



The Kenyon Building  
344 Main Street, Suite 202  
Wakefield, Rhode Island  
02879

401.284.1784

CHARLESTOWN

EXETER

HOPKINTON

NARRAGANSETT

NEW SHOREHAM

NORTH KINGSTOWN

RICHMOND

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

WESTERLY

[www.wcrpc.org](http://www.wcrpc.org)

## WASHINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

### Meeting Minutes: Board of Directors

*June 9, 2010; Kettle Pond Visitors Center*

#### **Council Members Present:**

Chris Duhamel – Westerly (President)  
Henry Oppenheimer – Richmond (Vice President)  
Cal Ellis – Exeter (Treasurer)  
Marge Frank - Charlestown  
Ray Torrey – New Shoreham

#### **Also Present:**

Jeff Broadhead – Executive Director  
Maura Sayre – Program Coordinator

**Summary: All towns are wrapping up their budgets. Flood damage continues to be an issue as roads and bridges are repaired. Continued progress on the energy program was discussed, and the procurement process for an ESCO is underway.**

**Minutes:** The minutes from the May 12, 2010 meeting were approved.

#### **Executive Director's Report:**

- **WCRPC Energy Program:** The Energy Program is designed to reduce energy costs for our towns and school districts through efficiency, modernization, management, training, and use of renewable energy. It includes grant applications seeking stimulus and other funds to reduce energy costs and create local jobs as well as a Performance Contracting process, through the use of an Energy Services Company (ESCO), to fund major efficiency and capital improvements with savings.

**Performance Contracting:** We have drafted the RFQ and attachments (Participation Agreements and ESCO Contracts) for the procurement of an ESCO. We are using the RFQ in order to select the best ESCO for our 10-town and 7-school system offering, and will be soliciting responses from the ESCO's that are approved by the State of RI. RI recently expanded the list of approved ESCO's and it is now a good selection pool. When we began our project, the approved list was severely lacking.

The RFQ has been reviewed by a municipal ESCO consultant, and is now in the final stages of a legal review by Seth Handy at Chace Ruttenberg & Freedman, LLP. Our ESCO engineer, Dave Ward, owner of Energy Engineering and Design Services, has also been instrumental in the review and is currently going over the last version. We anticipate sending the RFQ out to all the participating towns and schools early next week.

Part of the RFQ process is a compilation of two years of energy bills for all our town/school buildings. Gathering this information has been daunting—each town organizes its records differently and town personnel have much on their plate. Nevertheless, under Rachel Ackerman's guidance, the URI Energy Fellows have been crucial to compiling and entering the utility bills from the towns as part of the ESCO project. Rachel and the Fellows have direct experience doing this for the Naval War College, Port of Providence, and the City of Warwick. We are creating an electronic database of all the utility bill information in order to benchmark and help the selected ESCO to move forward in a timely manner.

Last month we participated in the Office of Energy Resources ESCO meeting on behalf of all the participating towns. We also attended an ARRA reporting meeting at the Department of Administration to gear up for all the reporting as a result of the EECBG funds being distributed to the towns. Each town has signed and returned the state contract for the EECBG money and each town has signed and returned the complimentary WCRPC contract to administer the EECBG work. Of the towns in our group, West Greenwich was the first to be reimbursed by the State for paying our invoice—congratulations!

**Strategic Energy Plan:** The State Guide Plan Energy Element is being revised, and we are working with Statewide Planning and the Office of Energy Resources so that we have a Washington County Strategic Energy Plan that not only meets all their requirements but can also be used by each town in their next Comprehensive Plan update. Additionally, the State's Office of Energy Resources wishes our towns to be basing their energy-related decisions on a rational basis. Therefore, they authorized some of the EECBG funds to be used to prepare an energy plan. WCRPC applied for these funds and was accepted.

Two of the Energy Fellows are helping to create the Washington County Strategic Energy Plan. They have created an outline for the Strategic Energy Plan that encompasses global, national, state, county, and town information.

The Energy Fellows have begun contacting the Town Planners to gather information on local projects and progress in the energy field. We are looking to highlight some individuals in case studies that represent Washington County's move towards energy efficiency and Renewables. This report will be presented to all the towns and submitted to the Office of Energy Resources as part of the EECBG work.

**Round 1 – Non Utility Scale Renewable Grants:** Of the 196 applications seeking part of the \$3.9 million fund, we submitted 7 applications totaling over \$7 million. WCRPC was officially notified last month of an award of \$750,000 as a grant towards a Solar PV (Photovoltaic, or sunlight to electricity) project to be located on the capped Westerly landfill. The grant contract has arrived and includes some language that will make it challenging to create a successful project. Jeff drafted a letter to Department of Energy Resources Administrator, Ken Payne, outlining the areas of concern. The Board was in favor of sending the letter and copying it to our legislators in the General Assembly as well as the town councils in Westerly, Hopkinton, Richmond and Charlestown.

**Round 2 – Non Utility Scale Renewable Grants:** In March, we submitted 5 applications for renewable energy grants for Washington County. Our applications were for turbines in North Kingstown, Westerly, New Shoreham, and Charlestown and are pending, as is another for solar photovoltaic on town hall and school roofs in each town.

**EECBG Competitive Round Activity 3:** This round is the approximately \$1.3 million Competitive round of the EECBG process, and was open to all towns. WCRPC submitted 3 grant applications on behalf of the WC Energy Program participants: 1) one Solar Thermal (solar hot water) demonstration project for each town (including South Kingstown), 2) New Shoreham Equity to equalize EECBG funds and give New Shoreham an equal footing with the mainland towns (the original formula used only winter populations, and under-funded New Shoreham,) and 3) Revolving Loan Fund for energy efficiency grants to homeowners and small businesses. No announcements have been made regarding the recipients of the awards.

**Up Coming Meetings:** Jeff and Maura S. are setting up individual meetings with each Town Manager/Administrator/School Superintendent and their staff to provide and update on the Energy Program and a review of the reporting requirements.

- **TDR Challenge Grant:** TDR, or the Transfer of Development Rights, is a means to preserve open space (farm or forest) while fostering development in areas where towns wish higher density. It utilizes market forces, and does not require public funds to purchase property or development rights. In RI, only North Kingstown has such a program, although it has been discussed for years and works well in other parts of the county. Last fall the WCRPC wrote a grant application that was accepted by RI Statewide Planning Program, and we were awarded \$51,000 to hold several public meetings about TDR, and to have a report prepared that will show the benefits of the program and the steps necessary to implement it across town boundaries—this would allow land to be preserved in one town, while the increased development would be located in another. The study will assess not only TDR in Washington County, but also a statewide program, where land in outlying areas could be preserved while fostering development in needy central city areas.
- The Stakeholders group has met for the study of TDR across the county. The RFP for a TDR consultant is being drafted. Once the consultant is chosen, sessions will be scheduled to introduce the TDR concept to planning boards and commissions, land trusts, town councils and conservation commissions. The sessions will explain the program stressing that TDR is a voluntary program that does not involve down-zoning and should be a win-win situation for all parties involved.
- **Broadband Grant Application:** The \$6,418,191 Federal grant application for Broadband technology installation across Washington County is in the thick of the Due Diligence stage. If funded, this project will build a 255-mile fiber optic network across Washington County, and will connect directly to 187 of our town and school buildings. It will eliminate the need for multiple phone lines (NK Schools will reduce over 400 phone lines to just 1), as well as eliminate multiple Internet connections. Further, the opportunity for real-time high capacity data will allow shared services such as dispatch, accounting, assessment, and other services to be implemented remotely.
- The Due Diligence process is intense, taking about 75% of Jeff's time. Since May 3, we have had several requests for additional information, spreadsheets, letters of support, etc. from the Feds (or their consultants) each week. We are continuously sending information and participating in conference calls with the Department of Commerce, and URI. Our project is one of two applications recommended by the RI Department of Administration's Broadband Review Team for funding (of 27 proposals considered). The project has senatorial support, and we believe we have a good chance of a positive funding recommendation.
- **Sustainable Energy Forum:** The WCRPC co-hosted a Sustainable Energy Forum on June 5<sup>th</sup> along with the RI Energy Efficiency and Resource Management Council (EERMC) and the URI Energy Center. The keynote speakers were Senator Sheldon Whitehouse and EPA Regional Administrator Curt Spalding. There were three breakout sessions focused on Commercial Industrial, Residential, and Municipal. Jeff

moderated the Municipal session. This was a free event and municipalities were encouraged to send Town Managers and Facilities folks.

- **RI Energy Leaders:** Jeff was invited to participate in Senator Whitehouse's Energy Leader's conference in Washington, DC on June 16. He will join industry, nonprofit, and governmental leaders in this exciting event.
- **SAMP Stakeholders Meeting:** The Ocean SAMP stakeholder process is drawing to a close, after two years of meetings and after reviewing millions of dollars of research about our near ocean. The chapters of the report are being produced and are fascinating reading. Any board members wishing to know more about virtually anything ocean-related are invited to ask, and we'll send you links to the chapters. The Cultural/Historical one was just published.
- **Borderlands Project:** The Borderland project, too, is coming to a close. Jeff and Maura will be attending a presentation in CT on June 9 showcasing the amazing work done in Exeter, RI and Killingly, CT. These towns are showing the way towards better rural planning and development.

#### **Town Reports:**

**Exeter** – Cal E. reported that they had a town financial meeting last night. They are making cuts to almost all programs. If money comes through they will restore programs. He also noted that they had just accepted the resignation of the tax collector and tax assessor opening the door for the possibility of additional shared services with NK.

**North Kingstown** – Steve D. reported that revaluation is taking place this year and the tax rate went up for commercial and down for residential. They are close to approval for a wind ordinance. They are reviewing recommended water conservation measures. The public safety unions are being reviewed for staffing.

**New Shoreham** – Ray T. gave an update on the proposed off shore wind farm. Ray and the board discussed the structure of having an elected vs. and appointed assessor. The Board strongly endorsed having an appointed assessor. Discussion continued for New Shoreham and all of the other towns regarding the benefits of staggered council terms.

**Westerly** - Chris D. reported that Westerly is considering a Utility Bond of \$6.5M for infrastructure improvements. Their police contract is being renegotiated. The Ocean House Hotel has reopened with great fanfare. They are about to have an Appreciation Event for the first responders for the recent flood.

**Richmond** – Henry O. gave an update on the progress at the WC CDC. He also reported that Richmond has settled their police contract. The police chief has announced his retirement. They are looking at a reduction in the municipal budget and a 3% increase in total taxes. They continue to deal with the aftermath of the

flood damage. There was discussion regarding the water line options for Richmond Elementary.

**Charlestown** – Marge F. reported that they have passed a \$9M municipal budget. Union negotiations continue with the police. They have let go their recreation director of 22 years.

The next meeting of the WCRPC will be **Wednesday, July 14, 2010** at 8:30 a.m. at Kettle Pond Visitors Center. Monthly meetings for 2010 are on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Wednesday of each month.

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_

Beverly Kenney, Secretary, WCRPC