



## Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 28, 2024  
Conference Call

*Executive Committee members present:* A. Weinhausen, E. Vorwald, R. Venkataraman, D. Rugh, S. Wraight, C. Bedford, M. Boulanger, J. Murray, C. Sawyer and S. Westa.

### 2024 Officers

Alex Weinhausen  
President  
802-777-3995  
[aweinhausen@hinesburg.org](mailto:aweinhausen@hinesburg.org)

Eric Vorwald, AICP  
Vice President

Ravi Venkataraman, AICP  
Treasurer

David W. Rugh, Esq.  
Secretary

Sarah Wraight, AICP  
NNECAPA Conference  
Representative

E. Vorwald, AICP  
NNECAPA Section  
Representative

### At-Large Members

Cymone Bedford, AICP

Matt Boulanger, AICP

Greta Brunswick

Jennifer Murray, AICP

Chip Sawyer  
VT Downtown Board Rep.

Eric Vorwald, AICP

Sue Westa, AICP

*VPA Members present:* None

*Meeting began at approximately 10:08 a.m.*

### 1. Agenda Changes & Announcements

None.

### 2. Minutes of January 24, 2024 Regular Executive Committee Meeting

*Action:* Motion to approve the minutes of the January 24<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting: 1) C. Bedford; 2) C. Sawyer. *Motion passes unanimously.*

### 3. Strategic Plan Update

#### a. Review Existing Plan

A. Weinhausen led the discussion of the renewal of the current, 2015 Strategic Plan. It has a ten-year term and is due for renewal in 2025.

#### b. Is a Strategic Plan Necessary?

The EC generally felt that it was a good document, and it should be updated and revised to bring it current. There was some discussion of whether it needed to be shortened. The EC also discussed whether the organization's mission is correct, is VPA on the right track as far as the mission is concerned, and what the organization sees as its role in the future.



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.*

### **c. Brainstorm Ways to Update and Simplify**

The EC discussed reaching out to membership to get their input on new ideas. It was also important for the organization to check-in on whether it fulfilled the purpose, organizational mission and accomplished the goals of the 2015 Strategic Plan. It was noted that the EC didn't check in on the Plan five years after it was adopted, but that was likely due to the pandemic striking on the 5<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Plan. Also, since the 2015 Strategic Plan, VPA has become a NNECAPA state section, which wasn't on anyone's radar screen when the 2015 Strategic Plan was adopted.

### **d. Member Outreach Ideas**

A. Weinhausen suggested reaching back out to membership with a new survey with similar questions to the prior, 2015 survey and adding in new questions to address changes since the Plan was first developed. Before we get the survey out, the EC should also review the 2015 Strategic Plan to see what goals were accomplished and which were overlooked. Still, a membership survey should be prepared, in part to ensure that the EC and membership are aligned on goals for the organization. The EC will conduct a review of the 2015 Strategic Plan at its March meeting, and each EC member is directed to review the plan and come ready to discuss at least one point or item to discuss and one guidance point going forward.

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

### **A. Treasurer's Report – November, December and January**

R. Venkataraman gave the Treasurer's Report for November, December and January. The organization is in good financial position. R. Venkataraman has been focused on making sure the organization's tax obligations and business registrations were current. The revenue shown on the January 2024 Report in the amount of +/- \$13,000 is VPA's reserve amount that is being transferred to a high interest savings account from a CD.

The EC discussed the monthly budget spreadsheet and how it tracks spending but doesn't quite line up with the amount in the organization's checking account. A. Weinhausen suggested some changes to the spreadsheet to clarify by adding a note that there is no "Investment" anymore and that VPA's reserves are actually in a high interest savings account, so that will be changed going forward.

*Action:* Motion to approve November, December and January Treasurer's Reports: 1) D. Rugh; 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

### **B. Downtown Board Report**

C. Sawyer said the Downtown Board, which met on February 26<sup>th</sup>. The Board approved five new Village Centers and renewed a number of the designations. There are now 240 Village Centers. The Board also approved a Neighborhood Development Area in Essex Junction, which can be within a half-mile of a designated downtown or a quarter-mile from a Village Center.

The NDAs come with certain Act 250 and other funding benefits. The issue is that sometimes there are natural impediments to growth that don't quite fit within the rules for the NDA designation, for example, if there's a lake in the middle of the town where growth cannot occur. The designation has been successful, and the Board's flexibility has been helped with growth in the areas outside the downtown designation, even if it doesn't strictly follow the NDA rules. The Board also got an overview of H.867, which probably has the best chance of moving forward and leading to revised designations coming out of the summer study committees.

### **C. Professional Development Committee –**

R. Venkataraman reports that he and S. Westa have come up with a few workshop ideas for the early summer and discussed possible venues. Topics considered include: flood resilience and rebuilding, communications and how to improve accessibility and messaging in communications to encourage participation in public processes, and integrating data into planning for housing growth. Another topic that was discussed was the recent legislation that inserted a fair amount of state preemption into the planning statutes, for example, eliminating conditional use review on certain developments. A lot of the work has shifted from appropriate municipal panels to zoning administrators as a result of these new provisions, and more development can move forward now without a hearing. As a result, beefing up administrative standards in zoning regulations might be needed. As far as dates are concerned, the Committee is looking at mid- to late-June, and for locations, they're looking at Rutland and Middlebury. If the meeting was located further south, it may be easier for those outside of Chittenden and Washington Counties to attend. Hub CoWorks in downtown Rutland is a potential venue with a minimal fee (\$300). The awards ceremony will be held in conjunction with the workshop.

The EC seemed interested in focusing on flood resiliency and possibly doing a planning case study or design charrette to plan for redevelopment after the flood. Focusing on rebuilding and creating new housing in Barre City might be a possibility. This is a little different than the usual panel discussion, but we could mix the two – a design charrette and a discussion of what works and what doesn't. For example, after July's floods, towns that did a lot of work after Irene came through the July flooding in really good shape. As a result, there are a lot of success stories out there. Another portion of the workshop could be a discussion with VPA members regarding the organization and strategic plan, including discussion of a survey or discuss survey results if we can get it out in April or May.

The Committee also discussed having more roundtables or brown bag lunches on discrete topics, such as the preemption topic mentioned above. A discussion like this might be more accessible to folks because it's not a day-long commitment. If this is organized by another organization and not VPA, then VPA could at least chip in and contribute to the cost of refreshments.

Motion: Authorize expenditure of \$100 in sponsorship funds for a planning event in southern Vermont: 1) A. Weinhausen; 2) E. Vorwald. *Motion passes unanimously.*

### **D. Communications Coordinator**

S. Westa gave a brief report. She continues to update the website.

## **E. Nominating Committee**

S. Westa had no report.

## **F. NNECAPA**

S. Wraight and E. Vorwald gave an update on NNECAPA. The Chapter is planning a spring leadership retreat on April 26-27 to discuss emerging issues, including the potential need to increase dues across the board. The NNECAPA EC attends, and then the Section presidents are invited, but not vice presidents and treasurers, who were invited in past years.

S. Wraight gave an update on the 2024 NNECAPA Conference at Stoweflake. There will be some additional spaces or rooms at the conference venue for different groups to get together on the side of the actual conference, including a meeting for new planners, a professional development for AICP exam takers and a possibly an in-house planners therapy. Once the conference session proposals come in, the Committee will have a better idea of topics for the side “meet-ups.” The Committee has pretty much nailed down the schedule, and instead of a big lunch, there will be a Tuesday dinner for attendees, and social activities are being discussed, including bowling. The Committee is looking at having one keynote speaker and then a three-person response panel with a representative from each NNECAPA state. The keynote may discuss the problems that have resulted from encouraging more density in small communities, but it’s still being developed. Kathleen Kanz was also suggested as a potential speaker; she’s a stand-up comedian.

## **G. Legislative Committee**

A. Weinhagen gave the report. There have been lighter reports, and they have been coming out a little less frequently than in past years. The focus of the reports has been on the designation reform bills, and a number of Legislative Committee members have been asked to testify on S.311 and H.687. VPA members did contact legislators about some of the problematic additional preemption provisions that were up for discussion, and a lot of the most concerning provisions were removed from the bill. H.687 is becoming the key bill on these issues, and this will be the bill that is considered by the House for passage in the next few weeks before the cross-over deadline.

## **H. Awards Committee**

S. Grimm-Lyon, the Committee Chair, sent out the awards announcement to the listserv, and it’s been posted on the website. The deadline is pushed from March 15<sup>th</sup> to April 15<sup>th</sup>, and EC members are encouraged to nominate good people, projects and plans for 2024 VPA awards.

## **5. Other Business**

There was a brief discussion of VPA’s Google Drive and getting people logged in and using the Google Drive.

## **6. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:50 a.m. The next meeting date is at 10:00 a.m. on March 27, 2024.