

1 **CENTRAL VERMONT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
2 **BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**  
3 **MINUTES**  
4 **April 13, 2021**

5  
6 **Commissioners:**  
7

<input type="checkbox"/>	Barre City	Janet Shatney	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Moretown	Dara Torre, Secretary/Treasurer
<input type="checkbox"/>		Heather Grandfield, Alt.	<input type="checkbox"/>		Joyce Manchester, Alt
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Barre Town	Byron Atwood	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Northfield	Laura Hill-Eubanks, Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		George Clain, Alt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Orange	Lee Cattaneo
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Berlin	Robert Wernecke	<input type="checkbox"/>	Plainfield	Paula Emery
<input type="checkbox"/>		Karla Nuissl, Alt.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Bob Atchinson, Alt.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Cabot	Amy Hornblas	<input type="checkbox"/>	Roxbury	Gerry D'Amico
<input type="checkbox"/>	Calais	John Brabant	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Waitsfield	Don La Haye
<input type="checkbox"/>		Jan Ohlsson, Alt.	<input type="checkbox"/>		Harrison Snapp, Alt.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Duxbury	Alan Quackenbush	<input type="checkbox"/>	Warren	VACANT
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	E. Montpelier	Julie Potter	<input type="checkbox"/>		J. Michael Bridgewater, Alt.
<input type="checkbox"/>		Clarice Cutler, Alt.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Washington	Peter Carbee
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fayston	Russ Bowen	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Waterbury	Steve Lotspeich, Vice-Chair
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Marshfield	Robin Schunk	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Williamstown	Richard Turner
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Middlesex	Ron Krauth	<input type="checkbox"/>		Jacqueline Higgins, Alt.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Montpelier	Marcella Dent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Woodbury	Michael Gray
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Mike Miller, Alt.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Worcester	Bill Arrand

8  
9 Staff: Bonnie Waninger, Nancy Chartrand, Zach Maia

10 Guests: Jamie Stewart, Central VT Economic Development Corporation; Ken Jones, VT Dept. of Economic  
11 Development

12  
13 **Call to Order**

14 Chair Hill-Eubanks called the meeting to order at 6:32 pm and conducted a roll call. Quorum was  
15 present.

16  
17 **Adjustments to the Agenda**

18 Hill-Eubanks noted the speaker from CVEDC was not available yet, so moved on to Nominating  
19 Committee Report to be followed by CVEDC.

20  
21 **Public Comments**

22 None.

23  
24 **Nominations Committee Report**

25 J. Potter provided an overview regarding the memorandum in the packet and the charge per the Bylaws

1 of the Nominating Committee. She presented the draft slate of candidates for officers which proposes  
2 Steve Lotspeich for Chair, Gerry D’Amico for Vice-Chair, Janet Shatney for Secretary/Treasurer, and at-  
3 large members of Laura Hill-Eubanks, Michael Gray, Lee Cattaneo, and Marcella Dent. It was noted that  
4 nominations from the floor will be accepted at the next Board meeting prior to a paper ballot being  
5 mailed to Board members for elections.

### 7 **Central VT Economic Development Corporation Update**

8 Jamie Stewart, Central VT Economic Development Corporation provided a brief update regarding the  
9 business community as they continue to address COVID factors and work on a Community Economic  
10 Development Strategy. He noted that they are finding a shortage of workforce a critical issue. There is  
11 some concern that some of the workforce may never return. CVEDC is hearing from businesses that are  
12 looking to reduce their footprint. He suggested that RPCs should be considering what kind of work they  
13 can do to support towns when office space may not be in demand as a result of remote work. He also  
14 noted that people coming into Vermont from cities due to the safer environment has had an impact on  
15 the real estate market, stating prices in the Mad River Valley have seen appreciation between 100-200%  
16 pre-COVID. This will mean that going forward a large issue resulting from the pandemic will be an  
17 increased need for the development of work force housing. He noted they are watching for what long-  
18 term impacts COVID will have on our communities, and what we will need to start doing now to prepare  
19 for that fallout and how we can increase the work force.

20  
21 The floor was opened to questions. There was discussion regarding what extent not having children in  
22 school and child care throughout the pandemic is having on the workforce and if it will reappear once  
23 this is addressed. It was noted that there is a good understanding of the need to expand and improve  
24 quality of day care throughout the state as well as federally. Let’s Grow Kids and Regional Development  
25 Corporations statewide are collaborating on a three-year plan of a much more robust day care system  
26 with public sector support.

27  
28 Also discussed was the status of industrial parks in the region. Stewart noted they are not seeing a  
29 significant amount of industrial space vacant. What is available tend to be small options. He also noted  
30 that construction costs have significantly increased and will likely put a damper on commercial  
31 development, resulting in a high demand on existing spaces.

32  
33 There was discussion on broadband and its critical need for schools as well as cell phone and internet  
34 service being critical to businesses coming into the state. Stewart noted there will be a focus on  
35 Communications Union Districts being funded and coverage will build out from there, but funds are not  
36 likely going to go to the large carriers. Ken Jones of CVFiber noted that currently Consolidated  
37 Communications is installing cable in areas where Comcast has service to compete. He noted that  
38 CVFiber will be partnering with Washington Electric to drop connections from their lines to homes in  
39 areas that are not served and are projecting service for the Washington Electric area with fiber by the  
40 end of 2024.

### 42 **Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy**

43 Zach Maia provided a brief overview of the West Central Vermont Comprehensive Economic  
44 Development Strategy (CEDS). A CEDS is a planning process and document approved by the US

1 Economic Development Administration. It is to identify strengths and weaknesses in a region and  
2 engage a diverse set of stakeholders to generate good jobs, diversify the economy, and spur economic  
3 growth. Implementation of a plan provides opportunity for regional organizations and municipalities to  
4 access federal funding if projects align with priorities within the CEDS.

5  
6 Maia described the West Central Vermont CEDS region as 4 regional planning commissions and  
7 economic development corporations- Central Vermont, Rutland, Addison, and Chittenden. To date they  
8 have formed a Strategy Committee to guide the development of the planning process. They are  
9 compiling background data, conducting region analyses including a regional profile and SWOTs  
10 (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats), and determining COVID's impact on the economy.  
11 All this work will evolve into stakeholder engagement this summer (businesses, municipalities,  
12 community members, etc.). The work will be summarized into a draft CEDS document to enable access  
13 the federal funding.

### 14 15 **COVID-19 and the Vermont Economy**

16 Ken Jones, VT Dept. of Economic Development, provided an analysis of the COVID impact on the  
17 regional economy. Jones provided a presentation on the Washington County economy and COVID. He  
18 noted that Washington County has a strong relationship to Chittenden County as there is a lot of  
19 commuter movement between the two counties. What happens outside of Washington County is as  
20 important as what happens within the county itself. He also noted that the national economy drives  
21 many of the variables in the Vermont economy, i.e. consumer confidence, industrial productivity and  
22 demand, cost of and access to capital, COVID impacts and recovery programs.

23  
24 Jones provided details about the county's overall GDP, Wages, Income, Property Value and Population  
25 and how Washington County compares to the entire state. Additional detail was provided on the impact  
26 of COVID in 2020 to lodging/accommodations, retail sales, construction, manufacturing, and household  
27 incomes.

28  
29 It was noted that housing sales to out of state buyers has accelerated significantly (approximately \$600  
30 million of additional money coming into the state from out of state purchases) than prior to 2020. This  
31 makes it very difficult for Vermonters to compete in the housing market.

32  
33 Jones discussed recovery programs, which include water and wastewater, broadband, housing, capital  
34 projects, outdoor recreation, education, municipal support as well as additional business support. It was  
35 noted there is going to be a significant investment in many of our economic sectors which will keep us  
36 very busy and hopefully establish a strong foundation for recovery.

37  
38 The takeaway from this presentation is that general impacts are not negative, but the general impacts  
39 do not tell the stories of individuals and/or businesses that were harmed. Emerging from the pandemic  
40 has huge uncertainties specifically related to remote work, retail sales shifts, and the federal deficit.

41  
42 The floor was opened to questions. Discussed was the statistic of no significant lost wages in  
43 Washington County. It was suggested that there is a concentration of business sectors that did not see a  
44 significant impact from COVID in the county. There was also additional discussion of the potential tax

1 implications of property values when neighboring properties are being sold at high rates. Jones advised  
2 that the equalized grand list should help to address this.

3  
4 There was question about the employees who have dropped out of the work force and expectations  
5 regarding their return. Jones noted the challenge in getting childcare is keeping people from re-entering  
6 the work force; as is fear of COVID. He also noted the unemployment insurance (UI) benefit is  
7 significant right now. People are receiving more money on UI than when they were working. It was also  
8 suggested that retirements may also be accelerated as a result of COVID. Based on all these factors, the  
9 recovery of the workforce may not be complete.

10  
11 There was discussion regarding certain sectors of economy and women being hit harder during the  
12 pandemic. It was noted there has been an increase in number of families seeking assistance due to  
13 COVID. Hope was expressed that the state is paying attention to ensure individuals who were harmed  
14 are getting the assistance that they need.

15  
16 Jones was asked whether he sees a negative side to funding of recovery programs through federal  
17 deficit. He noted what he has heard is that at some point there will be a reckoning of the cost of capital,  
18 but economists have been saying this for decades. During the last 16 months there have been  
19 unprecedented levels of deficit spending and at some point there will be a reckoning, which will  
20 hopefully be delayed for a while.

## 21 22 **Meeting Minutes – March 9, 2021**

23 *R. Turner moved to approve the minutes as written; P. Carbee seconded. Motion carried.*

## 24 25 **Reports**

26 Hill-Eubanks asked staff if they had anything to highlight. Waninger advised Berlin was granted its new  
27 Town Center designation which includes a number of conditions. She will provide a summary in the next  
28 Board meeting packet.

29  
30 She also advised that staff is calling all municipalities to talk about American Rescue Plan (ARPA) as  
31 municipalities will be eligible for federal recovery money. She also noted an email has gone out to  
32 Selectboards with the estimates of the amount of money to be received.

33  
34 Waninger announced that Zach Maia has tendered his resignation. Maia thanked the Board and  
35 conveyed his appreciation to the towns represented. He advised he will be a Development Planner with  
36 the Town of Colchester. It was noted that we will be very sad to see him go and will be advertising the  
37 position shortly. Hill-Eubanks thanked Maia for his work and wished him good luck.

## 38 39 **Municipal Updates**

40 Hill-Eubanks opened the floor to members to share information from their towns.

41  
42 Clain advised of a Barre Town experience related to a solar site proposed by Norwich Solar in which the  
43 final project was ultimately different from what was proposed to the town in their 45-day Notice. It was  
44 noted the map presented to Public Utilities Commission was a completely different map. This caused

1 concern in transparency of the process. He wanted to alert all municipalities to follow these types of  
2 projects through to completion to ensure they are within the bounds as presented. Waninger provided  
3 some background on preferred sites and noted that these types of projects should be monitored  
4 throughout the development process. It was confirmed that the project involved was the Grandview  
5 Terrace site in Barre Town, completed in 2020. Atchinson of Plainfield advised he was aware of a  
6 project that Twinfield Union and Danville School District had on Route 14 South and was pleased it was  
7 not the project that was at issue.

8

9 **Adjournment**

10 *D. La Haye moved to adjourn at 8:15 pm; B. Atchison seconded. Motion carried.*

11

12 Respectfully submitted,

13 Nancy Chartrand, Office Manager