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CHARLESTOWN

EXETER

HOPKINTON

NARRAGANSETT

NEW SHOREHAM

NORTH KINGSTOWN

RICHMOND

SOUTH KINGSTOWN

WESTERLY

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WASHINGTON COUNTY REGIONAL PLANNING COUNCIL

Meeting Minutes: Board of Directors

September 8, 2010; Kettle Pond Visitors Center

Council Members Present:

Chris Duhamel – Westerly (President)
Henry Oppenheimer – Richmond (Vice President)
Cal Ellis – Exeter (Treasurer)
Beverly Kenney – Hopkinton (Secretary)
Marge Frank - Charlestown

Also Present:

Jeff Broadhead – Executive Director
Maura Sayre – Program Coordinator
Rachel Ackerman – Energy Program Analyst
Michael Rauh – Facilitator

Summary: There was terrific response to the RFQ for performance contracting. Seven top energy companies from the State of RI approved list have submitted responses. Representatives from the ten participating towns and seven participating school districts (the Energy Team) have reviewed the responses and were invited to participate in the review meeting. At that meeting the field was narrowed to five ESCOs to be interviewed. Following the all day interviews, the Energy Team then narrowed the field to three ESCOs to conduct free preliminary audits on one sample school (Richmond Elementary) and one sample town hall (Narragansett). The county wide Broadband grant application is in the final stage of review and has across the board support thus far. The Planning Council continues to participate in statewide planning, transportation and energy initiatives.

Minutes: The minutes from the July 14, 2010 meeting were approved. There was no August meeting.

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 – On the July 30th RFQ deadline WCRPC received responses from seven of the ESCOs on the state approved list. They were Ameresco, Chevron, Honeywell, Johnson Controls, Noresco, Schneider, Siemens. The Energy Review Team, made up of a point person and alternate appointed by each town and school district, convened on August 4th. Prior to the meeting, each was given rating sheets and copies of the proposals and the group reviewed the scoring procedure. They voted to skip the meeting scheduled for August 11th in order to have adequate time to fully review all seven proposals. In addition to the Energy Team the WCRPC staff and David Ward, P.E., LEED AP, from Energy Engineering & Design, reviewed the proposals.

The group met again on August 17th for a three and a half hour review session where each rating criteria for each ESCO was discussed, and participants had a chance to change any of their ratings based on what others had noted. Twelve towns/schools and our engineer, David Ward, participated in the August 17th meeting. After the ratings were finished, two rankings were prepared - one was numerical based on the ratings, and the other a “gut” feeling. The results were identical, and five ESCOs were moved on to the interview stage. Only town/school representatives voted; WCRPC staff and our engineer did not vote.

In preparation for the interviews, five questions were sent to the ESCOs for written responses, and these have been received and are under review by the team. Another set of questions was prepared for the actual interviews, which will be held on September 2nd.

The URI Energy Fellows continue to fill in the missing information from energy bills for each town and school department. 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.

EECBG reporting continues. The WCRPC continues to send invoices to each town that they in turn send to the State for reimbursement from the EECBG funding for energy work. As we move forward the Planning Council will be available to help towns do their reporting if they so choose.

Finally, the State Office of Energy Resources is altering its EECBG drawdown procedures, and Jeff is reviewing the draft (and unreleased) regulations. We think the new procedures will streamline the process a little by allowing more prospective funding. The current system is largely reimbursement.

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 a terrific draft of the strategic energy plan that encompasses global, national, state, county, and town information. The Energy Fellows have been busy

contacting the Town Planners to gather information on local projects and progress in the energy field. 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 Grants - The WCRPC was awarded \$750,000 as a grant towards a Solar PV (Photovoltaic, or sunlight to electricity) project to be located on the capped Westerly landfill. A letter has been sent to the state Office of Energy Resources (OER) Administrator, Ken Payne, requesting several changes to the grant contract, which will be necessary in order to proceed. No formal response has been received to date, although we believe some modification of the procedures will be forthcoming shortly. Other avenues are being explored for pre-development funding.

ROUND 2 – Non Utility Scale Grants – WCRPC was awarded one \$750,000 grant for one turbine on Block Island and another \$750,000 grant for two turbines in Charlestown. These contracts seem to have the same constraints as the Round 1 contract. Jeff has been in constant contact with the OER regarding the award.

EECBG COMPETITIVE ROUND – ACTIVITY 3 – WCRPC has received notification that none of the Washington County applications for Round 3 were chosen for funding.

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 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 - The \$6,418,191 Federal grant application for Broadband technology installation across Washington County is finally done with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration's Due Diligence process. It is currently being reviewed by the staff of Larry Strickling, Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Communications and Information. Mr. Strickling is also Administrator of the National Telecommunications Information Administration. We believe he is the decision-maker on these grants.

We are in what is referred to as Wave 3 of the grants, with a staff recommendation to fund the project. We are somewhat confident, but that is tempered by recent news that Congress has removed some \$302 million from the Department of Commerce's broadband

stimulus fund. The Board requested that Jeff contact Senator Reed's office for additional last minute support.

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 many multiple internet connections. Further, the opportunity for real-time high capacity data will allow shared services such as dispatch, accounting, assessment, GIS, and other services to be implemented remotely.

What is news and is really exciting is that the partnership we have forged with URI and with OSHEAN will mean that the "backbone," or main loop of our fiber project will be built whether or not we are funded. If that happens, any of our towns or schools will simply have to install feeder lines and they will get the services of the full system.

Town Council Presidents' Summit – Given the upcoming November elections, the Board requested that plans begin for a January summit of the new Town Council Presidents.

Congress of Councils – The Board requested that plans begin for a March Congress of Councils event.

Accounting - Jeff B. and Michael Rauh will be meeting with the WCRPC bookkeeper and accountants on September 14th to review procedures.

The Board requested that Jeff B. present quarterly income statements and balance sheets at the Board meetings.

Jeff B. reported that he is waiting for a determination of whether an audit is required for WCRPC.

Meetings

- 17 town councils and school committees meetings
- ESCO RFQ Pre-proposal Conference
- ESCO interviews
- Convened Charlestown and New Shoreham with potential wind consultant
- DEM and EPA regarding brownfields grants
- Statewide Planning regarding their Sustainable Communities grant
- Westerly Alternative Energy Committee
- OSHEAN regarding the Broadband grant
- Numerous Energy Review Team meetings
- Numerous meetings with energy companies regarding renewables.
- Regional Municipal Energy Coalition

- Planner's meetings with RIDOT Planners, consultants and engineers to discuss the commuter rail plans for Washington County.
- State Technical committee
- Northeast Sustainable Energy Association
- Rhode Island Foundation
- URI regarding Broadband grant
- Dave Ward, Energy Engineer for Energy Program
- Statewide Planning regarding HUD Sustainable Committees grant application
- Ocean SAMP Subcommittee
- North Kingstown School Dept. Facilities Committee
- URI Energy Center
- Charlestown Town Manager and Planner regarding wind project

Upcoming Meetings

- Mike Sullivan, Executive Director of RI DEM on September 9th. Marge F. requested that he discuss the Charlestown septic regulations.
- North Kingstown IT and building department regarding options for regional building permitting.
- Ken Payne, RI OER, regarding grant agreements
- Dan Cartier, Chariho Regional Schools, regarding moving the met tower from Chariho to Charlestown.
- URI regarding the Broadband options for Washington County.
- The new Commuter Rail task force is set to hold their first meeting in September.

General – Jeff B. requested that the WCRPC consider having a municipal attorney on retainer. The Board discussed options and agreed that there were pros and cons to choosing an “up and comer” vs. one with stature and experience. Jeff B. will bring recommendations to the next board meeting.

Jeff B. presented a Public Records Policy. The Board voted to adopt the Public Records Policy with several minor amendments.

Town Reports:

Exeter – Cal E. reported that they hired a new tax collector; they are working on a wind ordinance; they have 8 candidates running for 5 seats on the council; they are bringing to vote 5 Charter questions.

Hopkinton - Beverly K. reported that they had a hearing on the affordable housing ordinance; several ordinances are still unresolved; the town attorney still needs to speak with the WCRPC energy attorney regarding the Participation Agreement.

Richmond – Henry O. reported that they swore in a new police chief; they issued a 1.15M bond to help with flood repairs; McGuire Group has been hired to do a Comp Plan revision (they are currently doing one for Hopkinton); they continue to work with the Senior Center regarding internal problems; they have 5 candidates running for 5 seats.

Charlestown – Marge F. reported that the police contract is not yet signed; Parks and Rec department has been very busy with summer activities and recent storms; the communication system was tested during the recent hurricane scare and operated wonderfully; election issues are heating up; there will be a candidates forum soon.

Westerly - Chris D. reported that they will have 8 candidates for 7 seats; they continue to work with residents concerned about entering into the Participation Agreement for the Energy Program; Chris asked Jeff for answers to specific questions regarding the Energy Program for an upcoming meeting.

The next meeting of the WCRPC will be **Wednesday, October 13, 2010** at 8:30 a.m. at Kettle Pond Visitors Center. Monthly meetings for 2010 are on the 2nd Wednesday of each month.

Attest: _____

Beverly Kenney, Secretary, WCRPC