



ROCKINGHAM
PLANNING
COMMISSION

theRPC.org



FY 2023/2024

Budget and Work Program Highlights

June 8, 2023

Introduction

If I had to sum up Fiscal Year 2023 in one word, it's housing. This year saw the completion of the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) and significant investment in planning to support new housing opportunities in New Hampshire. As we close out FY 2023, the RPC staff is looking to capture the momentum of the completed housing needs assessment to advance the regional conversation on housing. Data from the RHNA is supporting conversations and housing opportunity grant work in 15 communities (and counting) around the region. Housing will continue to be a focal point in the coming fiscal year as we integrate cross discipline planning to examine the codependency of transportation, wastewater infrastructure, drinking water and environmental resources in our housing work.

With more than 35 contract projects in the queue and a budget approaching \$1.8M, FY 2024 promises to be one of the busiest years the RPC has seen in decades. The RPC is staffed and ready to meet this challenge as we welcome Victoria Healey and Mikayla Jerominek to the staff as new regional planners.

Below are some highlights from this past year's work, a summary of our proposed budget for FY 2024, as well as a look ahead at some of the work we will take on as a region in the upcoming year.

FY 2023 Accomplishments

Land Use and Local Planning Assistance

Local Planning Assistance

RPC staff provided a variety of Master Plan updates and reviews to support six communities including Brentwood, Plaistow, Hampstead, North Hampton, Fremont, and Newton. RPC staff also provided MS4 Stormwater Permit compliance support and general stormwater management assistance to Greenland, Raymond, and Hampstead. Circuit rider services were provided to seven communities in the region.

7 communities supported by circuit rider services

26 communities in which RPC staff participated with local officials and staff to present information, provide technical assistance, work on a project, or secure grant funds.

6 local master plans updated by RPC staff.

300 staff hours at Planning Board meetings providing guidance on land use regulations, application review, and master plan development.

3 developments of regional impact reviewed by RPC staff at the request of two communities.

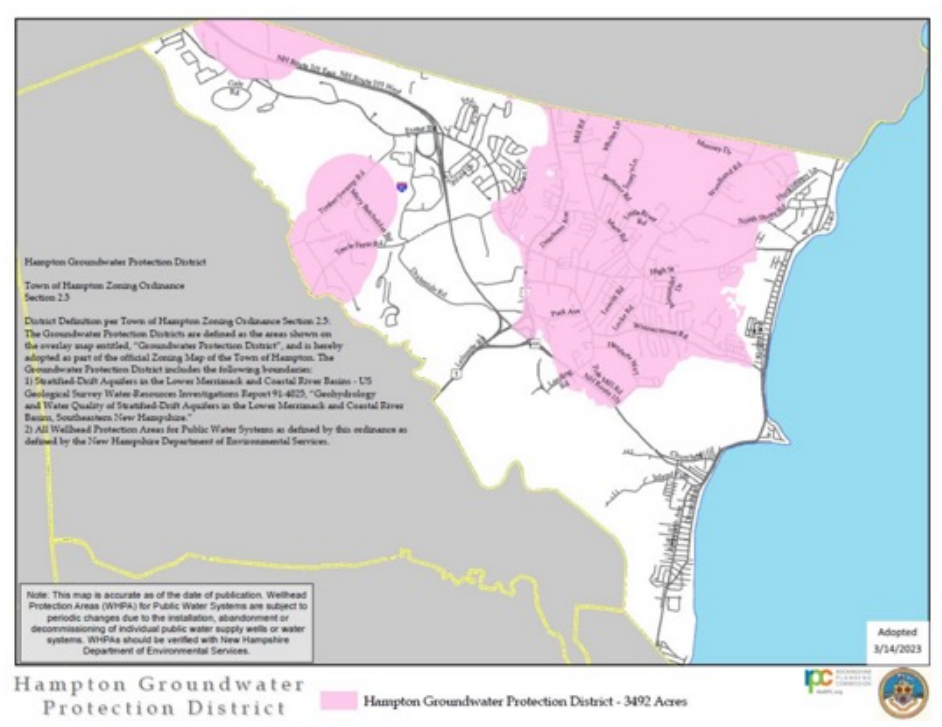
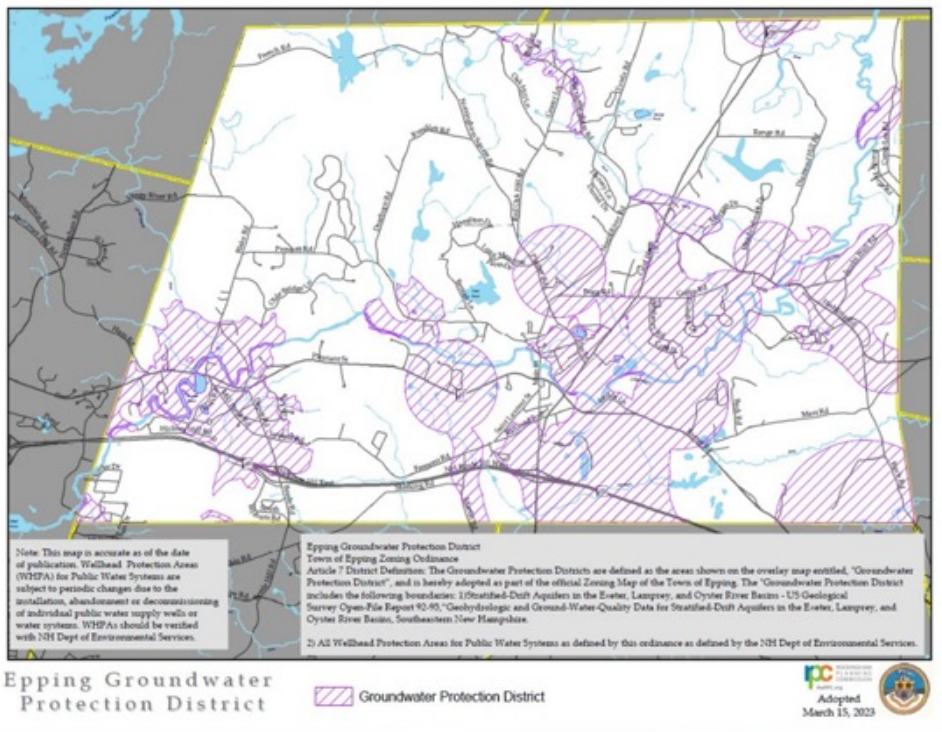
100% of coastal communities engaged on coastal resiliency, mitigation, and adaptation efforts.

48 presentations at local, regional, or state workshops and conferences given by RPC staff on topics including master plan options, drinking water protection regulations, housing data, climate change adaptation and long-term transportation network reliability.

Source Water Protection Planning

The RPC was successful in securing a NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Local Source Water Protection Grant program to help several RPC municipalities update their local groundwater and drinking water protection regulations. The RPC worked in Epping, Hampton, Raymond and Stratham to increase drinking water protection and resiliency through streamlined regulations. This resulted in updated regulation in Hampton and Epping that simplified administration and enforcement of ordinances to strengthen the protection of drinking water resources.


Staff also presented the outcomes of this project at the NH Department of Environmental Services 2023 Source Water Protection Conference in May.



Regional Housing Needs Assessment

In FY 2023 RPC staff completed a comprehensive update to the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA). The RHNA provides current trends and data to help guide communities as they consider the need for housing in the region. A primary goal of this RHNA is to provide data on housing and demographics, by income level, so that each municipality in the region can begin to understand their current and future need. By equipping municipalities with a foundation of knowledge on the challenges and opportunities facing community members, this assessment may be utilized to frame a regional conversation around local solutions.

The RPC Staff is using the momentum of the RHNA to work with multiple communities - Brentwood, Hampton, Newton, Little Boar's Head Village District, Plaistow and Rye - on advancing housing related initiatives through Invest NH funded Housing Opportunity & Planning Grants. To learn more about the Regional Housing Need Assessment reach out to the RPC staff or visit: www.therpc.org/RHNA



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2023

**Regional Housing
Needs Assessment**

February 2023

Tufts Age Friendly Communities

RPC is continuing work this year under our grant from Point32 Health Foundation (formerly Tufts Health Plan Foundation) to assist communities in planning for the needs of older residents now and over the next two decades. In 2022 we worked with Exeter, Fremont, Hampstead, Hampton, Portsmouth, and Stratham on Age Friendly Community Assessments using a national framework developed by AARP. In 2023 we're working on assessments for Kingston and Newton, as well as implementation projects for Fremont and Stratham. Staff are assisting Fremont in developing new transportation options for older residents including a volunteer driver program. In Stratham staff are developing a resource guide for programs and services available to older residents and helping the town design a better process for sharing information with older residents, some of whom do not use the internet regularly. The AARP framework considers elements such as transportation, housing, recreation and social engagement, health and nutrition services, information flow, respect and social inclusion, work and civic engagement, and outdoor spaces. Each assessment is led by local steering committee made up of town staff and residents, and includes a town-wide survey, community forum, demographic profile, and asset inventory. To date, surveying across eight communities has generated over 1,800 responses. Common themes across all communities include a desire for better transportation options, affordable housing options, availability and affordability of support services to help older residents age in place in their homes and improving how information on available resources is made available to residents.

1,800 responses from 8 communities

COMMON THEMES:



a desire for better transportation options,



affordable housing options,



availability and affordability of support services to help older residents age in place in their homes and improving how information on available resources is made available to residents.



Coastal Resilience

Flood Smart Seacoast

RPC resumed work on the Flood Smart Seacoast project. Flood Smart Seacoast seeks to build regional capacity and coordination for greater environmental, social, and community resilience in the region. This is accomplished by establishing a staffed technical assistance partnership focused on coastal floodplain management and hazard mitigation. The program will provide direct assistance to help coastal communities incorporate the best available coastal flood risk science in decision making, adopt higher floodplain management standards, and access FEMA funding for coastal resilience projects. In FY 2023, the RPC supported Rye and Hampton through technical assistance efforts.

In Rye, the RPC assisted in the development of a grant application for FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance to 1) Complete a risk assessment of the sewer infrastructure to identify mitigation measures to increase system resilience and 2) Replace and install outdated generators at two pump stations and install external plugs at three pump stations to accommodate a mobile generator.

In Hampton, the RPC worked with NHDES and the town to update Hampton's Floodplain Management Ordinance to improve compliance with state building code and incorporate higher floodplain management standards. This includes but isn't limited to new Sea-level Rise Design Flood Elevation (SLR-DFE) requirements.

Additionally, The RPC is assisting Hampton in establishing a town-led process for acquiring Hazard Mitigation Grant Program funds on behalf of property owners interested in elevating their structures or selling their flood-prone properties to the town to protect against flooding from sea level rise.

Technical Assistance to Coastal Communities

The focus of the FY 2023, the Coastal Zone Program Technical Assistance Grant, was to advance local and regional coastal resilience initiatives. This year, the RPC launched a cooperative, continuous, and comprehensive approach to working with coastal communities on resiliency planning. This effort included:

- Working with the Exeter Town Planner, Sustainability Planner and Master Plan Oversight Committee to develop and review amendments to the town's floodplain development ordinance. In addition to incorporating the sea level rise risk areas and the increased freeboard requirement, RPC staff also worked with NHOPD to review Exeter's existing ordinance for minor amendments to better align the ordinance to the State's model.
- Advancing the Seabrook Coastal Resilience Team modeled after the Coastal Hazard Adaptation Team in Hampton.
- Responding to inquiries from New Castle on incorporating sea level rise maps and information into the master plan chapters as part of ongoing assistance.

The RPC staff was active at regional and state conferences with presentations at the 2022 Climate Summit on Integrating Climate & Coastal Resilience into Municipal Planning and the Office of Planning and Development monthly planning webinar series. RPC staff also attended the Keeping History Above Water conference in Portsmouth.



Electricity Aggregation

The goal of the Rockingham Planning Commission Electricity Supply Aggregation is to purchase electricity as a group from a competitive supplier at a lower rate than each member could receive on its own. By purchasing as an aggregation, municipalities and school districts can offer electricity suppliers a larger demand than they could individually. The larger demand, in turn, allows suppliers to offer a better rate to the aggregation than it could to individual members. The aggregation also makes it possible for members to share the costs of documenting load data, organizing an RFP process, selecting a supplier, conducting negotiations, and managing energy contracts. Contracts for current Electricity Aggregation members run from November 2022

through October 2025. During the first 8 months of the contract period, aggregation members will save almost \$0.12 per kWh compared to the default utility rate. In addition, aggregation rates are locked in and will not change for the duration of the contract, which provides members with budget certainty over the next few years. Over the past year RPC staff have:

- Continued to track savings against the default utility for aggregation members.
- Monitored competitive supply rates and price trends in the energy market.
- Held discussions with competitive suppliers and aggregation members about innovative purchasing options to hedge against market volatility.
- Facilitated the execution of a new 3-year contract for competitive electricity supply.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning

Municipal hazard mitigation plans provide a framework to recognize and address the impacts of natural hazards and climate change, including infectious disease such as COVID-19. This fiscal year, RPC worked with the Towns of Sandown, Raymond, Fremont, and Rye to complete their Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates with funding from NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NHHSEM). Having an updated compliant Hazard Mitigation Plan in place ensure your community's eligibility for federal funding in the face of a natural disaster.

Transportation Planning

In FY 2023, RPC Staff participated on the Project Advisory Committees for transportation improvement projects in the communities of Epping, Hampton, New Castle, Rye, Plaistow, Kingston, Portsmouth, and Seabrook. Our direct involvement in the project ensures that local interests are being represented at the state and regional level.

This fiscal year also coincided with the completion of the most recent Ten-Year Plan development process. The RPC staff worked closely with our partners at the NHDOT on the development of the final Ten-Year plan as well as the work of prioritizing projects for the next iteration. The RPC, in cooperation with NHDOT and Executive Councilor Janet Stevens, will participate in hearings to gather input on the next draft plan in the fall of 2023.

RPC staff also successfully administered the required federal transportation planning process to ensure an uninterrupted flow of project design and construction funding to the region. To learn more about the dollars invested in our region see the obligated project list.

<https://www.therpc.org/transportation/annual-list-obligated-projects>

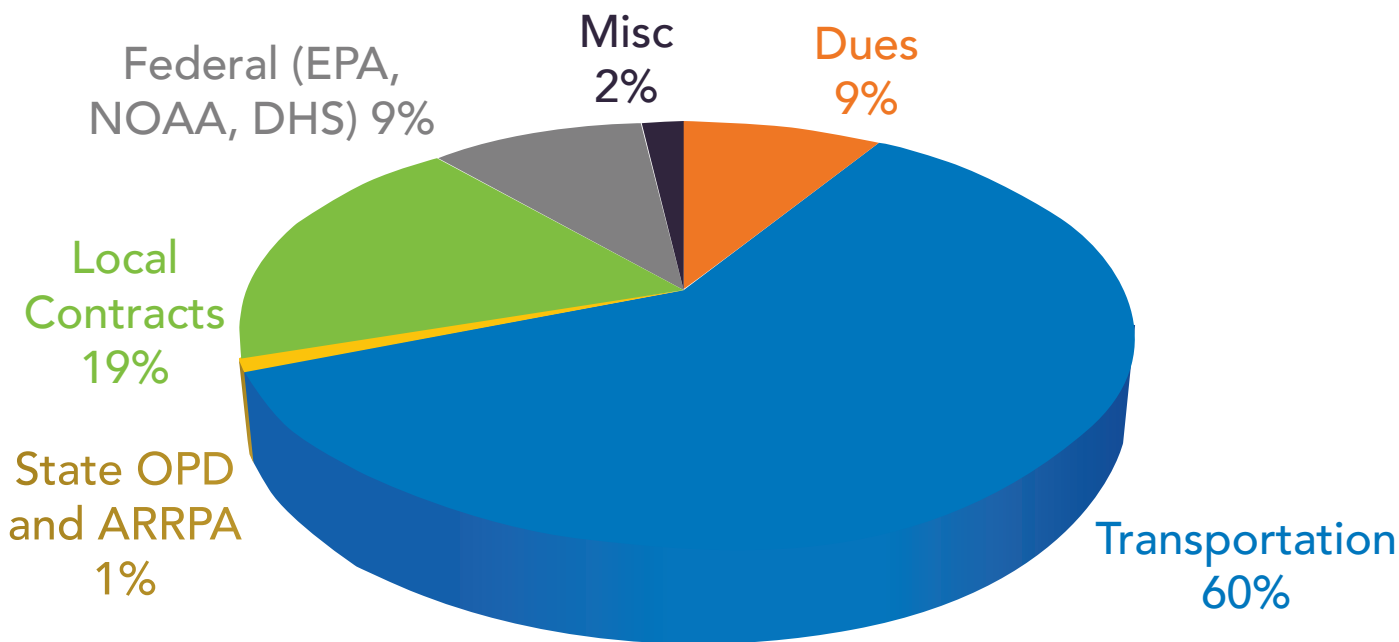
FY 2024 Budget Summary

Resources

The proposed FY 2024 Budget is strongest the organization has seen in decades with several important regional projects planned. Transportation planning funds provided through the U.S. Department of Transportation and passed through the New Hampshire Department of Transportation have increased nearly 30%. Combined with the successful Safe Streets for All Grant, transportation planning dollars make up more than half of the total revenue. The FY 2024 budget and work program also includes funding to continue conversations on the Regional Housing Needs Assessment. The RPC is working with several communities on Housing Opportunity Grants to address housing needs. Several local contracts are also anticipated as the RPC Staff prepares to provide local planning support and Master Plan assistance to member communities. The Work Program also features continued work in resilience planning, with funding from Federal sources such as the Environmental Protection Agency and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

Revenue	Contracts
Dues	\$ 151,485.00
Transportation (Federal)	\$ 1,056,654.00
State OPD and ARRPA	\$ 11,111.00
Local Contracts	\$ 340,834.00
Federal (EPA, NOAA, DHS)	\$ 166,000.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 32,827.00
Total Revenue	\$ 1,758,911.00

FY 2024 Revenue Sources



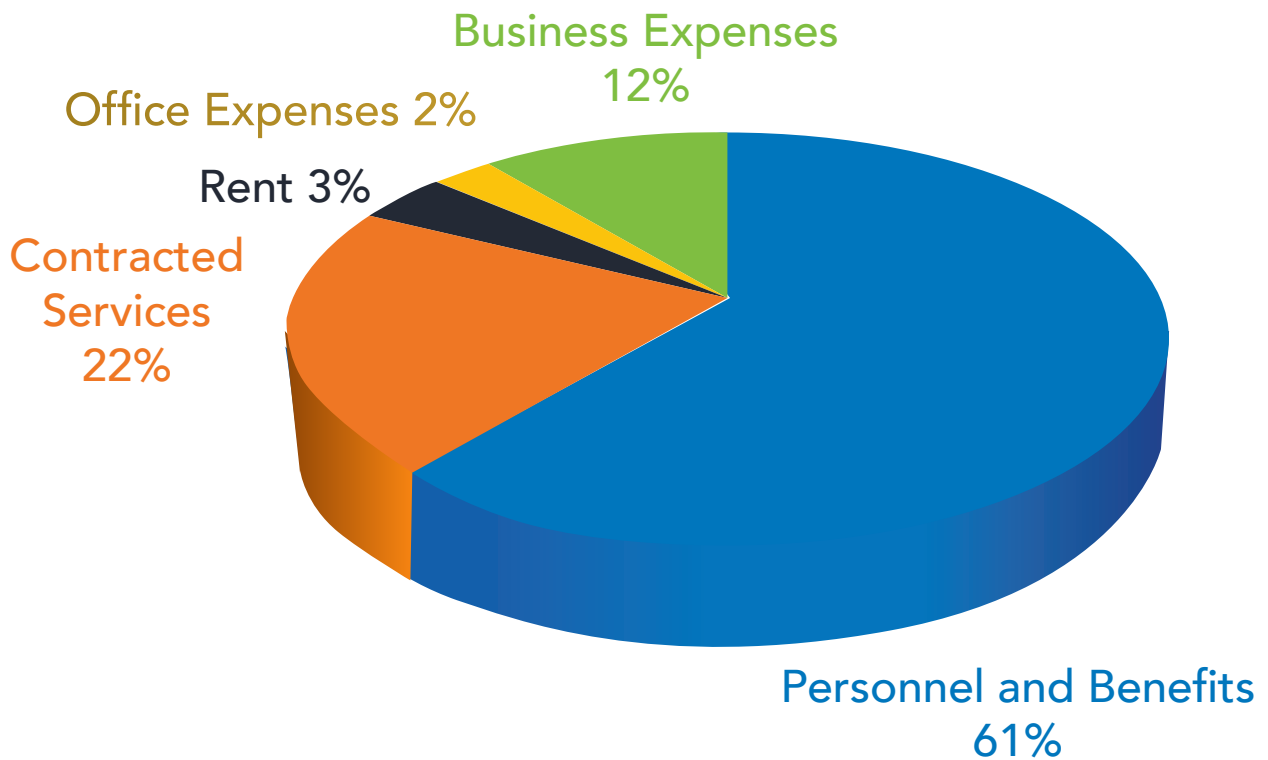
Expenses

Operating expenses are generally stable for the organization with limited year to year variability. Personnel and benefits represent the greatest percentage of the budget. With a significant workload and very competitive job market, staffing and staff retention remain a priority for FY 2024. As such, salary and benefits have been adjusted to meet the demands of the work program and remain

Expenses	
Personnel and Benefits	\$ 1,020,987.00
Contracted Services	\$ 372,000.00
Rent	\$ 52,444.00
Office Expenses	\$ 30,500.00
Business Expenses	\$ 194,774.00
Miscellaneous	\$ 2,000.00
Total Expenses	\$ 1,672,705.00
Net Reserve/Deficit	\$ 86,205.00

competitive. Business expenses including software licensing to support our GIS program, public outreach services, transportation data, as well as our server, network, and workstation infrastructure combine to make up about 12 percent of the expenses. Overall expenses, while higher than past years, are expected to remain stable for the year and result in a net reserve of \$86,205.00.

FY 2024 Expenses



FY 2024 Initiatives

Land Use and Local Planning Assistance

Land Use Planning Assistance

In FY 2024, the RPC land use planning team will continue to provide their expertise with direct assistance to your planning board. The RPC is prepared to ensure that each member community has the resources and technical skills needed to meet their planning needs. On a case-by-case basis, the RPC can assist with complicated or challenging site plan and subdivision review, with most costs eligible to be billed back to the applicant under state law.

This year, the RPC will provide direct circuit riding and land use planning support to eight communities in the region. In addition, the RPC is partnering with Resilience Planning and FB Environmental to provide regional context to the Rye Master Plan update and land use build out. The RPC is also teaming with VHB and Resilience Planning to support the City of Portsmouth Climate Action Plan development.

Regional Housing Needs

The conversations on housing will continue in FY 2024. The RPC Regional Housing Needs Assessment will be used as a guidance document to further regional and local conversations on housing. All too often, the fallout from the Regional Housing Need Assessment is hyper-focused on the “fair share” number for each community. Focusing solely on “fair share” numbers at the community level distracts from the opportunity to work collaboratively. In FY 2024, the RPC will be working on Housing Opportunity (HOP) Grants with:

- North Hampton
- Brentwood
- Fremont
- North Hampton
- Brentwood
- Plaistow
- Rye
- Newton
- Hampton
- Little Boar’s Head Village District

RPC staff will work with these communities to conduct:

- Housing Preference & Community Surveys
- Build Out Analyses
- Master Plan Updates
- Developing Land Use Regulations
- Local Housing Data & Needs Assessments
- Public Information & Engagement Sessions
- Land Use Regulation Audits
- Applying for Additional HOP Grants

The goal of the Rockingham Planning Commission RHNA outreach effort is to reach consensus on a regional housing approach that looks beyond municipal boundaries and supports housing development consistent with wise use and careful stewardship of the region’s natural and built environment.

Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning

Municipal hazard mitigation plans provide a framework to recognize and address the impacts of natural hazards and climate change, including infectious disease such as COVID-19. This fiscal year, RPC is working with the Towns of **Exeter, Hampton Falls, Newington, and North Hampton** to complete their Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates with funding from NH Homeland Security and Emergency Management (NHHSEM). Having an updated compliant Hazard Mitigation Plan in place ensures your community's eligibility for federal funding in the face of a natural disaster.

Coastal Resilience and Environmental Planning

Flood Smart Seacoast

Flood Smart Seacoast will continue in FY 2024 with the RPC playing a pivotal role in piloting an equitable home elevation and voluntary buyout program in Hampton, NH. The RPC is currently working with NHDES and Hamptons staff to develop public-facing resources about the program for purposes of communication with Hampton Boards, Commissions, residents, and non-resident property-owners. The program will include a desktop analysis to identify neighborhoods of high physical and social vulnerability wherein to focus efforts. The effort is expected to result in a living resource guide for town staff with information on applying for FEMA funding for home elevation / buyouts.

The Future is Now Story Map

Rockingham Planning Commission (RPC), in conjunction with the National Weather Service, Grey ME, has worked to document the impacts December 23, 2022, storm event from the perspective of weather forecasting, roadways and transportation network impacts during the storm. Additionally, the partnership documented the extent and severity of coastal flooding from the hightide and storm surge to inform near term investment in coastal resilience projects. This November at the NNECAPA conference being held in New Castle, the RPC is delivering a panel-style presentation that will involve representatives from National Weather Service, NH Department of Environmental Services Coastal Program, University of New Hampshire, and local emergency officials to discuss how documenting and communicating about present day risks can help support decisions and investments needed to be resilient to sea level rise.



Technical Assistance to Coastal Communities

The focus of the Coastal Zone Program Technical Assistance Grant will build on the work from previous years to advance local and regional coastal resilience initiatives. RPC staff will work directly with coastal communities to implement projects identified as priorities. This year, the RPC will continue to work with our partners to advance the Seabrook Coastal Hazards Adaptation Team and expand the regional coordination of coastal resilience efforts. RPC has also been awarded three grants from the Piscataqua Region Estuaries Partnership (PREP) to work with multiple communities on watershed protection efforts.

Additional planning activities will include:

- Supporting the Exeter Squamscott River Local Advisory Committee
- Implementing coastal resilience master plan strategies
- Updating wetland ordinances
- Supporting Great Bay 2030 initiative
- Researching Salt Marsh history and ownership to support coastal resilience.
- Enhancing floodplain and surface water protection regulations

Source Water Protection Planning

The RPC team was successful in securing two NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) Local Source Water Protection Grants. The first project will provide technical assistance to three communities, Plaistow, Kingston, and Salem, to amend their existing stormwater management regulations to bring them into conformance with the federal MS4 Stormwater Permit.

The second project will update the Town of Raymond's 2009 Source Water Protection Plan and develop a Source Water Protection Plan for the Town of Fremont. This project will include a public education component to increase public understanding and awareness of drinking water resources and develop public educational materials that discuss the implementation of water protection actions.



Transportation

The transportation planning cycle will move forward in FY 2024 with a focus on the Ten Year Plan Public Hearings. The RPC will provide regional context to support the Governor’s Advisory Council on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT) hearings being held in the fall of 2023.

Work to update the regional Long-Range Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) and Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) will continue with a focus on enhanced public outreach to identify goals, objectives, and transportation project funding priorities in the region for the next 20 years. The Long Range MTP provides a data driven pathway to identify transportation goals and advance projects into the Ten-Year Plan (TYP) that help the region meet those goals.

Additionally in FY 2024, the RPC and neighboring MPOs will begin work on a Safety Action Plan funded through a grant from USDOT’s Safe Streets and Roads for All program. This project is designed to ensure that all communities, regardless of size, setting, or available resources, can identify transportation safety challenges and appropriate strategies to address them. The proposed action plans will analyze crash data and be customized to address safety and equity in urban and rural areas and provide the first step in helping the smaller and historically disadvantaged communities access resources they often lack for vital safety projects. This plan, when completed will allow municipalities access to three billion dollars of federal money for transportation safety improvements.



In partnership with Strafford Regional Planning Commission (SRPC), COAST, and UNH Wildcat Transit, the RPC proposes a collaborative transit planning study, focused on improving access to stops on the region’s fixed route transit networks. The purpose of this project is to: 1) provide COAST, UNH Wildcat Transit, and the communities served by the two systems with insight into the barriers that riders face in being able to safely access transit stops on foot; and 2) provide the communities with tools through the municipal land use review process to help reduce those barriers and improve access.



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The Rockingham Planning Commission is a voluntary regional public organization enabled under RSA 36 and created and sustained by its 27 member communities and their appointed representatives. We provide professional planning assistance and advice to member communities concerning local and regional planning and by actively promoting and facilitating cooperation and coordination among the communities.

Our Commissioners

Mike Turell (Atkinson)
Ken Grant (Atkinson)
Stefanie Kizza (Brentwood)
Doug Finan (Brentwood)
Edward Warren (East Kingston)
Heather Clark (Epping)
Gwen English (Exeter)
Langdon Plumer (Exeter)
Leanne Miner (Fremont)
Roger Barham (Fremont)
Stephen Gerrato (Greenland)
Bob Dion (Greenland)
Alan Davis (Hampstead)
Susan Hastings (Hampstead)
Ann Carnaby (Hampton)
Barbara Kravitz (Hampton)
Marl Olson (Hampton)
Sharon Mullen, Alt (Hampton)
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Mary Ann Driscoll (New Castle)
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Lauri Etela (North Hampton)
Tim Moore (Plaistow)
Darrell Britton (Plaistow)
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Elizabeth Moreau (Portsmouth)
John Tabor (Portsmouth)
Christina McCarthy (Raymond)
Patricia Bridgeo (Raymond)
Keith Smith (Raymond)
Thomas Luszcz (Raymond)
Jaci Grote (Rye)
Phil Winslow (Rye)
John White (Sandown)
Srinivasan Ravikumer (Seabrook)
James VanBokkelen (South Hampton)
Lucy Cushman (Stratham)
Joseph Johnson (Stratham)