VPA EC this year, and only one new volunteer – Matt Boulanger from Williston. As a result, VPA is taking a nominations from the floor for one open at-large EC meeting.

3. Draft 2023 Work Plan

C. Bryars went over the Executive Committee's draft 2023 Work Plan and highlighted the changes from 2022.

4. Approval of Minutes of 2021 VPA Annual Meeting

D. Rugh presented the minutes of the 2021 VPA Annual Meeting for approval. There was no discussion.

Action: Motion to approve the minutes of the 2021 VPA Annual Meeting: 1) M. Tuttle. 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

5. Adoption of 2022 Operating Budget

S. Lotspeich gave a presentation on the 2023 Operating Budget. Going into 2023, VPA is in a strong financial position. VPA's 2022 revenues come from NNECAPA. There is a membership base payment, and then VPA receives a prorated share of NNECAPA's membership dues based on the organization's overall percentage of NNECAPA membership. There will be no NNECAPA conference revenue share from the 2023 NNECAPA Conference because all three sections waived their shares in order to assist in putting NNECAPA in a stronger financial position following all the work that went into the reorganization. VPA usually gets 10% of NNECAPA conference revenue. Also, it was noted that revenue from the 2022 NNECAPA Conference will show up in 2023 due to a delay in the 2022 conference venue invoicing NNECAPA. Other VPA revenue comes from sponsorships in coordination with NNECAPA.

VPA's 2022 expenses were much lower than expected due to a lack of in-person activities. The Spring Workshop is an expense with venue and speaker and food and beverage, though even with lower expenses than usual, VPA tries to break even on workshops. Other expenses are for awards plaques and the awards ceremony. Also legislative expenses for the intern shared with VNRC and Vermont League of Conservation Voters. VPA will also sponsor a conference or two.

As far as other funds are concerned, VPA has \$13,000 invested in a CD with Edward Jones in addition to its checkbook balance.

Action: Motion to approve the 2023 Operating Budget: 1) D. Rugh. 2) C. Bryars. *Motion passes unanimously.*

6. Election of Officers – Slate of Officers

C. Bryars presented proposed Slate of Officers. The EC and M. Tuttle thanked S. Westa for compiling the 2023 EC as Chair of the Nominating Committee. The new EC members for 2023 are M. Boulanger and then one at-large position that can be nominated from the floor. J. Murray was nominated by S. Westa and D. Rugh seconded. All in favor.

There were no other nominations from the floor.

Action: Motion to approve the 2023 Slate of Officers with J. Murray as an additional At-Large EC member: 1) R. Venkataraman. 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

7. Other Business

M. Tuttle and EC recognized S. Lotspeich for his 24 years on the EC and 23 years as the organization's treasurer. His major contributions during his tenure included significant roles in assisting Waterbury's recovery from Tropical Storm Irene and evolution of Waterbury's Main Street improvement project.

8. Adjourn

Action: Motion to adjourn: 1) S. Lotspeich. 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.* The meeting was adjourned at 4:17 p.m.