

TRORC
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
King Farm, Woodstock, VT
February 12, 2025

Attendance

Board Members: Bill Emmons, III, Chairperson; John Echeverria, Vice Chairperson; Nancy Jones, Secretary; Nancy Malmquist; Brian Loeb

Others Present: Peter Gregory, TRORC, Executive Director; Kyra Wood, TRORC, Grants Manager; Kevin Geiger, TRORC, Chief Planner, John Moore, Tony O’Meara, Newbury

1. Call to Order, Changes to agenda

Chair Emmons convened the meeting at 3:05pm, a quorum was present.
No changes were made to the agenda.

2. Public Comment on items not on the agenda

Public in attendance, no public comments received.

3. Approval of January 8, 2025, Minutes

On a motion made by Nancy Jones and seconded by John Echeverria, the minutes of January 8, 2025, were approved unanimously

4. Acceptance of unaudited January 2025 Financial Reports

Peter Gregory provided an overview of the reports, sharing that January 2025 was an active month for income and expenditures. Payments on outstanding invoices, such as TPI, are expected shortly. The Accounts Receivable displays a high number, but four large payments have been received in February to this effect. Gregory noted the expenditures for MARC Brownfields are higher than the budget expected, but funds are obtained in advance from MARC and expenses are covered. TRORC made \$16,000 in payments in January to students awarded by the 2024 Scholarship Program, with one student remaining to pay upon receipt of first semester grades.

Upon question, Gregory explained the percent spent of the Salaries/Wages line item is greater than expected as 3 payroll periods are in January, where there are normally two.

On a motion made by John Echeverria and seconded by Nancy Jones, the unaudited January 2025 financial reports were unanimously accepted.

5. Regional Plan Adoption Update and next Regional Plan process and timeline update

Kevin Geiger, Chief Planner, shared updates on work with TRORC's Regional Plan updates. The current revisions worked on for the last year have been finalized with only typographical fixes made after the last hearing in January 2025. Links to the draft ready for adoption will be provided to the TRORC Board in the packet for the February meeting. Formal adoption is expected.

Staff are already at work on the next updates for Future Land Use and Housing Chapters. These revisions are based on changes in the law that require us to add new regional and local housing targets, as well as modify our future land use areas. John Echeverria questioned the policy implications of the new areas, and Kevin stated there would not be large changes in policy. The regional prohibition on principal retail outside of core areas will be the same, but these areas would basically be renamed and will get larger, enabling more dense housing and commercial uses. The current Rural Areas would remain but get smaller as some of the agricultural and forest land would go into a new Rural Agriculture and Forestry Area. Similarly, land in the Forest Based Resource Area would go into two areas, with the deep forests going into Rural Conservation and getting the policies of the existing area. The smaller and more working forest would also go into the Rural Agriculture and Forestry Area, which would have a mix of policies of the two existing areas. Policies are already in the Plan on development in fields and forests.

The first draft of Future Land Use maps are done. TRORC will be holding four regional information sessions in roughly the areas covered by the four newspapers for the region, and then we will be meeting with each community, roughly trying to do these in the four subregions to review the new maps. It is hoped that this creates more public involvement and awareness. Kevin said that we have drafted a timeline for meetings with towns and the Committee asked that this be shared.

There were questions about the 'tier' system created in Act 181 as well as state designated areas. Kevin noted that TRORC won't make tiers. Our new maps will be reviewed by the State's Land Use Review Board, and will likely drive the new state designated areas as well as Tier 1b areas. Towns will get to opt into Tier 1b, which will essentially carry forward some Act 250 review exemptions. Bill Emmons asked about Tier 3 areas (which will likely have more Act 250 jurisdiction) and the new road rule. The 800 foot 'road rule' that was previously in Act 250 is back in, so a project with that would trigger Act 250. What the LURB does with Tier 3 areas is still unknown as they won't deal with that for a few years. It will connect with our Plan, but how is not known except that our Rural Conservation Area will be taken into account. A wide group of interested organizations and citizens expect to be involved in that rulemaking.

6. Discussion on federal funding situation

Peter Gregory provided a brief update on the current federal funding situation and its impact on TRORC's grant funding. Some work has been halted, such as a grant focused on climate activity. However, EPA Brownfields has been reauthorized, and work will continue. Gregory shared that TRORC does not expect a decrease in funding. Additionally, some projects that were not anticipated during the FY25 budget development are now under contract with TRORC, such as grant administration for MERP Implementation Grants with several TRORC member towns. TRORC is always seeking new funding opportunities for towns and will remain active in its search.

7. Investment Policy Discussion re: ESG

Peter Gregory followed up on a prior Executive Committee discussion regarding the current investment policy, specifically in relation to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investments. Christina Scott, TRORC Finance Manager, reviewed the policy, which does not explicitly state a requirement for investment in this category. Gregory will present the policy for discussion at the next Executive Committee meeting.

8. Updates: Projects, Legislation and Staffing, Other

Peter Gregory shared that Geena Baber, a Planner with TRORC who has contributed greatly to the Regional Plan updates, will be moving away and leaving her position at the end of March 2025. TRORC will advertise for an open position, which Gregory expects will contribute to the Shared Services work planned with several towns.

9. Executive session, if needed

No Executive Session.

10. Other

The Executive Committee meeting concluded at 4:37 pm on February 12, 2025.

Meeting minutes prepared by:
Kyra Wood, Grants Manager
February 19, 2025