Members Present: Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair; Karen Astley
Members Participating by Phone: Piet van Loon, Tim Arsenault, Jack Cunningham, Lise Fortin, Steven Lembke, Bobbi Kilburn, Carolyn Partridge
Absent: none
Staff present: Chris Campany, Executive Director
Public/Guests: Stephen Dotson, Commissioner for Putney; Ralph Meima
Presenter: none

Call to Order: Commissioner Gabby Ciuffreda, Chair, called the meeting to order at approximately 6:03 p.m. Introductions were made and it was noted that roll call votes would be required as a number of commissioners participated by phone due to inclement weather.

Additions/Changes to Agenda: none

Administrative Items:
Secretary/Treasurer’s Report: The minutes of the September 17, 2019 meeting were amended to correctly reflect that Karen Astley had been appointed Transportation Committee Chair, and that Steve Lembke had been appointed Emergency Planning chair. On a motion by Commissioner Partridge, seconded by Commissioner Lembke, the minutes were approved by a unanimous roll call vote with Commissioners Arsenault and Fortin abstaining.

Treasurer Bobbi Kilburn reviewed her conversations with Finance Manager Inessa Muse. She noted that the FY2018 audit was complete, that the FY2019 audit process was getting underway, and that the indirect rate cost proposal had been approved and included a note about the reviewer’s appreciation of working with Inessa. It was further noted that the WRC has 6 months from the close of the fiscal year to complete the FY2019 audit. On a motion by Commissioner Lembke, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the Treasurer’s Report was approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

Sibling Region Committee Update: Sibling Region Committee Chair Stephen Dotson, in collaboration with committee member Ralph Meima, provided a written report and update on the activities of the committee and where its work now stands. The update and report included a comprehensive history of how the initiative and related committee were created. While the committee is currently focused on building a relationship with the Hassleholm/Skane area of Sweden, it was noted that the function and purpose of the initiative is to establish the capacity to partner with communities throughout the world. Some committee members would like to self-fund a trip to Sweden to begin face to face introductions and explore what kind of relationship might be possible. Part of this trip would involve an exchange of letters of interest between the Windham Regional Commission and community and economic development entities in Sweden. The Executive Board asked that a draft letter be
presented to them at their next meeting scheduled for January 14th, and that the Committee make a presentation and ask for approval of the letter and trip at the next Full Commission meeting scheduled for January 28th.

**Regional Plan Update:** Executive Director Chris Campany was asked to provide an update on the updating of the regional plan. He noted that staff changes, notably the departure of former Associate Director Susan McMahon, and the more recent departure of Natural Resources Planner Emily Davis, coupled with the loss of Finance Manager Michael Shaughnessy, had challenged staff capacity to engage in the regional plan update process that was put forth in 2018. Given new staff and major new initiatives including the Windham Region Broadband Project, he proposed the Commission pursue a minor update with the goal of then continuing with a major update. Under this strategy, for calendar year 2020 the WRC would:

- Update and integrate the transportation plan into the regional plan.
- Integrate the regional energy plan into the regional plan.
- Update plan data, language and policies based upon needs identified by WRC committees.
- Update maps to reflect new information.

With a target adoption date of late 2020/early 2021, the WRC would then have time to focus on a major update that would focus on the following:

- What policies and implementation strategies are necessary to achieve compact settlement patterns.
- What policies and implementation strategies are necessary to ensure resilience of these compact settlements in the face of more frequent and severe flooding events resulting from global warming and climate change.
- What policies and implementation strategies are necessary to maintain and improve land conservation and landscape-scale habitat conservation and connectivity.

The board indicated agreement with this approach and asked Chris to bring a plan update workplan and schedule to the next Executive Board meeting.

**New England Youth Theatre Brownfield Funding Request:** Chair Gabby Ciuffreda presented a proposal from the Brownfields Committee to provide the NEYT with a $20,000 loan and $30,000 grant to remove a structurally unsound cement block building from the property. The NEYT would provide a 20 percent match. On a motion by Commissioner Lembke, seconded by Commissioner Fortin, the proposal was approved by a unanimous roll call vote with the exclusion of Commissioner Arsenault who had to leave the call.

**Executive Session:** On a motion by Commissioner Partridge, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the Executive Board voted unanimously by a roll call vote to go into executive session at 6:55 to discuss an FY2020 staff compensation proposal. The Executive Session concluded at 7:12 p.m. on a motion by Commissioner Kilburn, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham and approved by a unanimous roll call vote.

**FY2020 Staff Compensation:** On a motion by Commissioner Kilburn, seconded by Commissioner Partridge, a staff compensation package for FY2020 was approved by a unanimous roll call vote, including Commissioner Arsenault who rejoined the call. As part of this package, it was agreed that Senior Planner Sue Westa’s membership to the American Institute of Certified Planners/American Planning Association should be paid as it was of benefit to the region.
**Green Mountain National Forest Project:** Executive Director Chris Campany explained that the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) was seeking a grant to implement the Somerset Integrated Resource Project, and that staff had recommended that the WRC sign on in support to the Natural Resources Committee. Natural Resources Committee Chair Fortin explained that the committee had misgivings about signing onto a letter that was not yet available for review, and that some members had concerns about the Somerset project and the USFS generally. Commissioner Cunningham asked for clarification as to how this project differed from normal operations, and what area was covered. Chris explained that this project was within the Manchester Ranger District and was of a relatively larger scale than normal operations. He also explained that while staff had engaged in the USFS multi-year planning process, the Commission and commissioners had not had that benefit while many towns had. He suggested the WRC would benefit from collaboration with the USFS in the areas of habitat connectivity, water quality protection, and fuel sources for modern wood heating systems and related economic development opportunity. He further suggested that it would be helpful for the USFS to meet with commissioners, including the Full Commission and Natural Resources Committee. The Board felt that while there might be merits to eventually signing on in support of the project, that it should respect the concerns of the Natural Resources Committee and that the USFS should be invited to explain more about its current and proposed operations. On a motion by Commissioner Lembke, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the Board voted unanimously to not sign onto a support letter at this time.

**New Appointments:** There were no new appointments to be made.

**Executive Director Report:** Executive Director Campany explained that the kickoff meeting for the Windham Region Broadband Project, funded by a Broadband Innovation Grant, had been scheduled and that towns had been asked to 1) resolve to participate in the project, 2) identify a principal point of contact, and 3) think about how to best survey citizens about broadband needs and capacity to pay. While the grant has been awarded the WRC has yet to receive a contract, and cannot continue work until a contract is in hand or has been given the go ahead to begin work. He expressed concern that legislators in the region have caused confusion about the need for towns to decide to join a communications union district (CUD) during the upcoming town meeting. He explained that a primary purpose of the feasibility study and business plan to be created through this effort was to identify what CUDs make sense, and that wherever towns stand at present in their CUD discussions is fine. Chris also explained that he’d been contacted by senior staff with the U.S. Economic Development Administration for advice as to how a new $18 million grant program could be implemented to assist nuclear host communities with the transition from a functioning to shuttered nuclear power plant.

**Committee Chair Updates:** Chair Gabby Ciuffreda explained that Chris had been given his performance evaluation. He is expected to have staff annual performance reviews completed by the end of January and that a mid-year review would be conducted by the end of June. Treasurer Kilburn noted that the Finance Committee would meet in early January, and Commissioner van Loon noted that the Personnel Committee would also convene in early January to revise the update of the WRC Personnel Policies.

**Public Comments:** None.

**Review of Action Items from Meeting:** None.
Adjournment: On a motion by Commissioner Astley, seconded by Commissioner Cunningham, the meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,
Ashley Collins