

**Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional  
Commission**

# **Board Member Handbook**

January 2020



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128 King Farm Rd. • Woodstock, VT 05091

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## Getting Started

### *Welcome to the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission*

This Board Member Handbook describes:

- ❖ What the Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) is;
- ❖ How it is organized;
- ❖ What activities TRORC can and must do;
- ❖ The planning and funding processes;
- ❖ The powers and duties you have as a Board member;
- ❖ How you can be an effective Board member;
- ❖ Staff and staff responsibilities; and
- ❖ The resources available to you.

The Handbook cannot possibly answer every question you will have. Please do not hesitate to ask your fellow Board members (especially members of the Executive Committee) and the Executive Director for guidance and assistance. They can supplement the Handbook's resources by describing how TRORC previously has addressed your concern and concerns similar to it.

Serving on the TRORC Board calls upon you to think regionally and invest your best efforts to help TRORC succeed on behalf of all of the communities and organizations it serves. Your service requires a certain level of commitment and investment of time. The learning curve is fairly steep, but there are plenty of people and resources available to help and support you.

We want you to succeed as a Board member. To be successful, you should:

- ❖ Prepare thoroughly before each meeting by reading the board packet and related materials;
- ❖ Communicate the ideas and opinions of your community or organization clearly;
- ❖ Listen fully to the ideas and opinions of others;
- ❖ Be flexible and diplomatic; and
- ❖ Be true to the organization's guiding principles and laws that govern our work.

The more you invest in the organization, the more rewarding you will find your service to be.

### TRORC's Vision

*Working toward a region with a superior quality of life with a vibrant economy, clean environment, and citizens attaining their goals and meeting their needs.*

### *What is TRORC?*

The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (Regional Commission) is a compact of thirty municipalities in east-central Vermont. It was founded in 1970 by the acts of its constituent towns and is a political subdivision of state government. The Regional Commission's programs are governed by representatives appointed by the Selectboard from each of its member towns. The Regional Commission exists to advocate for the needs of its members and to help bridge the opportunities and concerns that exist between towns and the State. The Regional Commission's primary purposes are to provide technical services to town officials, act as a resource for local governments, and to conduct regional planning and development activities.

### *Organizational Policies and Procedures*

TRORC has formally developed and adopted numerous policies and procedures which dictate or guide the operations of the organization.

Please see <http://www.trorc.org/about/policies-and-procedures/> for more information.

### *Strategic Planning*

In 2013 the Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission (TRORC) embarked on the creation of a ten-year Strategic Plan. TRORC's mission is to advocate for the needs of member towns, and to articulate a vision for building a thriving regional economy while enhancing the region's quality of life. TRORC's staff provides technical services to local, state, and federal levels of government and to the region's nonprofits and businesses.

The purpose of developing this strategic plan is to create a framework by which we will strive to provide a high level of service to our communities while targeting specific areas of focus. This Strategic Plan differs significantly from the Regional Plan established and periodically renewed by the TRORC under Vermont's planning enabling statutes and the HUD Sustainable Communities Regional Plan.

To view the Strategic Plan, go here: <http://www.trorc.org/strategic-planning/>

### *Enabling Legislation*

The legal basis and powers for Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Commission as the region's regional planning commission stem from Vermont laws as stipulated in 24 V.S.A. § 4301 et seq., as amended, 24 V.S.A. § 4345 et seq. TRORC is funded in part through the State of Vermont property transfer tax as outlined in 24 V.S.A. § 4306(a).

### *Funding*

Legislative funding and town appropriations provide the base of funding for TRORC's work program activities, such as the regional transportation program, community and economic development planning, and emergency preparedness. TRORC receives funding from four main sources. These include the Vermont Agency of Transportation, Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and our member municipalities.

### *Town Appropriations / Dues*

TRORC depends upon allocations from the thirty towns served. We receive about \$83,000 in dues annually. Town appropriations demonstrate support for TRORC's services and leverage additional funds that support local and regional planning.

### *State Allocation*

The Vermont Legislature provides base funding for all Regional Planning Commissions (RPCs) through the Property Transfer Tax. The funding is dispersed to RPCs through the Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) using a four-part formula. The formula provides an equal share to all RPCs for operating expenses and balances anticipated planning needs with a proportional share for number of municipalities served, number of residents served, and property transfer tax receipts from the region.

### *Annual Contracts*

In addition to the pass-through funds from ACCD, three state agencies have consistently provided funds to RPCs through annual contracts. The Vermont Agency of Transportation (VTrans), Vermont Emergency Management (VEM), and Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) support local and regional planning and appreciate RPC efforts to bring local successes and concerns to statewide discussions.

### *Project-Based Contracts*

TRORC uses project-based contracts to support local efforts or regional strategies. One-time grants and contracts aim to further specific planning efforts or to implement projects with communities.

Projects funded directly by federal agencies are awarded on a periodic basis, like the Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Program or the Housing and Urban Development's Sustainable Planning Project.

### *Town Plan Reviews and Approvals*

TRORC is required by Vermont Statutes to review and render a decision on whether a Town Plan meets the statutory tests required for approval, when asked by a municipality. While it is highly desirable for Towns to seek and obtain approval, this step is optional and that is why TRORC seeks a letter from communities explicitly seeking our review. In a related action, TRORC is required to make a determination that each Town is maintaining its planning efforts. TRORC must do this at least twice in an eight year period.

### *TRORC's Participation in Act 250 and Section 248 Proceedings*

TRORC, by law, is a statutory party to every application filed and must participate in each process and use its adopted Regional Plan as its guide in that participation.

### *Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Foundation*

The Two Rivers-Ottauquechee Regional Foundation (TRORF) was developed in support of TRORC to address long-term organizational sustainability and sustained strategic actions. The purposes and objectives of the TRORF shall be to support the



TRORC in TRORC's efforts to promote the health, safety and welfare of the inhabitants of the Upper Valley region in Vermont by working toward a region with a superior quality of life, vibrant economy, and clean environment and by encouraging sound growth through effective community and regional development.

Unlike TRORC which is a political subdivision of the state, the TRORF is a 501(c)(3) and received its public charity notice from the Internal Revenue Service on November 6, 2018. The TRORF is classified as a Type II supporting organization under IRC Section 509(a)(3).

TRORC must seek to maintain, grow, and diversify its funding in order to tackle the many new and emerging issues in our region. This is especially important to help maximize its role as coach and player, along with funding strong communications and outreach for our Region. This will allow TRORC to make significant progress in achieving the vision of a thriving regional economy and high quality of life. The TRORF is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of members of the TRORC Executive Committee and one other appointed TRORC Board member. Information can be found on the TRORC website here: <https://www.trorc.org/foundation/>

## Getting to Know the Organization

### *The Board*

TRORC is governed by a Board of Directors and functions with a professional staff. Board members (also known as Commissioners) are appointed by the Selectboard of Towns within the region. TRORC provides a regional framework that can assist municipalities to chart the best course forward with policies that guide their communities toward the goals that are important and unique to them. The Commissioners meet throughout the year to act as the Board of the organization, conduct business, and are responsible for the fiscal soundness of the organization. Each year TRORC approves a Budget at its Annual Meeting in June which outlines the organization's efforts to best meet the needs of the TRORC communities.

The Board is representative of the following municipalities:

<b>Barnard</b>	<b>Hancock</b>	<b>Royalton</b>
<b>Bethel</b>	<b>Hartford</b>	<b>Sharon</b>
<b>Bradford</b>	<b>Hartland</b>	<b>Stockbridge</b>
<b>Braintree</b>	<b>Newbury</b>	<b>Strafford</b>
<b>Bridgewater</b>	<b>Norwich</b>	<b>Thetford</b>
<b>Brookfield</b>	<b>Pittsfield</b>	<b>Topsham</b>
<b>Chelsea</b>	<b>Plymouth</b>	<b>Tunbridge</b>
<b>Corinth</b>	<b>Pomfret</b>	<b>Vershire</b>
<b>Fairlee</b>	<b>Randolph</b>	<b>West Fairlee</b>
<b>Granville</b>	<b>Rochester</b>	<b>Woodstock</b>

In addition, there are four at-large member seats. At-large members are elected annually by the Commissioners at the Annual Meeting. At-large members are elected by a majority of the TRORC Commissioners.

Annually, a Nominating Committee recommends to the Board a Chair, Vice-Chair, Secretary, and Treasurer. Officers are elected by a majority vote at the June Annual Meeting.

Meetings follow an established agenda. To add an item to the agenda, contact either the Chair or the Executive Director. Time permitting 'other' items of interest to any Commissioner may be provided at the end of each meeting.

Meetings of the Board are the fourth Wednesday of each month and begin at 6:30 p.m. Executive Committee meetings are scheduled between full Board meetings. All meetings are open to the public. TRORC Board of Directors and Executive Committee meetings are subject to Vermont's Open Meetings Law, and minutes and agendas are posted at [trorc.org](http://trorc.org).



When a motion has been made, seconded, and opened for discussion, no other business should be discussed until action has been taken on the motion before the Board. All Commissioners are encouraged to add to the discussion of a motion. The Chair will make every effort to ensure that all members are given the opportunity to speak. Except when otherwise provided by TRORC's Bylaws, meetings and voting are conducted in accord with Roberts Rules of Order, as revised.

### *Committees*

TRORC has two standing committees: The Executive Committee and the Scholarship Committee. In addition, there are 3 advisory committees: Transportation Advisory Committee, Clean Water Advisory Committee, and the Energy Committee. TRORC staff assist the Committees in all functions as needed.

### *Standing Committee*

#### **Executive Committee**

The Executive Committee consists of the four officers of the Board of Directors and up to two additional members selected by the Chair, ratified by the Board as needed. Vacancies on the Executive Committee may be filled at any time. The Executive Committee also serves as the Board of the TRORF, along with one other appointed Commissioner

#### **Scholarship Committee**

The Scholarship Committee consists of members from the Board of Directors to analyze scholarship applications for High School students every Spring. The winners are announced at the Annual Meeting.

### *Advisory Committees*

#### **Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

The Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) provides local input to the TRORC Board and the Vermont Agency of Transportation to identify needs and to develop transportation improvement programs. The TAC's membership includes appointed representatives from towns, VTTrans, and modal representatives. The TAC meets bi-monthly or as otherwise needed.

### Key Duties

1. Provide decision making and policy recommendations for the Regional Transportation Planning Program to the TRORC Board.
2. Recommend project priorities and the adoption of the Regional Transportation Plan.
3. Represent needs and interests of TRORC.

## **Clean Water Advisory Committee**

The Clean Water Advisory Committee (CWAC) was developed to guide TRORC's activities and policy development related to water quality in our region's rivers and their tributaries, as well as programs pertaining to stormwater, groundwater, wetlands, and stream stability. Membership includes nominated individuals from our member municipalities and partner organizations.

### Key Duties

1. Provide guidance to TRORC for activities and policy development related to water quality.
2. Give input to TRORC in their assistance to the Vermont DEC in the development of tactical basin plans.
3. Provide input to TRORC in developing a plan for implementing water quality improvement projects in the region.

## **Energy Committee**

The Energy Committee was formed in August 2015 by appointment of the TRORC Chairman, to support TRORC's energy planning initiative. TRORC was one of three RPCs to be granted funds from the Public Service Department to conduct regional energy planning including renewable generation siting and scenario planning related to the mix between generation and conservation that will allow this region to meet the state's Comprehensive Energy Plan's (CEP) renewable energy targets. The Energy Committee met several times to brainstorm strategies for regional achievement of the Vermont CEP goals and to review the draft Regional Energy Implementation Plan. The Energy Committee may be called upon for advice with regards to Act 174 and how TRORC can best assist towns who may seek enhance energy planning.

### *Staff*

TRORC has 10 professional staff. They consist of: Executive Director, Senior Planners, Regional Planners, Planners, GIS Manager, and Finance Manager.

All TRORC staff work to implement TRORC programs, including transportation, land use, emergency preparedness, natural resources, municipal planning, community and economic development, and energy planning and carry out Board policy.

### **Executive Director**

The Executive Director translates Board policy into programs, plans, and actions for staff, Board members, and committees and ensures that TRORC is responsive to its member municipalities and other stakeholders while ensuring statutory duties are carried out. The Director is responsible for overall management of all programs and staff, and for development and oversight of the organizational budget and for long-range organizational planning. The Executive Director is directly accountable to, and meets on a regular basis with, the Executive Committee and reports to, plans, and coordinates

regular and special meetings of the full Commission and TRORF. The Executive Director is responsible for preparing, or working with staff to prepare applications and work programs required by funding agencies and for preparation of special grant applications to support TRORC's work. The Executive Director is responsible for ensuring that all required reporting to funding agencies is complete and correct. The Executive Director provides regular reports to the TRORC Board on the status of projects, personnel and fiscal matters. The Executive Director most often works with municipal leadership and State and Federal agency leadership from department/division heads to Agency Secretaries. The Executive Director is TRORC's representative on statewide organizations and to the Legislature.

### **Senior Planners**

The Senior Planners manage major projects and core programs of the Commission and conducts policy analysis and regional studies and other similar work as necessary. The Senior Planners perform advanced professional work related to all regional program areas; manages complex planning studies; review development proposals; develop project budgets; administer bidding processes, manage consultants, and verify contract expenditures and compliance; provide professional planning assistance to member communities and manages projects on behalf of municipalities on varied projects; develops plans, studies and analyses on varied subjects; and supervises more junior planners within the organization as determined by the Executive Director. The Senior Planners most often works with municipal boards on intermunicipal projects and State and Federal agency program staff, and may work with municipal leadership and State and Federal agency department/division heads.

### **GIS Manager**

The GIS Manager operates and maintains TRORC's Regional GIS Service Center, providing mapping and spatial analysis services related to all regional program areas and municipal projects and programs. The GIS Manager manages and works on independent projects related to river hazard mapping, forest analysis, energy facility siting studies, and other subject areas, and acts as primary contact to TRORC's IT consultant and manages the TRORC's IT equipment. The GIS Manager most often works with municipal staff and volunteer board members and State and Federal agency program staff.

### **Regional Planners**

The Regional Planners assist municipalities with various planning activities and work to integrate land use planning with other municipal planning activities. Land use planning activities commonly include drafting or updating land use plans, zoning and other ordinances, subdivision regulations, capital improvement plans, and other planning and growth management tools. The Regional Planners also facilitate comprehensive regional planning efforts necessitated by Vermont Statute as well as the various

collaborative planning efforts TRORC conducts in partnership with other regional, state, and federal agencies.

### ***Planners***

The Planners work with other planning staff to implement projects and programs of the Commission. The Planners gather and maintain demographic data and other related statistics; participate in the research, analysis, and interpretation of social, economic, population and land use data and trends; compile information and make recommendations on special studies; prepare technical reports; prepare staff reports and graphic displays; research and draft documents for review; assist with grant writing; and complete GIS mapping and printed resource materials, under the direction of other staff. The Planners most often work with other TRORC staff, and may work with municipal staff and volunteer board members.

### ***Finance Manager***

The Finance Manager is responsible for full charge bookkeeping and other financial tasks of the TRORC and TRORF, such as Accounts Payable and Receivable, payroll and tax reporting, deposit preparation, account reconciliation, grant reporting, audit and indirect cost proposal preparation, draft budget preparation, and end of year reports. The Finance Manager is also responsible for assisting with the smooth operation of TRORC's office, including TRORC Board meeting coordination and communication, review of office operating procedures and policies, coordination of contract billing and reporting, research and coordination of employee benefit packages, office supply purchasing, mailings and communications, overseeing the operation and maintenance of office equipment, tracking vacation and compensatory time, maintaining office insurance and worker's compensation records, and other activities as assigned by the Executive Director. The Finance Manager most often works with TRORC staff and may interact with municipal staff or State and Federal agency administrative staff.

## The Role of the Citizen Planner

As a Citizen Planner you can look forward to a rich and challenging experience! Being an effective Board member requires you to get involved in your community, be informed, communicate with your Selectboard, and use common sense, fairness, and objectivity in all of the decisions that come before you. It is your responsibility to balance the public good with private rights and interests. **Most of all, this Board makes decisions that impact an entire region, so it is important to be able to “think regionally” even though you are representing a local municipality or organization.**

To understand what “regional planning” is, it helps first to understand that a “region” is a set of places that share common features or characteristics so that they relate to each other in one or more significant ways. These relationships may be defined by a specific geography (i.e. County), a common natural resource (such as a watershed), a feature of the built-environment (such as a highway corridor), or a non-physical social, economic, or political feature (such as a housing market area).

Each place in a region is interrelated with the other places in the region. Consequently, it is challenging for any one place to successfully address a regional concern without considering what is happening in the region's other places. By understanding what is happening in the entire region and coordinating local actions, a region's places can address opportunities and problems more effectively and efficiently.

### *Board Member Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations*

Your role is important and the public trust is invested in you.

#### Roles and Responsibilities

- ❖ Define and oversee the vision and mission of the organization and keep it relevant to the needs of the region and its individual local governments and communities through policy development;
- ❖ Approve programs and services and monitor their effectiveness and usefulness;
- ❖ Provide strategic guidance to the organization and the Executive Director; and
- ❖ Ensure financial solvency, integrity, and soundness.

#### Keep Your Commitments

- ❖ Know the organization's vision, mission, goals, products, and services;
- ❖ Do your homework before all meetings;
- ❖ Focus on solving problems and achieving positive results for the region;
- ❖ Recognize and avoid, or make public, any conflict of interest your position may place you in as defined in Appendix A;
- ❖ Don't pursue special privileges;
- ❖ Maintain confidentiality when legally required;
- ❖ Let your behavior contribute to the smooth operation of the Board. Since so much of your time is spent in meetings, you can help them run efficiently by preparing ahead and following the rules and agreements;

- ❖ Ask questions to gain a fuller understanding of the topics at hand;
- ❖ Communicate regularly with your local legislative body and/or constituents; and
- ❖ Become familiar with the laws that cover public open meetings and hearings.

During your term, you will become conversant in planning lingo: new terms, acronyms, and legal citations such as Act 250, ACCD will be rolling off your tongue. There will be a virtual alphabet soup of just the acronyms. (Never be afraid to ask for explanations of terms you don't understand.) You will form new relationships with other boards and commissions; you will learn to write legally binding policies; and you will have the opportunity to influence decision making that may stand for decades.

There will be times when your decisions, in whole or in part, may not be popular. Some of these may be challenged in court or written up in the local paper. You'll be thought of as a villain by some and a hero by others and the tides can change easily.

There will be times when the learning curve is steep. Take advantage of training sessions offered at board meetings, by TRORC, or by the state in order to learn about general planning issues and technical topics which will be the underpinning of your decision making process.

### *Planning Basics*

Planning involves a wide range of activities such as:

- ❖ Land use;
- ❖ Community and economic development;
- ❖ Community wellness;
- ❖ Transportation;
- ❖ Emergency management;
- ❖ Conservation and recreation;
- ❖ Historic preservation
- ❖ Fiscal planning; and
- ❖ Housing

Planning can address just about any issue of local or regional concern. In Vermont, planning is performed collaboratively by the State, RPCs, and municipalities. Laws define how this collaboration is to work, specifying different responsibilities for each level of government. ***This means that the regional planning undertaken by each RPC is intended to be different from the planning undertaken by municipalities and the State.***

The regional planning commission is the primary body responsible for planning for the region, with the culmination of that planning documented in the Regional Plan. The Regional Plan is not just a stapling together of local plans. The regional planning commission or other groups may also prepare plans on specific topics, for instance, the East Central Vermont Economic Development District (ECVEDD) may develop a plan for economic development.

Our work can be divided into two steps:

1. **Planning:** where the visions and goals of the community or region are discussed and established and a means of achieving the goals are determined. Typically, this is done in conjunction with the adoption or amendment of a plan but doesn't need to be. The development of a specific plan such as a watershed plan or economic strategy plan would follow the same process.
2. **Implementation:** where the goals from the planning stage are brought to reality through projects or regulations. The development of projects and regulations is principally undertaken by local and state government in Vermont. TRORC may assist with project implementation by managing a local or regional project or being the applicant for and managing an intermunicipal project.

### *Regional Planning*

Planning for an entire region is especially challenging. While we all agree that the TRORC region should be a “great place to live, work, and play,” there are myriad visions of exactly what this means and which actions we should undertake to achieve this goal.

Regional planning performed by TRORC is at an intermediate level between the most local planning performed by municipalities and the most general planning performed by the State. As a consequence, the regional planning responsibilities of RPCs are intended primarily to promote the coordination and collaboration of planning activities, both between each RPC's member municipalities and between those municipalities and the State.

The Legislature calls upon each RPC to fulfill at least eighteen duties. The majority of an RPC's work will be dedicated to six of the duties:

1. Promote the mutual cooperation of the RPC's member municipalities and cooperate with neighboring states, regions, and municipalities;
2. Assist and advise municipalities in the preparation of plans, studies, and bylaws regarding the appropriate development and use of the region's physical and human resources;
3. Prepare a regional plan at least every eight years;
4. Review proposed State capital expenditures for compatibility with the RPC's regional plan and assist municipalities in assessing compatibility with municipal plans;
5. Appear before District Environmental Commissions to aid in Act 250 reviews of proposed developments and appear before the Public Utility Commission to aid in Section 248 reviews of proposed utilities and telecommunications facilities; and
6. Confirm municipal planning programs (at least twice in an eight year period) and approve municipal plans, when asked.



In order to fulfill these responsibilities, the Legislature empowered each RPC to exercise certain powers including but not limited to:

1. Prepare studies, plans, and recommendations on a broad set of issues;
2. Retain staff and consultant assistance, enter upon land with the prior approval of the owner to make examinations and surveys, hold public hearings, and require municipalities and the State to provide information;
3. Carry out, with the cooperation of member municipalities, programs for the appropriate development and use of the region's physical and human resources; and
4. Perform other acts or functions that the RPC deems to be necessary or appropriate.

The Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission carries out programs in local and regional planning, public safety, transportation infrastructure, natural resources and water quality, brownfield redevelopment, and energy to impact these outcomes:

- ❖ Municipal permitting is predictable and effective.
- ❖ Vermont is prepared for a local, regional, or statewide disaster.
- ❖ Transportation systems are planned effectively with local, regional, and state consideration of economic, environmental, and community impact.
- ❖ Brownfield sites are assessed and cleaned up, creating and preserving jobs and housing.
- ❖ Regions and the state have access to sufficient energy resources and plans for new generation, efficiency, and conservation to support community and economic development.
- ❖ Infrastructure is planned and coordinated to meet the needs of the local economy.
- ❖ Community and economic development are coordinated within and across regions to maximize public resources and ensure strong vibrant communities.
- ❖ Vermont's land use laws are implemented.
- ❖ Vermont's working landscape is used effectively for community and economic benefit.
- ❖ Water quality is improved, and environmentally sensitive areas are protected.

### *Municipal Planning*

The TRORC region has a diverse mix of municipalities, with populations ranging from 350 to 10,000. Some municipalities have professional planning staff, but most do not. For all communities, TRORC provides technical assistance. Technical assistance comes in the form of requests by municipalities for services, by hiring TRORC on a project, or through responsibilities delegated to RPCs by the Legislature.

Community development assistance TRORC provides includes:



- ❖ **Municipal plan and bylaw updates and related technical assistance:** Through municipal planning grant funds or other funding sources, TRORC acts as a cost effective professional planning staff for many municipalities. Current plans and bylaws are essential in smooth state and local permitting. TRORC works with communities to adopt or update bylaws, including flood hazard regulations, form-based codes, zoning, and subdivision.
- ❖ **Geographic information services (GIS):** In addition to enhancing our own work, TRORC provides its municipalities, state agencies, and regional groups with mapping and data analysis in support of their projects.
- ❖ **Transportation planning:** Through a contract with VTrans, TRORC coordinates the Transportation Planning Initiative (TPI) in the TRORC region. The TPI is designed to meet federal requirements to ensure local involvement in transportation decision making, and provides local and regional services such as intersection studies, corridor plans, traffic counts, culvert inventories and road erosion inventories.
- ❖ **Watershed planning and related project development:** TRORC works with the Agency of Natural Resources to complete river assessments, which result in better and safer growth management decisions, help municipalities identify areas prone to erosion and damage from floods, assist communities with erosion and stormwater management, and ensure river corridor projects are designed to be their most effective.
- ❖ **Working landscape planning and related project development:** TRORC works with municipalities, other regional organizations, and state agencies to complete forest, soil, and other assessments aimed at using and maintaining the TRORC region's working landscape.
- ❖ **Grants:** TRORC assists local and regional groups and state agencies with identifying appropriate grant sources, defining a project scope, and writing grant applications. We have experience in all types of grants from Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) applications to federal disaster mitigation grants and private foundations. TRORC matches many federal sources from the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), Department of Homeland Security (DHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). These funds benefit our communities and businesses.
- ❖ **Emergency response planning:** TRORC works with VT Division of Emergency Management (VEM), local emergency service responders, and municipalities to coordinate local and regional emergency response and hazard mitigation planning. TRORC works with the Local Emergency Planning Committee (LEPC) to complete exercises and training to better prepare our communities and state for disasters.
- ❖ **Brownfields:** TRORC has sought and been awarded over 1.2 million over the last decade for this economic development initiative. Environmental site assessments allow properties to be sold, developed, or re-developed in ways that benefit the

local and state economy, create or protect jobs, and increase housing opportunities.

- ❖ **Regional Plans:** TRORC coordinates planning at the regional level through the development, adoption, and administration of a comprehensive regional plan and related studies. The Regional Plan guides investment decisions of the public and private sectors.
- ❖ **Special Projects:** TRORC also works on special projects such as downtown revitalization, recreation paths, farmland preservation, economic development, energy, capital planning, and affordable housing projects.

### *Transportation Planning*

The surface transportation system is not just highways, but a wide array of modes that are used to provide mobility and serve the economic and social needs of the region.

A region, however you define it, can have a range of transportation types, but to get them to function effectively as a system takes transportation planning to develop the initiatives, both projects and operational strategies, that will optimize its utility.

Regional transportation needs at any level can be met by some combination of several planning approaches:

1. Modifying or adopting strategies to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of existing operations;
2. Developing policies to influence transportation behavior and practice; and
3. Construction of new or enhancement of existing capital projects.

As the region changes over time, transportation needs, and the demands on the existing system, are also likely to change. So transportation planning is an ongoing process that has to factor in how the system is performing in relation to those changing needs and demands—and performance will be affected by the condition of the system's components.

Transportation planning is about more than just transportation. It must account for the extended and unintended impacts of the transportation system, and strike a balance in relation to non-transportation policies. The location, construction, and operation of transportation systems have effects that are the focus of non-transportation statutes.

Transportation shapes and is shaped by all aspects of community life. Non-transportation policy decisions—on land use, housing, economic development, and social services—made by State, regional, and local agencies can have a bearing on transportation decisions.

Because of this interdependency, a number of other laws—Federal, State, and local—bear on transportation planning.

- ❖ **Land use decisions** are in the purview of State, regional and local governments.

- ❖ Because **traffic congestion contributes significantly to air pollution**, planning efforts to reduce congestion are a key Federal requirement.
- ❖ Federal transportation law and regulations tie into the **National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA)**, which requires varying levels of environmental review, depending upon the nature of the transportation initiative.
- ❖ **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)** requires universality of design. In transportation, this particularly impacts public transit infrastructure and vehicles.
- ❖ **Environmental justice under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act** means that the effects of transportation initiatives may not adversely affect the well-being of any subgroup of the population in a discriminatory manner.

Planning is clearly important, but regional transportation planning is essential. Planning that pulls in adjoining jurisdictions, the affected stakeholders, and the public has the greatest likelihood of yielding a system that will anticipate and support future needs.

## The Importance of Public Engagement

Community planning and regional planning enable people with different outlooks and awareness to learn about important and sometimes controversial matters, to agree on common objectives, and to collaborate on undertaking coordinated agendas of actions. Planning by public bodies strives to engage people not only because our laws and democratic traditions require it, but also because public engagement makes planning better. Planning that engages affected people, communities, and organizations promotes:

- ❖ Greater understanding of key facts;
- ❖ Deeper and more widespread appreciation of divergent views;
- ❖ Increased consensus on important goals and objectives; and
- ❖ Improved collaboration in undertaking complicated sequences of interrelated actions.

Public engagement entails more than hosting public hearings/meetings. Engagement includes listening to, developing an understanding of, and interacting with people who are not commonly considered “stakeholders.” Effective public engagement invites average citizens to get involved in deliberation, dialogue and action on public issues that they care about. And, it helps leaders and decision makers better understand the perspectives, opinions, and concerns of citizens and stakeholders. When done well, public engagement goes far beyond the “usual suspects” to include those members of the community whose voices have traditionally been left out of political and policy debates.

## Appendix A: Board Member Responsibilities and Duties

### **Board Member Responsibilities**

#### **Roles and Responsibilities**

1. Define and oversee the vision and mission of the organization and keep it relevant to the needs of the region and its individual local governments and communities;
2. Approve programs and services and monitor their effectiveness and usefulness;
3. Provide strategic guidance to the organization and the Executive Director; and
4. Ensure financial solvency, integrity, and soundness.

#### **Keep Your Commitments**

1. Know the organization's vision, mission, goals, products, and services;
2. Do your homework before all meetings; and
3. Focus on solving problems and achieving positive results for the region.

#### **Commitments**

1. Attend each meeting of the Board
2. Participate in the Board's retreats
3. Participate in statewide and regional activities of the organization
4. Serve on at least one committee
5. Hold the organization to a high, ethical standard and monitor its performance regularly
6. Prepare for all meetings thoroughly by reading the meeting packet
7. Listen carefully and considerately to others and maintain an open mind
8. Promote decisions and solutions that are in the best interest of the region and the organization
9. Respect the confidentiality of the Board's business if necessitated by circumstances
10. Be familiar with the open meeting laws
11. Avoid conflicts of interest

### **Board Member Expanded Duties**

#### **Establish Policy**

1. Focus on the needs of your region and constituents

2. Focus on the common good of the region, not just your individual community or organization
3. Set policies that guide the Board to run effectively, legally, and ethically
4. Recognize policy decisions as those that affect the region as a whole
5. Establish policy and governance frameworks needed to allow management and staff to implement the vision and priorities of the Board

### **Establish a Partnership with the Executive Director**

1. Set guidelines for authority, responsibility, and accountability of the Executive Director
2. Provide support as necessary for management to succeed in advancing Board goals and policies
3. Do NOT micromanage the day-to-day operations of the organization
4. Understand that the Board is not the same as a local government

### **Nurture a Vision**

1. Establish a shared vision, sense of mission, and common goals at the Board level
2. Be able to articulate the Vision, Mission, and goals to others
3. Take the long-term view with incremental performance measures to evaluate progress
4. Provide direction through regular strategic planning to establish long-term goals and objectives

### **Communicate Effectively**

1. Conduct regular outreach and feedback sessions with the public
2. Don't limit your input and feedback to only Board members
3. Convey the issues and decisions facing the region back to your local legislative body or organization, seek input, and relay their comments and perspectives back to the Board
4. Provide constructive and timely feedback
5. Respect the diversity of thoughts and opinions
6. Speak for the Board only when authorized to do so

### **Maintain the Financial Integrity of the Organization**

1. Develop a financial vocabulary
2. Have a firm understanding of the financial condition of the organization including its financial position, obligations, operations, budget, and expenditures
3. Review the annual finance audit prepared by a reliable outside firm
4. Monitor financial outcomes and performance

## Participate Responsibly

1. Commit the time necessary to serve on the Board
2. Understand your role as a leader of this organization
3. Keep local politics in perspective relative to regional needs and priorities
4. Review meeting agendas and materials prior to attending any meeting
5. Ask informed, thoughtful questions
6. Work at the Board level, not at the staff level
7. Follow the conflict of interest policy
8. Be open to participating on committees and serve on at least one
9. Support member retention and recruitment efforts
10. Maintain confidentiality
11. Develop trust
12. Think regionally even when you act locally
13. Evaluate performance at all levels including your own
14. Be a goodwill ambassador for the organization at the local, regional, and state levels

## Appendix B: Staff Contact Information

### **Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission**

Physical Address: 128 King Farm Road  
Mailing Address: 128 King Farm Road  
Woodstock, VT 05091

Phone Number: (802) 457-3188

Fax Number: (802) 457-4728

General email: [info@trorc.org](mailto:info@trorc.org)

Website: [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org)

<b>Position</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Extension</b>	<b>E-mail</b>
Executive Planner	Peter G. Gregory	x 11	<a href="mailto:pgregory@trorc.org">pgregory@trorc.org</a>
Senior Planner	Kevin Geiger	x 24	<a href="mailto:kgeiger@trorc.org">kgeiger@trorc.org</a>
Senior Planner	Rita Seto	x 13	<a href="mailto:rseto@trorc.org">rseto@trorc.org</a>
GIS Manager	Pete Fellows	x 21	<a href="mailto:pfellows@trorc.org">pfellows@trorc.org</a>
Regional Planner	Kimberly Gilbert	x 12	<a href="mailto:kgilbert@trorc.org">kgilbert@trorc.org</a>
Regional Planner	Tory Littlefield	x 22	<a href="mailto:vlittlefield@trorc.org">vlittlefield@trorc.org</a>
Regional Planner	Sarah Wraight	x 23	<a href="mailto:swraight@trorc.org">swraight@trorc.org</a>
Planner	Jessica Richter	x 25	<a href="mailto:jrichter@trorc.org">jrichter@trorc.org</a>
Finance Manager	Lori Kay	x 10	<a href="mailto:lkay@trorc.org">lkay@trorc.org</a>

## Appendix C: Statutes

The legal basis and powers for TRORC as the region's regional planning commission stem from Vermont laws as stipulated in the Vermont Planning and Development Act (24 V.S.A. § 4301 et seq., as amended, 24 V.S.A. § 4345 et seq.).

The Vermont Statutes Online is an unofficial copy of the Vermont Statutes Annotated. Available at <http://www.leg.state.vt.us/statutes/sections.cfm?Title=24&Chapter=117> for convenience, it has NOT been edited for publication, and is not in any way official or authoritative. It does, however, provide a quick reference to aspects of statute relating to:

### **Title 24: Municipal and County Government**

#### **Chapter 117: MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT**

##### **Sub-Chapter 3: Regional Planning Commissions**

§ 4341: Creation of regional planning commissions

§ 4341a: Performance contracts for regional planning services § 4342 Regional planning commissions; membership § 4343 Appointment, term and vacancy; rules § 4344 Repealed. 2009, No. 146 (Adj. Sess.), § G5.

§ 4345 Optional powers and duties of regional planning commissions

§ 4345a: Duties of regional planning commissions

§ 4346: Appropriations

§ 4347: Purposes of regional plan

§ 4348: Adoption and amendment of regional plan

§ 4348a: Elements of a regional plan

§ 4348b: Re-adoption of regional plans

§ 4349: Regional plan; adoption by municipality

§ 4350: Review and consultation regarding municipal planning effort

§ 4351: Review by Commissioner of Housing and Community Development



## Appendix D: Resources

There are a number of resources available to you to help get acquainted with TRORC.

Veteran Commissioners are an invaluable resource for new recruits. Talk with your predecessor, other Commissioners, and members of TRORC. Staff can help you connect with other Commissioners who share similar interests and concerns, as well as provide administrative and technical support to the organization in order to fulfill the mission and vision.

Get to know staff and other Commissioners and partner with them as you fulfill your duties on the board. Carpooling to meetings with other Commissioners, speaking with locally elected officials, and joining Committees give additional opportunities for preparation and review. Contact information for staff are listed in Appendix B

Reading through the Regional Plan, as well as local municipal plans, will help familiarize you with the goals and policies of each community as well as the direction TRORC sets for the region. Copies of the Plan are found on our website, [www.trorc.org](http://www.trorc.org), one is given to you when you first join the Board, or they are made available on request.

Staying tuned in to current events in your community, neighboring communities, and across the state will help prepare you to better understand the context in which local and regional planning occurs.

## Appendix E: Abbreviations & Acronyms

AAP	Accepted Agricultural Practices
ACCD	Agency of Commerce and Community Development
AMP	Accepted Management Practices (for silviculture)
ANR	Agency of Natural Resources (sometimes referred to as VANR or VT ANR)
AOT	Agency of Transportation (also referred to as VTrans)
APA	American Planning Association
BMP	Best Management Practices
BOA	Board of Adjustment
CDBG	Community Development Block Grant
CERT	Community Emergency Response Team
COOP	Continuity of Operations Plan
DHCD	Department of Housing and Community Development
DEC	Department of Environmental Conservation
DFPR	Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (also referred to as FP&R)
DFW	Department of Fish and Wildlife (also referred to as F&W)
DOH	Vermont Department of Health
DOJ	Department of Justice
DPS	Vermont Department of Public Service
DRB	Development Review Board
EDA	Economic Development Administration (US)
ECVEDD	East Central Vermont Economic Development District
EM	Emergency Management (also referred to as VEM)
EMC	Emergency Management Coordinator
EMD	Emergency Management Director
EMPG	Emergency Management Performance Grant
EOP	Emergency Operations Plan
EPA	Environmental Protection Agency (U.S.)
F&W	Department of Fish and Wildlife (also referred to as DFW)
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency (U.S.)
FP&R	Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation
FTE	Full Time Equivalent
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
HCA	Vermont Health Care Authority
HMEP	Hazardous Material Emergency Planning
HMGP	Hazard Mitigation Grant Program
HSU	Homeland Security Unit

HUD	Housing and Urban Development (U.S.)
INS	Immigration and Naturalization Services (U.S.)
kw	Kilowatt
LEC	Local Exchange Carrier
LEMP	Local Emergency Management Plan
LEPC #12	Local Emergency Planning Committee #12
MGD	Million Gallons per Day
MOMS	Municipal Officers Management Seminar
MPG	Municipal Planning Grant
mw	Megawatts
NADO	National Association of Development Organizations
NBRC	Northern Border Regional Commission
NRC	Natural Resources Committee
NRCS	Natural Resource Conservation Service
NWI	National Wetlands Inventory
PC	Planning Commission
PDM	Pre-Disaster Mitigation
pp <sup>m</sup>	parts per million (equal to milligrams/liter)
PL	Public Law
PSD	Public Service Department
PUC	Public Utility Commission
RDC	Regional Development Corporation
RPC	Regional Planning Commission
RSMS	Road Surface Management Systems
RCT	Rural Community Transportation
RTP	Long-Range Regional Transportation Plan (also known as LRTP)
SB	Selectboard
SEP	Supplemental Environmental Program
SERC	State Emergency Response Committee
SHMO	State Hazard Mitigation Officer (acronym pronounced "SHH-MOE")
SHPO	State Historic Preservation Officer (acronym pronounced "SHIP-POE")
SPA	Source Protection Areas
TAC	Transportation Advisory Committee
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOEC	Town Officers Education Conference
TPI	Transportation Planning Initiative
TRORC	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Commission
TRORF	Two Rivers-Ottawaquechee Regional Foundation
USDA	United States Department of Agriculture

USFS	United States Forest Service
VAL	Vermont Adult Learning
VANR	Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (also referred to as ANR)
VAOT	Vermont Agency of Transportation (also referred to as VTrans)
VAPDA	Vermont Association of Planning and Development Agencies
VCDP	Vermont Community Development Program
VCEP	Vermont Comprehensive Energy Plan
VCGI	Vermont Center for Geographic Information
VCIC	Vermont Criminal Information Center
VEDA	Vermont Economic Development Authority
VEM	Vermont Emergency Management
VEPC	Vermont Economic Progress Council
VHCB	Vermont Housing and Conservation Board
VLCT	Vermont League of Cities and Towns
VMT	Vehicle Miles Traveled
VPA	Vermont Planners Association
VSA	Vermont Statutes Annotated
VTP	Vermont Telecommunications Plan
VTrans	Vermont Agency of Transportation (also referred to as VAOT or AOT)
WHPA	Wellhead Protection Area
WHPP	Wellhead Protection Program
WMZ	Waste Management Zone
ZBA	Zoning Board of Adjustment
604b	A grant program established under Section 604b of the federal Clean Water Act