

**Mount Ascutney
Regional Commission**

Minutes of Monday, October 25, 2021
MARC Offices, Ascutney, VT
and via Zoom

Commissioners Present: Tom Bock, Chester; Tom Marsh, Windsor; Kathy Rondeau, Reading; Wayne Wheelock, Baltimore; Walter Martone, Springfield; Terry Carter, Ludlow; Bob Flint, At-Large.

Staff Present: Tom Kennedy, Jason Rasmussen, Cynthia Porter.

Others Present: Amanda Sidler, SRDC.

Tom Bock opened the meeting at 12:02 PM.

1. Changes to the Agenda
 - a. None.
2. Secretary's Report
 - a. *Walter Martone made a motion to approve the September 27, 2021 meeting minutes as presented. Second by Tom Marsh. Motion passed unanimously.*
3. Treasurer's Report
 - a. *Tom Marsh made a motion to receive the August 2021 financial report as presented. Second by Walter Martone. Motion passed unanimously.*
4. Discussion of Ongoing Working Communities Challenge in the Springfield Area
 - a. Bob Flint and Amanda Sidler gave an update of the ongoing Springfield area Working Communities Challenge. This is one of four projects in Vermont funded by the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston focused on economic opportunity for communities and residents with low incomes. There will be four new projects in the state this year.
 - b. Amanda reviewed some key project initiatives intended to address barriers of entering the workforce:
 - 1) The program includes a child care fund which helps region's residents pay for child care. This program helped, but the level of need is much higher. Prior to the pandemic, a study indicated that the region needed to double the number of child care providers.
 - 2) A transportation work group was formed, which has led to a micro-transit study. This study will evaluate if an Uber-like transportation service model makes sense for the region. One benefit is that it provides more flexibility.
 - 3) The project also included a free laptop program. The Springfield Working Communities Challenge Committee quickly realized the need to also provide basic computer literacy as part of this program.
 - 4) Working Fields provides employment and recovery coaching services.

- 5) An ongoing employment research effort is intended to identify employment barriers, and it includes surveys for both employers and residents in the region.
5. Discussion of Regional Project Priorities for ACCD
 - a. Bob Flint indicated that SRDC and MARC are working together to develop a list of economic development-related projects that ACCD can look to as funding opportunities become available. For example, it is recommended to add projects for future applications to the CDBG and Northern Borders programs. Solicitation for projects was sent to towns recently, and information is available on both the MARC and SRDC websites. The projects need to be realistic. Projects can be either public or private. We intend to review and finalize the list with the Board around December before submitting it to ACCD.
 6. Discussion of RPC Projects and Staffing Challenges
 - a. Tom Kennedy noted that MARC is fortunate to be getting significant levels of funding this year. This may present a situation where we need to prioritize the help we can offer our towns. The priority will be to assist towns with ARPA funds. It is possible that other things may need to wait until we have staff capacity.
 7. Brownfields
 - a. Tom Kennedy indicated that demolition has begun in the back of the J&L building. It is estimated to be a 1.5-year long project. Bob Flint thanked MARC for the support for the J&L brownfields project over the years.
 - b. Tom Kennedy reported that ACCD has \$10 million for brownfield grants or loans, for which the private sector is eligible. ACCD has an additional \$1 million for brownfield assessment work by RPCs (statewide). MARC will be administering the \$1 million RPC assessment funds for ACCD. Sub-grant agreements to the other RPCs should go out by mid-November. MARC will need to open a new bank account for these funds.
 - c. *Terry Carter made a motion to pass a resolution authorizing staff to open a new bank account for the ACCD Brownfields Assessment Program, and to authorize Tom Marsh, Kathy Rondeau, Tom Kennedy and Jason Rasmussen as signatories for that bank account. Second by Walter Martone. Motion passed unanimously.*
 8. Discussion of American Rescue Plan (ARPA) and Associated State Funding
 - a. Tom Kennedy reported on the ARPA funding coming to towns including both the “town” and “county” apportionments. He indicated that culverts are eligible, which should help small towns that do not have infrastructure. Funds need to be encumbered by 2024 and spent by 2026.
 - b. Tom also discussed associated state funding, including DEC six program areas (e.g. CSO, mobile home parks, pretreatment, homeowners well/septic, villages without infrastructure), VHCB funding (e.g. land banking, water/sewer, accessory dwelling units, home down payment assistance), increased funding for

the Downtown Transportation Fund, and EV charging stations for multi-family dwellings. For more information, see VLCT's website including a recent webinar: <https://www.vlct.org/resource/arpa-funds-take-your-time-and-think-big>.

9. New Business

a. None.

10. Old Business

a. None.

11. Adjourn

Tom Marsh made a motion to adjourn at 1:10 p.m. Second by Wayne Wheelock. Motion passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Jason Rasmussen