



RPC News & Notes

Newsletter of the Rockingham Planning Commission

156 Water Street, Exeter New Hampshire

• 603-778-0885

• www.rpc-nh.org

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OPERATION LIFESAVER ON TRACK

The Rockingham Planning Commission has taken a lead role in bringing rail safety training to area school children. Maura Carriel, Senior Planner, and Annette Pettengill, Business Manager, both completed the Level I Presenter certification training for the national rail safety program called Operation Lifesaver (OLI), and over the past year have taken the very serious message rail safety to area schools to help educate students. The OLI program is national, non-profit education and awareness program dedicated to ending tragic collisions, fatalities and injuries at highway-rail grade crossings and on railroad rights of way. Increased visibility of the OLI program in New Hampshire and Maine is particularly timely given the higher-speed Amtrak service which has just begun in this area.

As of December 2001, Maura and Annette have presented the OLI rail safety message to over 4,500 school children at eight local elementary, middle and high schools. Due to the efforts of all OL presenters from Maine and New Hampshire (including Bob Hall of Exeter), nearly all of the schools along the Portland-to-Boston rail corridor received presentations prior to the December 15 start-up of service. The hope is that students will help spread the safety message to their family and friends, as well as carry the knowledge with them for the rest of their lives, and make safe choices around railroads. The response has been enthusiastic, and both Maura and Annette have discovered the satisfaction of working with a roomful of wriggling kindergartners!

If you would like more information about Operation Lifesaver or would like to arrange for an OLI presentation to a school or group in your community please contact Maura and Annette.

CDFA SEED CAPACITY GRANT

The RPC, along with the other eight regional planning commissions in NH, recently entered into a third year contract with the Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) SEED Capacity Grant Program. In addition to continued data collection and expansion of a standardized regional economic development database, staff will undertake several discretionary projects related to economic development. First, the RPC will create a database of property transactions in the region, which will be used to develop a better understanding of property turnover and real estate markets in various parts of our region. RPC staff will also work with one town in the region on initial steps toward establishing a Main Street-type downtown revitalization program. Lastly, the RPC will coordinate with the Rockingham Economic Development Corp. to update the countywide *Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy* (CEDS) document, as well as to offer quarterly forums on selected economic development topics.

The first forum was held in February, and focused on ways to foster the development of shared infrastructure among towns. Craig Seymour of RKG Associates and Attorney Craig Nelson, Chairman of the Kennebec Regional Development Authority, presented information on inter-municipal cooperation for economic development, and their experiences in developing a 24-town TIF (tax increment financing) district to support the development of the FirstPark business park in Oakland, Maine. For more information on the CDFA project or upcoming forums, contact Maura Carriel.

All products developed by the nine planning commissions in the first 2 years of the contract - including regional databases, maps, reports - are available on the website of the NH Association of Regional Planning Commissions, at: www.nharpc.org.

NEW PERSONAL WIRELESS SERVICES FACILITIES (PWSF) MODEL ORDINANCE

In December of 2001 the latest RPC Model *Personal Wireless Services Facilities (PWSF) Ordinance* was made available to all of our member communities.

Wireless digital technology is fast becoming mainstream and in fact is becoming a necessity in many people's lives for many types of communication. Businesses and private citizens alike are using the technology for more than phone conversations, such as text messaging, email and web access. As the technology advances reliance on conventional technology will likely diminish.

Many of our communities' wireless ordinances allow the location of wireless facilities in designated areas that often leave significant gaps in coverage. The RPC recognized the opportunity to craft an ordinance that provides for the regional deployment of the technology while emphasizing on mitigation of the perceived negative impacts.

For a copy of the new model PWSF ordinance visit our website at www.rpc-nh.org, or contact Mike Garrepy.

REVITALIZING MAIN STREET IN SEACOAST TOWNS

The Main Street concept was developed in the late 1970s by the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and piloted in three Midwestern communities. The program was designed to revitalize historic small towns where highway bypasses or regional shopping malls had rerouted traffic and business activity away from downtown.

As a means of encouraging Main Street revitalization efforts, the New Hampshire Community Development Finance Authority (CDFA) paid for a staff member from each of the state's nine regional planning commissions to attend a Main Street training workshop in Washington DC in early November. These planners will work in their regions to support existing Main Street programs and help establish new ones. Scott Bogle represented the RPC at the workshop, and has past experience with the program, as he helped establish a Main Street organization in his neighborhood in Honolulu in 1995-97.

There are currently no Main Street communities in the RPC region, though tentative interest has been expressed by several communities. RPC staff will likely work with these communities in the coming year to lay the groundwork for establishing Main Street programs. If you think that a Main Street program could play a role in improving your community's downtown, or would just like to learn more about the program, contact Scott Bogle.

STAFF ROSTER & EMAIL DIRECTORY

Cliff Sinnott, Executive Director, csinnott@rpc-nh.org
Glenn Greenwood, Assistant Dir., ggreenwood@rpc-nh.org
Annette Pettengill, Business Mgr., apettengill@rpc-nh.org
Roxanne Rines, Secretary, rrines@rpc-nh.org
John Krebs, Senior Planner, jkrebs@rpc-nh.org
Michael Garrepy, Regional Planner, mgarrepy@rpc-nh.org
Tom Falk, Transportation Analyst, tfalk@rpc-nh.org
David Walker, Senior Transp. Planner, dwalker@rpc-nh.org
Maura Carriel, Senior Planner, mcarriel@rpc-nh.org
Scott Bogle, Transportation Planner, sbogle@rpc-nh.org
C. David Wickliffe, GIS Specialist, dwickliffe@rpc-nh.org
Theresa Walker, Env't. Plnng. Consult. twalker@attbi.com

2ND ANNUAL EXETER RIVER ALEWIFE FESTIVAL!

The Exeter River Local Advisory Committee is hard at work organizing the 2nd Annual Exeter River **Alewife Festival**, to be held **Saturday, May 18th from 10am to 2pm along Swasey Parkway in downtown Exeter**. The Festival will highlight the Exeter River watershed and its role as a major tributary to Great Bay, water supply source and wildlife habitat. Once again, NH Fish and Game will host tours of their fish ladder providing a glimpse into the annual migration of thousands of Alewives and other fish. There will be music, food, activities for kids and an opportunity to talk with natural resource and historical organizations. Join us! For more information contact Theresa Walker.

MPO LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATES

As part of the major updates to the MPO transportation plans in our region, we are conducting the **2002 Regional Transportation Needs Survey**. If you live or work in the Seacoast or the Salem-Plaistow-Windham regions, we urge you to complete on-line at...

http://www.surveycafe.com/transportation.enter.asp**

Input from the survey (including those from 4000 randomly sampled households) will shape updates to the Long Range Transportation Plans for the Seacoast and Salem-Plaistow-Windham Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs). These plans identify transportation needs and investment priorities for the communities in the two MPO regions over the next 20 years. The Plans outline policies addressing all modes of surface transportation, including highways, rail and bus transit, cycling, and walking, and freight.

The update process was kicked off in each region with a series of public visioning sessions in January and February. Meetings were held in Newmarket, Exeter, Rochester, Salem, and Plaistow. Other input opportunities include an on-line household survey on transportation needs and priorities; a series of focus group meetings with transit users, freight haulers, and municipal representatives in each region; and review and comment periods on the draft plans.

The Seacoast MPO is made up of representatives from 35 municipalities in Rockingham, Strafford, and Carroll Counties, stretching from Seabrook in the south to Wakefield in the north; and is staffed cooperatively with the Strafford Regional Planning Commission. The Salem-Plaistow-Windham MPO is composed of representatives from nine towns in southwestern Rockingham County.

**** If you don't have internet access call the office to obtain a paper copy of the survey.**

OEM HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

RPC Begins Hazard Mitigation Plans for Exeter and Fremont

Under a contract with the State of New Hampshire's Office of Emergency Management, the RPC will begin developing hazard mitigation plans for the Towns of Exeter and Fremont. The objective of the plans is to reduce future losses from natural or man-made hazards before they occur, with a focus on flood prevention in the Exeter River watershed. Michael Garrepy and Theresa Walker from the RPC will be working closely with local officials in both communities to research and develop the plans. For more information, please contact Mike Gerrapy or Theresa Walker.

NHDOT ROAD INVENTORY PROJECT

The New Hampshire Department of Transportation (NHDOT) is coordinating an effort to use Global Positioning Systems (GPS) to map roads that are missing from its GIS database. The RPC and other regional planning commissions will provide ongoing road data collection to update the NHDOT Roads GIS database. This effort will standardize the mapping of road features and will ensure more accurate and up-to-date delineations — and fairer block grant distributions to communities. The goal of the project will be a statewide roads GIS database and an effective method for keeping it up to date. NHDOT has provided regional planning commissions with Global Positioning System (GPS) receivers and other equipment needed to map and collect information on roads.

In our process to identify and map missing roads we will rely on the assistance of municipal officials. We will solicit the help of town managers, road agents and selectmen. All new road names must be verified by signature from the Board of Selectmen before being accepted by NHDOT.

The Commission has leased a vehicle for use in the road inventory and in traffic research which is equipped it with a distance-measuring instrument that enables us to precisely measure the length of a road, as it is driven. Data collection is performed by a team of two. One drives, while the other operates the GPS receiver and the distance-measuring instrument.

So far we have conducted road inventory efforts in *Greenland, North Hampton and Brentwood*. Upcoming communities are *Plaistow, Hampton and Fremont*. For the present, our road inventory work involves collecting data for new Class V roads only. Beginning next year, this will expand to collecting similar data for all Class V roads.

If your community is interested in working with us in this project, please contact David Wickcliffe, GIS Specialist.



Rockingham Planning Commission **UPCOMING MEETINGS**

- April 10, Commission Meeting, Windham (Old Firehouse), topic - Manchester/Lawrence Passenger Rail, 7 pm
- April 11, Rte 125 Advisory Task Force, Plaistow Public Library, 7 pm
- April 19, SPW TAC, Hampstead Town Hall, 9:30 am, (Long Range Plan discussion)
- May 8, Commission Meeting, location to be determined
- May 10 & 31, SPW TAC, locations to be determined (Long Range Plan discussion)
- May 15, Bike/Pedestrian Conference, location to be determined
- May 18, Alewife Festival, Swasey Parkway
- June 5 & 19, Planning Board Training Series, Kingston Town Hall
- June 12, RPC Annual Meeting, location to be determined

For more information go to: www.rpc-nh.org or call the RPC office

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