



RPC News & Notes

Newsletter of the Rockingham Planning Commission

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Model Zoning Ordinances for Hamlets and Villages

The modern sprawl pattern of monotonous subdivisions, garish commercial strips, and deteriorating historic town centers is viewed by a majority of people as negative and inappropriate, yet few people realize that this pattern does not have to continue. The small towns and villages of New Hampshire do not have to accept a pattern of growth that is haphazard and insensitive to local concerns. With careful planning, community involvement, and a return to the planning principles based on the best examples of traditional New England village design, towns can use the tools of planning to discourage sprawl, protect natural resources, reduce the cost of infrastructure and public services, and create small-scale hamlet and village development that is designed for the human scale, is community friendly, and preserves and enhances the best natural and architectural features of a town. Such developments have proven to be highly marketable in all regions across the country, consistently demonstrating that town ordinances designed with the above characteristics lead to better growth that is at the same time both highly efficient and highly desirable.

With the support of an innovative planning grant from the NH Office of Energy and Planning, the RPC is currently completing model ordinances for use by towns that want to use traditional neighborhood design to better plan for and achieve the kind of growth in their town that will best meet local concerns. These concerns include historic and environmental protection, architectural excellence, and design for the human scale. Based on state law requiring municipalities to use smart growth strategies such as a village plan alternative (RSA 674:21) to control haphazard and unplanned development, the ordinances use innovative land use controls to design housing and commercial areas that are appropriate to the traditional and historic New Hampshire landscape. This work is being headed up by Jill Robinson, RPC Regional Planner. Robinson is developing two model ordinances, one of which is a Village Overlay District, and the other a Hamlet Overlay District. The Village Overlay District is designed to create more compact development at town crossroads or redevelopment of existing sites that includes small-scale retail and commercial uses, while maintaining rural character through appropriate design guidelines. The Hamlet Overlay District is designed for smaller residential and infill development, and will focus on design at the human scale that is appropriate for a rural context, including areas without access to municipal sewer and water systems. Both ordinances require designation of land within the development for the conservation, and both will contain illustrated design standards for streets, landscaping, and architecture.

RPC Designated a "Best Workplace for Commuters" by EPA

This month the Rockingham Planning Commission joins Dartmouth College and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center as the three organizations in New Hampshire designated by the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as "Best Workplaces for Commuters"! EPA's Best Workplaces for Commuters (BWC) program, is designed to promote alternatives to driving alone by recognizing organizations that provide employee benefits programs reducing the number of automobile commute trips. Emissions from automobiles and trucks are a major source of air pollution, and the program is part of regional efforts to attain federal air quality standards under the Clean Air Act. Most of New Hampshire's Southern Tier is currently in non-attainment with federal standards for Nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons, which react with sunlight to produce smog.

To receive the BWC designation, an employer must provide three or more commuter benefits selected from a menu of options including subsidized transit passes, rideshare matching, facilities to encourage bicycle commuting, flexible scheduling, and the option to telecommute. Several RPC staff work compressed schedules (four ten-hour days per week) or telecommute (work from home) one day per week. Other staff members commute to work by bicycle when the weather and their schedules allow, and benefit from the office shower and secure storage for their bikes.

RPC Senior Planner Maura Carriel rides her bike to work from Rollinsford when the weather cooperates: "Two of the biggest hassles with commuting by bike are finding safe storage for your bike once you get to work, and finding a place to shower and change if you have a long ride. At the RPC I can bring my bike inside the building and store it out of the way in my office. Plus, the office has a shower for employees who either ride to work or exercise at lunch or before night meetings. This makes bike commuting much easier and attractive!"

A total of 36 employers in New England and more than 600 nationwide received the designation. EPA will hold a press conference to promote the program and recognize participants in November.

Conservation Commission Roundtable

The RPC is initiating a quarterly Conservation Commission Roundtable for communities in our region. The purpose of this project is to provide Conservation Commission members with an informal opportunity to meet and discuss topics of mutual interest and concern and to work together on regional conservation issues. Modeled loosely after a regional roundtable initiated in the Central NH Planning Commission region, the Conservation Commission Roundtable will provide participants with a forum that is not presently available in the region to share ideas and problem-solve. In addition, it will enable the RPC to communicate with Conservation Commissions more effectively. Start-up support for the project is being provided through our Regional Environmental Planning Program (REPP).

The first Roundtable will take place Wednesday, March 31st from 6:30 pm to 8:30 pm in the Hampstead Town Hall. The agenda includes an opportunity to enjoy some refreshments and update participants on projects you are tackling. In addition, staff from the RPC will explain two projects that require immediate Conservation Commission participation. The first involves collecting data to update the Local Resource Protection Priorities map, and the second involves establishing a common set of Regional Conservation Priorities for land protection. Both of these projects are funded by the NH Department of Environmental Services through REPP.

We hope the Conservation Commission Roundtable will prove to be fun, lively, and informative and urge every town to join us on March 31st. To ensure you receive Roundtable agendas, please contact Theresa Walker at theresawalker@comcast.net, or call the RPC at 603-778-0885.

Commute Trips Increase Faster than Population Growth in Region

In July the US Census Bureau released town-to-town commuter trip data from the 2000 Census. RPC staff analysis of the data, including comparison to similar data from 1990, highlighted a number of trends in the region, many of them expected, some of them surprising:

- ?? A total of 121,837 residents of the Seacoast MPO region commute to work in NH and surrounding states. 85% of those workers commute to jobs in New Hampshire, compared to 10% going to Massachusetts and 4% to Maine. A total of 42,379 residents of the Salem-Plaistow-Windham (SPW) region commute to work, with 52% traveling to jobs in NH and 48% to jobs in Massachusetts.
- ?? As a percentage of all commute trips in each region, trips to Massachusetts increased in the Seacoast and decreased in the SPW region. As a share of all commuter trips originating in the SPW region, trips to NH increased 11.8 % during the decade, while the share of trips to Massachusetts declined 10.2%. In the Seacoast region, trips to MA increased 19% during the decade, reflecting an influx of Massachusetts workers seeking the relative affordability of housing in NH.
- ?? Commutes to Maine from the Seacoast MPO region decreased 36%. The 36% decrease in commutes to Maine is likely due primarily to the loss of jobs at Portsmouth/ Kittery Naval Shipyard during the 1990s.
- ?? Commute trips to jobs outside of Rockingham and Strafford increased for both MPO regions. Trips from the Seacoast region to jobs outside of Rockingham & Strafford Counties increased 56%. This includes Hillsborough and Merrimack Counties, facilitated by the upgrade to NH 101.
- ?? Commutes on the Spaulding Turnpike grew dramatically. While commute trips to jobs in Portsmouth and Newington increased only 2% during the decade due to the closure of Pease AFB, trips to Portsmouth and Newington from communities in the Spaulding Turnpike corridor increase dramatically. Trips from Dover grew 31%, from Rochester grew 55%, and from Farmington grew 109%. This is reflected in observed congestion increases on the Spaulding.

More extensive analysis of the data, as well as the full dataset, are available on the RPC website: (www.rpc-nh.org) on the regional data page. Contact Scott Bogle at sbogle@rpc-nh.org or 778-0885 with questions.

Staff News: In February the RPC welcomed **David West** as their newest Assistant Planner. David is a recent graduate from the University of New Hampshire, with his Master's Degree in Natural Resources. David received his Undergraduate Degree in Geography at Portland State University, in his home state of Oregon. The projects David will be working on include circuit riding for two towns, Greenland and Kensington, and Hazard Mitigation Analysis Planning. David currently resides in the town of Durham with his wife Natalie.



Intern News: RPC welcomes **Jon Ekroth** as a new GIS Intern. Jon will be working with us on Mondays and Tuesdays. He will be working on land use mapping, OEM, and other projects as needed. Jon has a bachelor's degree in History from Eastern Connecticut State University and has work experience in Banking, Chemistry and computer field service. Over the last several years Jon has become very interested in GIS. His love of maps and geography is now changing his career path. Jon recently received a Certificate in GIS from Penn State University. Jon is looking forward to starting a career that will take advantage of his skills and interests and also allow him to make a difference in the community. Jon currently lives in Candia with his wife and two children where he has been a resident for about seven years.



Dates to Remember

- ?? **Tuesday, March 2**— State Transportation Enhancement Advisory Committee Hearings. Location TBA. 1:30 pm—9:30 pm.
 - ?? **Thursday, March 4**—Seacoast MPO TAC Meeting. Location TBA. 9:00 am.
 - ?? **Wednesday, March 10**—RPC Commission Meeting. Forest Society Presentation on Southeast Lands Reservation Study. Urban Forestry Center. 7:30 pm.
 - ?? **Thursday, March 11** — State CMAQ Advisory Committee Hearings. Location TBA. 1:30 pm—9:30 pm.
 - ?? **Friday, March 12**—SPW MPO TAC Meeting. Location TBA. 9:30 am.
 - ?? **Saturday, May 8**—NHOEP Spring Planning & Zoning Conference. Center of NH in Manchester. For info go to www.nh.gov/oep.
 - ?? **Friday, May 21**—Seacoast Bike to Work Day
- For more information on any of these meetings, contact the RPC office at 778-0885, or check the RPC website at www.rpc-nh.org.**

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