



Thursday, November 30, 2023

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Paul Robitaille, Chair; Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair; Mark Decoteau, Treasurer, Mark Dindorf, Member

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director; James Steele, Finance Manager & Special Projects Planner (virtual)

Call to Order

Chair Robitaille called the meeting to order at 2:03

Attendance by Roll Call

Paul Robitaille, Chair; Ben Gaetjens-Oleson, Vice Chair; Mark Decoteau, Treasurer, Mark Dindorf, Member

Minutes of 08/17/2023 Approval

MOTION Member Dindorf made a motion to approve the 08/17/2023 minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Treasurer Decoteau.

The motion carried - 4 in favor/0 opposed/0 abstention.

Financial

Financial Report June & July

Mr. Steele provided an overview of the financials, noting that in October, there was a loss of \$13,268.65. This was due to a loss in billable hours as a result of staff medical leave, as well as the last large invoice for the audit of \$6,662.50. Mr. Steele explained that this is not something that we expect moving forward; however, November, December, and January are the holiday season, and traditional Councils' billable hours are lower. With me, we may see some losses over the next 3 months, but it is not anticipated to be as significant as October. After January, we anticipate not seeing losses.

Discussion – staff medical leave was unexpected, and could the loss have happened over the year versus a small span? It's not like we are going to realize the \$13,000 loss by the end of the year. Mr. Steele, it is anticipated that we will start to recover slowly from this loss over the remainder of the year. Question – what would be the anticipated year-end impact of the \$13,000? Will most of it be resolved? Mr. Steele commented that while it is anticipated we will recover from the loss by year-end, it does rely on how billable staff can remain. Discussion regarding if this is a loss that we would likely have seen over the course of the year vs. in a short period of time. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that this was a significant block of medical leave that may have or may not have been taken over the course of the year, and typically, we wouldn't see staff taking this amount of leave.

Is the Council allowed to end the year in a negative balance statutory? Mr. Steele & Ms. Moren-Grey commented that for many years, we have run negative. Staff will look into the statutory requirement. The Board expressed concern that the Council could not

withstand this on a repetitive basis if the Council was able to make this up over the year. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that November through January will be less billable but then is anticipated to increase. Moving forward, this should be watched closely. Mr. Steele commented that we do have some funds in reserve that can cover the cost at the end of the year.

MOTION Treasurer Decoteau made a motion to approve the October Financial Reports. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson.
The motion carried - 4 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention.

Audit Services Update

- Mr. Steele commented the audit came back positive, with the exception of the separation of duties. This is a continuing challenge for the Council because of staff size, and in order to address the issue, it would require increased staff, which is not in the best financial interest of the organization. At the end of the year, the Council had \$350,000 in revenue, and only \$250,000 was protected by FDIC insurance. Other possible options mentioned collateralized sweep accounts and public investment pools. Mr. Steele will look into this. Overall, there was a positive gain in the net position of \$55,000. The auditor will be scheduled to present in the next meeting.

Other Business

2024 Meetings: - Ms. Moren-Grey, January, March, May, July, September, and November, with a full commission meeting in June. This will be the Council's Annual Meeting. Ms. Moren-Grey asked if there is interest in going back to an event as in past years or keeping to a regular commission meeting as we have been. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that organizing an event, as in the past, is a considerable effort that results in administration time resulting in a financial loss. It was determined that a regular Commission meeting would be the format in the future.

OHRV State Commission – Ms. Moren-Grey commented that Mr. Jackson has been attending; however, he has informed her that he is no longer able to be the representative due to a change in his personal time commitments. Ms. Moren-Grey reminded the Board that during that application period, no alternative was selected due to the pool of candidates, and she recommended that the application be redistributed. The Board agreed.

Dues – Mr. Steele opened the discussion of dues for the calendar year 2024. For the calendar year, we received \$66,750 with 39 members. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that since COVID the Council has been able to maintain or reduce dues. In the future she recommends moving back to the historical dues calculation to prevent the potential of drastic change. Mr. Steele commented that the dues calculation is based on the most current town valuation and population factored in the amount needed to be raised. \$125,000 (based on all communities) is the goal to raise historically; we raise \$70,000. Is

there a way to budget for the \$70,000 vs \$125,000? What if the budget is \$66,000 with a 5% increase for those that pay? Is there a way to then incentivize participation with an introductory rate that is not significantly lower than the actual rate? Ms. Moren-Grey expressed concern as to how we different the services between members at a full rate vs. the introductory rate. Staff will consider a 5% increase over 2023 based on raising \$70,000 and the \$125,000 and how we can incentivize communities to join for 2024.

The solicitation process for membership is that the Council sends invoices, membership dues letters, as well as information material to the town select boards and planning boards. There are two new communities considering membership this year. Member Dindorf inquired about Conway's community and its involvement. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that Conway has been in contact with services and membership. The Council is currently working with Conway on a CBBG grant, as well as contract work in the past.

Project Update – we are still working our way through the CDS funding for both the Regional Plan as well as the continued housing work.

Picked up approximately 10 additional 10 NBRC administration projects. We received a draft MOU from NBRC for technical assistance to potential NBRC applicants that are with NBRC & NH BEA, while we are still unsure where this is at the state level.

Coos County Broadband Committee – The Council will be working with NCDE to support this group and provide technical assistance to towns.

Bethlehem Pop-Up – In late August, we will implement a traffic-calming project along the main street of Bethlehem, potentially the largest in the state. The project resulted in slowing traffic along the main street. The select board is considering forming a committee to move the effort forward.

Treasure Decoteau shared Waterville Valley's newly implemented pedestrian bike project at the entrance into Town.

Chair Robitaille commented that Kaela Tavares did a great job with the HOP grant presentation this week for the community of Gorham. Treasure Decoteau commented that Kaela did a great job as well with Waterville's HOP grant, which has resulted in five amendments. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that she attended the Bethlehem meeting where Cathlin Lord and Kaela Tavares presented for Bethlehem's HOP grant, and they both did a great job. Cathlin provided an in-person presentation and handled the public meeting and presentation very well.

Member Dindorf asked about how much interaction the Council has with proposed legislation with commenting and/or monitoring. Ms. Moren-Grey explained that through NHARPC, there may be a decision to comment on proposed legislation. Through NHMA as well as NHARPC, there is monitoring of proposed legislation. The Board discussed how

proposed legislation, current and future, may impact northern communities in a unique manner and that it would be helpful if the Council could highlight or link proposed legislation for Council communities. Ms. Moren-Grey commented that we can add this to the newsletter.

Nonpublic Session under RSA 91-A:3, II (if needed)

None needed

Public Comment

Chair Robitaille asked for public comment – there was none.

Adjournment

MOTION Treasurer Decoteau made a motion to adjourn. Motion was seconded by Vice Chair Gaetjens-Oleson.

The motion carried - 4 in favor/ 0 opposed / 0 abstention

The meeting adjourned at 3:14

Respectfully Submitted,
Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director