

TRORC Board Meeting

March 26, 2025 – Board Meeting Minutes



Attendance:

Name	Town	9/25/24	10/30/24	12/11/24	2/26/25	3/26/25		
Ed Jodice	Barnard					X		
Steve Cota	Barnard (Alt)							
Paul Vallee	Bethel (Alt.)		X					
Gene Kraus	Bethel			X		X		
Nancy Jones	Bradford		X	X	X	X		
Sandy Vondrasek Cooch	Braintree	X	X	X	X	X		
Megan O'Toole	Braintree (Alt)							
Lynne Bertram	Bridgewater			X	X			
Gwynn Zakov	Brookfield		X	X	X			
Jon Binhammer	Brookfield (Alt.)							
Carl Pepperman	Chelsea			X	X	X		
Stephen Devoto	Corinth	X	X	X	X			
Peter Berger	Fairlee		X	X	X			
Mark Belisle	Granville			X	X	X		
Monica Collins	Hancock				X	X		
Lori Hirshfield	Hartford	X		X	X			
Bruce Riddle	Hartford (Alt)		X	X	X	X		
Stephen Cone	Hartland			X	X	X		
Tony O'Meara	Newbury	X	X	X		X		
Larry Scott	Newbury (Alt.)				X			
Brian Loeb	Norwich	X			X			
Herb Kuendig	Pittsfield							
Anne Brown	Plymouth	X	X	X	X	X		
Bill Emmons	Pomfret	X	X	X	X	X		
Tyler Wellington	Pomfret (Alt.)							
Chris Sargent	Randolph				X			
Patricia Harvey	Rochester			X	X	X		
Doon Hinderyckx	Rochester (Alt)			X				
Patrick Dakin	Royalton	X	X	X	X	X		
Bushrod Powers	Royalton (Alt)	X			X			
Ira Clark	Sharon	X	X	X	X	X		
Kevin Travis	Stockbridge					X		
John Echeverria	Strafford	X	X	X		X		
Tim Taylor	Thetford					X		
Jim Masland	Thetford (Alt)							
Jim Clark	Topsham							
Michael Sacca	Tunbridge							
Kevin Rose	Tunbridge (Alt)							
Andrea Herrington	Vershire			X	X	X		
Nancy Malmquist	W. Fairlee	X	X	X	X			
Don Bourdon	Woodstock		X	X				
Brad Prescott	Woodstock (Alt)	X			X			
Meghan Butts	At-Large		X		X			
Ken Alton	At-Large	X		X	X	X		
Dan Rudell	At-Large							
Andrew Winter	At-Large		X	X		X		
Meg Emmons	At-Large	X	X					
Caroline Sherman-Gordon	Youth At-Large		X	X		X		

+1 unnamed late entry

Staff: Peter Gregory, Kyra Wood, Bryan Kovalick

Guests: Cathy Emmons

1. Call to Order/Approval of Agenda/Introductions/Public Comment on items not on the agenda.

Chair Bill Emmons called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. There was public attendance, with individuals joining later in the meeting. Gene Kraus shared information about an upcoming Thermal Energy Network Workshop on April 10 and encouraged involvement. No public comments were received. Attendees introduced themselves. A quorum was present, and the agenda was approved.

2. Public Hearings. Public Comments on Town Plan Approval Action for the Stockbridge Town Plan and Confirmation Action for their planning efforts per 24 VSA, Section 4350.

Bill Emmons opened the Hearing for public comments.

Tim Taylor noted that the Plan could include unambiguous and mandatory language, such as the word 'shall.' Gene Kraus suggested that the section referring to floodplains could include additional information, particularly in a revision before the next adoption in eight years. Monica Collins expressed a desire to see food security addressed in the context of emergency management across all towns, specifically regarding food access, planning, and distribution in the event of a natural disaster.

Emmons closed the Public Hearing.

3. Action on both the Stockbridge Town Plan Approval and Confirmation. Staff will present details on the draft review.

Bryan Kovalick, TRORC Planner, provided an overview of the Stockbridge Town Plan, adopted by the Town on January 2, 2025. Kovalick noted that 4 recommendations were made to the Town for inclusion in their next Town Plan revision, urged to be sooner than the required 8 years before expiration.

1. Inclusion of a policy to encourage the protection and restoration of floodplains and flood hazard areas to attenuate and moderate flooding and fluvial erosion
2. Inclusion in future policies to ensure development and river corridors do not exacerbate flooding or fluvial erosion.
3. Full alignment with the State of Vermont's planning goal, as stated in 24 V.S.A. § 4302, to support childcare financing, business assistance for childcare providers and workforce development for childcare providers.
4. Addition of a section on air quality and air resources.

Kovalick shared the recommendations made during the Town's last review in 2015 were included in this recent revision.

On a motion made by Gene Kraus and seconded by Sandy Vondrasek Cooch, the Town of Stockbridge's Town Plan was approved unanimously.

TRORC staff recommended Board confirmation of their planning efforts per 24 V.S.A. §4350. On a motion made by Nancy Jones and seconded by Mark Belisle, the Town of Stockbridge's confirmation was granted unanimously.

4. Approval of the TRORC Board Minutes from February 26, 2025.

On a motion made by Nancy Jones and seconded by Caroline Sherman-Gordon, the Board meeting minutes of February 26, 2025, were approved unanimously. John Echeverria abstained.

5. Acceptance of unaudited Financial Reports for February 2025.

Peter Gregory shared that TRORC, through February 2025, has completed 67% of the budget for the year, in line with expectations. 70% of income expected has been received and 59% of expenses, suggesting the balance sheet is in good standing at this time. The Commission has been consistent with invoicing, ensuring funds are received in a timely manner for expenditures, with a priority for federal contracts.

On a motion made by Caroline Sherman-Gordon and seconded by Mark Belisle, the February 2025 Financial Reports were accepted unanimously.

6. The TRORC website. What is it, what does it contain, does it serve the intended purposes?

Kyra Wood demonstrated how to navigate the TRORC website, emphasizing resources that are useful for Commissioners' duties and expectations, such as policies and financial information.

She then outlined where key information regarding TRORC's programs is kept, emphasizing that there is a wealth of detailed information held under main programs. For example, under 'Programs' and then 'Transportation', there are dedicated pages for the transportation Advisory Committee, Municipal Roads General Permit (MRGP), Culverts and Ditches, and more. The tab 'Towns' was shown to display TRORC's interactive map of member towns, who have a dedicated page where TRORC project files and pertinent town information is kept.

Kyra explained the website is a consistently updated resource, with each staff member contributing based on their respective work with TRORC.

7. Federal Funding situation. What do we know, what don't we know and how is this affecting your towns and TRORC?

Peter Gregory facilitated a discussion for towns to share on what they are experiencing, or for feedback on what TRORC should be doing.

Commissioners shared that farming is experiencing some cuts in funding and resources, impacting the delivery of food to schools. Additionally, many avenues of borrowing have disappeared, causing some municipalities to receive less lending with the anticipation of federal funds. This issue is especially acute as it relates to FEMA reimbursements.

Peter concluded the conversation, sharing that a decent share of TRORC's work is federally dependent, such as Brownfields work with the EPA and the Economic Development Administration (EDA). TRORC is working to not overreact while remaining prepared. For example, requests for advancement of funds to pay consultants with federal dollars are being made.

8. Staff/Commissioner Updates

a. Commissioner Items

Peter Gregory shared details on the state Public Hearing on TRORC's Request for Determination of Energy Compliance for the TRORC Regional Plan, adopted in February 2025. It will be held by the Vermont Department of Public Service on Tuesday, April 15 at 5:30pm, with in-person and virtual options.

b. Legislative and NADO Updates

In the State Legislature, there are two housing bills, one in the House and one in the Senate, dealing with appeals and appropriations for different housing programs. Specifically in the budget, the Governor proposed \$2 million in cleanup for Brownfields work. This does not include assessment work; therefore RPCs have sought an additional two million for regional planning commissions to conduct more assessment. The Agency of Commerce and Community Development (ACCD) annual funding from the State for RPCs includes a 3% increase.

Peter shared updates on two bills introduced. H.421, proposed by Representative Masland, would transition RPCs to councils of government over a 2–3-year period. This is likely to have a committee later this year. While the concept is new to Vermont, this structure can be seen in other areas of the country. H.233 is a bill proposed by the nonprofit community, aiming to improve efficiency in contracting with state agencies and on indirect rates, for organizations receiving funds from or through the State.

In NADO, the organization is monitoring funding freezes, with a report that staff at these agencies, regardless of funding status, have reduced staff capacity/sizes.

c. Other

Caroline Sherman-Gordon read aloud a letter sent to Bill Emmons, Chair, prior to the Board meeting. The intention of this letter is to promote a discussion on a request for Future Agricultural Land Use Maps that would include nine sets of data. The Commissioners discussed the logistical approach and reality of gathering certain data sets for use. The letter is to be shared with all Commissioners after the meeting and this item will be included in a future agenda for discussion.

Nancy Jones reminded the Commissioners that the 2025 Scholarship Program deadline is on April 11, 2025, and encouraged them to share the information.

10. Adjournment.

The meeting adjourned at 8:06pm.

Meeting minutes prepared by:
Kyra Wood, Grants Manager
March 31, 2025