



COMMISSIONERS' HANDBOOK

A Little History

(Special Thanks to Nancy Marashio and the Strategic Planning Committee)

On July 1, 1963, the New Hampshire legislature created and incorporated the Upper Valley Development Council, Inc., granting "the power and authority:

- to promote all civic improvements within the area
- to acquire, by purchase, lease, exchange, or otherwise, land and real estate. To erect, construct, alter, repair, maintain, and improve buildings and other structures with full power to own, hold, sell, lease, mortgage, and acquire all kinds of property, and,
- to undertake and engage in, transact, and carry on any types of business that may be necessary for connection with any of the preceding purposes.

On October 27, 1964, the Upper Valley Development Council, Inc. became a 501 (c) 6.

In 1967, the original membership of Lebanon, Hanover, Enfield, Canaan, New Hampshire, Hartford, Woodstock, and Norwich Vermont were amended to include "nonvoting associate membership ... for any person, corporation, or association approved by the board of directors and desirous of furthering the purposes of the council." Effective June 19, 1967, House Bill 612 established non-voting associate membership for the Council.

During that same time in 1967, a Study Committee established by community governments of Hanover and Lebanon, New Hampshire, and Hartford and Norwich, Vermont, considered "how an organization might be formed to more effectively activate the region's common goals" to confront "problems that no community alone can solve." The sole resulting recommendation was "that a governmental organization be formed that can plan, coordinate, and administer the solution of problems that extend over community boundaries." A professional staff is seen as key to providing needed services to the region and its communities, services in transportation, land use, economic development, environment, and provision of federal assistance.

The State of New Hampshire committed statewide to regional planning in 1968, emphasizing "creating regions with general utility for state agency planning and regional planning for communities." The resulting Executive Order designates the geographical boundaries of seventeen coterminous regional planning councils "to represent physical,

administrative, social, and economic groupings of municipalities" and to maximize both state and federal planning resources. Dorchester, Grafton, Lyme, Orange, and Orford added to the four original New Hampshire communities.

On June 13, 1969, the state legislature formally changed the name from the "Upper Valley Development Council, Inc." to the "Upper Valley Planning and Development Council, Inc."

The 1972 Executive Order of statewide amalgamation for regional planning placed the Sunapee Region under the responsibility of the Upper Valley Planning and Development Council. Statutes also required municipalities to discontinue open burning in municipal dumps by July 1, 1975, and to prepare indexed tax maps showing the boundary lines of each parcel of land by January 1, 1980.

The conflict was anticipated between the demands of growth, development, services, state requirements, and preservation of the region's environment. Meetings with local officials to determine needs priorities established technical planning assistance as the highest priority, with solid waste disposal second. Both needs would benefit from regional long-range planning.

In 1973 the Upper Valley Planning and Development Council prepared a problems and issues study of one city (Claremont) and eighteen towns (Acworth, Bradford, Charlestown, Cornish, Croydon, Goshen, Grantham, Langdon, Lempster, Newbury, New London, Newport, Springfield, Sunapee, Sutton, Unity, Washington, Wilmot) which comprised the 630 square mile Lake Sunapee Region, whose manmade uses "have historically appeared to be in harmony with their natural surroundings." Growth and development within the region were attributed to the "somewhat classical New England landscape of rural villages and small mill towns located within a green, pastoral setting ... a high quality, high amenity environment within which to work and live." Comprehensive land planning did not keep pace with population growth and land subdivision activity. At the regional level, planning activities "resulted from the efforts of two private organizations: the Dartmouth-Lake Sunapee Region and the Lake Sunapee Protective Association." Town membership fees and an annual block appropriation from the State Department of Resources and Economic Development supported the Dartmouth- Lake Sunapee Region. Memberships supported the Lake Sunapee Protective Association.

By 1974, the Upper Valley-Lake Sunapee Council (as it had begun to be called) was selected for "further analysis" in an examination to profile the ten-state regional planning agencies. That analysis documented a central office in Lebanon and a regional office in Newport "to maintain close contacts in both sub-regions" and expanded coverage of 1,200 square miles, approximately 70,000 people and 31 municipalities crossing Grafton, Sullivan, and Merrimack counties as well as the two states. Commitment to local identity and autonomy and a lack of understanding of regional planning required active promotion by the Council of regional planning merits. The scope of work expanded beyond the management of industrial development to the technical assistance of municipal governments to review and comment on authority under federal procedures and to regional planning such as sanitary landfills, mass transit, and elderly services.

The Upper Valley Solid Waste Management District was established in September of 1983, mainly in response to NH RSA 149 – M requiring all NH communities to belong to a formal solid waste district by October 1, 1983. The Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee Council accepted the lead role and drafted by-laws and a planning schedule for the review of the communities of Canaan, Enfield, Grafton, Grantham, Hanover, Orange, Piermont, Springfield, NH, and Thetford Vt.

The Upper Valley – Lake Sunapee Council opened a sub-office in Newport in June 1984.

In 1988, the first Regional Plan, laying out regional priorities based on examining growth trends and local needs, was produced.

In 1990, the Sullivan County Economic Development Council emerged from the administrative umbrella of the Upper Valley-Lake Sunapee Council to devote resources to Sullivan County's redevelopment efforts. The organization was later known as the Western Region Development Corporation.

In 1995, An Act "extending the date for the submission of a river basin planning and assessment program by the Department of Environmental Services and making an appropriation therefor and relative to the Upper Valley Regional Planning Commission became the Commission" was enacted as a result of HB651 Final Amendment read: 208:6 The Upper Valley Planning and Development Council, Inc., incorporated by 1963, 435 as amended by 1967, 547 and 1969, 593 shall be known as the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. All powers and duties of the Upper Valley Planning and Development Council relative to regional planning commissions under RSA 36:45-53 shall be transferred to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Notwithstanding RSA 36:46, the new commission shall continue as a regional planning commission governed by RSA 36:45-53. The commission shall have 12 months from the effective date of this section to bring the operation into full compliance. 208:7 Repeal. 1963, 435, as amended by 1967, 547, and 1969, 593, relative to the Upper Valley Planning and Development Council, is repealed and approved on June 12, 1995.

In 1997, the Economic Development Council, assisted by the Council, was formed and later became the Grafton County Economic Development Council.

On May 20, 2000, the State of New Hampshire enacted Chapter Law 200:1 (codified in RSA 36) entitled "Regional Planning Commissions with an effective date of July 29, 2000. The new law specifically re-enacts the status of Regional Planning Commissions as "political subdivisions" of the State of New Hampshire. The new law also amends the purpose therein (RSA 36:45), amends the formations and representatives of its members (RSA 36:46), and specifically defines its finances (RSA 36:49).

After a 2003 Vermont study to determine "logical geographic and coherent socio-economic planning" areas, the Vermont members became part of a Vermont-only planning commission. Also, at this time, the Commission established a partnership with the North Country Council to

enable Grafton County communities to join the North Country Comprehensive Economic Development District to allow the communities within the region to apply for and received US Department of Commerce Economic Development funding.

On July 1, 2004, the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission became a New Hampshire-only regional planning commission for the first time.

RESOURCES

State of New Hampshire. (1963). An Act relative to the incorporation of the Upper Valley Development Council, Inc.

State of New Hampshire. (1967). An Act is creating an associate membership in the Upper Valley Development Council, Inc.

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RSA 36:37-36:44 (1967)

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Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission Mission Statement

The purpose of the Commission shall be to guide, coordinate, and promote sound economic growth and development and to prepare, maintain, and implement a comprehensive regional plan for the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region; to serve as a research agency and information clearinghouse for the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region; to assist local units of government with their plans and programs; and to establish a public information program to promote the health, safety and general welfare of the inhabitants of the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Region.

Governance of the Commission

The 27 municipalities within the region established by the NH Office of Energy and Planning voluntarily choose to be members of the Commission. A regional planning commission's powers shall be advisory and generally pertain to the region's development within its jurisdiction. Regional planning commissions are political subdivisions of the state. However, regional planning commissions have only that power and authority expressly provided for in NH RSA 36. Each municipality member of the Regional Planning Commission shall be entitled to 2 representatives to the Commission. Municipalities with a population of over 10,000 but less than 25,000 shall be allowed to have three representatives on the Commission (Claremont, Lebanon, and Hanover currently). Population, as outlined in this section, shall be deemed to be determined by the last federal census. The planning board of each municipality shall nominate representatives to a regional planning commission from the residents thereof. The municipal officers of each municipality shall appoint them. Representatives may be elected or appointed officials of the municipality or county. By resolution of its County Commissioners, any county may become a member of the Commission and shall be entitled to appoint two representatives to the Commission. The terms of office of members of a regional planning commission shall be for four years, but initial appointments shall be for two and four years. In municipalities entitled to 3 or more representatives, the initial appointment shall be for 2, 3, and four years. Also, Regional Planning Commissions are encouraged to consult, at their discretion, with agencies and institutions operating within the region whose activities influence planning and development. Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission currently has two at-large Commissioners. The Commission adopted a set of revised Bylaws in October 2021, which guide the Commission's work.

What is the Role of a Commissioner?

The Commissioners have overall fiduciary responsibility for the direction of the Commission.

As a local government representative, you may assist with regional policy decisions and bring back information to your community. A Commissioner's role is to balance the needs of their municipalities with the needs of the region. Commissioners work to reach a consensus when regional solutions can provide more significant benefits. The Commissioner's role is to bring concerns, issues, and information to the Commission so that staff may find the best resources to help communities. It is essential to express the needs of communities and be engaged in the Commission's business.

Commissioners are often asked to:

- Attend six bi-monthly meetings a year.
- Review agenda materials sent before meetings
- Serve on sub-committees which meet more often than bi-monthly
- Advise the Commission on issues within the community
- Introduce staff to key leaders in the community
- Keep community officials and citizens informed on regional issues and the activities of the Commission.
- Make sure to inform the Executive Director of any special concerns your local leaders have.
- Approve a yearly budget and work plan for the organization.

An effective Commissioner is an engaged liaison between the Commission and the member community.

Ways to Be an Effective Commissioner

- **Participate**

Attend as many UVLSRPC meetings as possible and participate in discussions. Help new commissioners become acquainted with each other and the Commission's purpose, structure, and policies.

- **Use Two-Way Communication to Build and Maintain Support in Your Municipality**

Always keep an open door between yourself and your local government and the UVLSRPC.

- **Strengthen Relationships with State Officials**

Become acquainted with state officials in your region and build working relationships. Make sure they are aware of the importance of regional planning to your community. Work through the UVLSRPC to strengthen ties with the state government to further local and regional objectives.

- **Contribute to a Group Spirit Among Commissioners**

Pay attention to the relationships among Commissioners. To work well, any board requires a good group process.

- **Stay Informed**

Keep up with the activities of the Commission and staff to know what is going on around the region and on state-wide issues affecting your community and area. The Commission maintains an extensive and useful library that is available for your use as well.

- **UVLSRPC Web Page – <https://uvlsrpc.org>**

The RPC updates the webpage frequently and is a source of current information and calendar.