

**Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
40 Church Street, Suite 200
Lowell, MA 01852**

Minutes of Special Council Meeting: March 7, 2022

A March 7, 2022 special meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments was held virtually on the Zoom platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. with Chair Andrew Deslaurier presiding. The following were in attendance:

Councilors

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chair, Billerica Board of Selectmen
- Mary McBride, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board
- George Zaharoolis, Chelmsford Alternate
- Phil Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Council
- Gerard Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Westford Select Board

Staff

- Justin Howard, Assistant Director / Transportation Program Manager
- Bert Almeida, Financial Officer
- Katrina Garavanian, Executive Assistant

I. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Andrew Deslaurier opened the meeting and, following roll call, transitioned quickly to the business of the Personnel Committee.

II. NEW BUSINESS: REPORT OF THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE ON STAFF HIRES – POTENTIAL ACTION BY COUNCIL

Pat Wojtas thanked attendees for making themselves available and informed the group that the Personnel Committee has conducted interviews and successfully arrived at two highly desirable candidates for NMCOG's two open Transportation Planner positions. The Committee requested a special meeting, as they were reluctant to lose one or both candidates by waiting until the March 16 Council meeting. Pat detailed resumes and a brief background on both.

Shravanthi Narayanan is completing her Master's degree in Environmental Policy and Planning at Tufts University. During her studies, she has become familiar with the City of Lowell, even writing her Master's Thesis on Transit-Oriented Development in Lowell. Shravanthi is willing to share her Thesis with NMCOG and with the City. She submitted a portfolio of work that was impressive to the Personnel Committee, along with her extensive software experience, which would be helpful to this position. She is ready to begin work in early June; however, Shravanthi is in the US on a work and study visa, which would require a work authorization to assume this position. A firm job commitment and offer letter will ensure this hiring process moves more quickly. Shravanthi displays confidence in her abilities, is willing to learn, willing to participate in non-transportation projects as needed at NMCOG. Both Jerry Frechette and Phil Thibault added that they were impressed with Shravanthi Narayanan. Justin Howard has spoken with one of Shravanthi's professors as well as her internship manager from Sarasota County Florida. Both had glowing statements about her work ethic and her willingness to go above and beyond what was asked of her. Justin stated that he is very comfortable following those conversations that NMCOG should look to hire Shravanthi. The Personnel Committee, following their interview with Shravanthi, voted unanimously to bring her forward to the full Council and recommend that she be hired.

Following discussion and based on a motion by George Zaharoolis, seconded by Phil Thibault, the Council voted unanimously to extend an offer to hire Shravanthi Narayanan at an initial salary of \$59,000 annually.

Pat Wojtas gave a brief summary of the resume of next candidate, Colin Fredrickson, currently a Transportation Planner with the California Department of Transportation but originally from northeast and hoping to return to the region. Colin is lead planner in the Caltrans District 3 region, is highly familiar with the software necessary to conduct NMCOG's Transportation Planner tasks, he is willing to learn whatever is needed for the position and step in wherever he is needed. Colin is available to begin in April, given sufficient lead-time to complete his current projects and prepare to move east. Jerry Frechette and Phil Thibault agreed that Colin is a top-notch candidate, providing very specific and confident answers to all questions asked. Justin Howard has spoken to Colin's internship supervisor at the Philadelphia City Planning Commission. Colin had begun that internship one month prior to the initiation of requirements that employees work remotely due to the pandemic. The supervisor felt Colin was very flexible in dealing with COVID restrictions. Justin Howard informed the group that he was impressed that Colin had worked on a trails master plan, and he is familiar with software and INRIX/RITIS data, which NMCOG uses for congestion management, the TIP and the Regional Transportation Plan. Colin has more work experience than other candidates have, and has a Bachelor's degree. As the remaining references are on the west coast, Justin has not been able to connect with them yet and is waiting on return phone calls.

Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen inquired as to relocation costs. Pat Wojtas stated that NMCOG's policy is to provide up to \$1,500 in relocation costs. That provision is the decision of the Executive Director.

Following discussion and based on a motion by Jerry Frechette, seconded by Phil Thibault, the Council voted unanimously to extend an offer to hire Colin Fredrickson at an initial salary of \$59,000 annually.

III. ADJOURNMENT

Based on a motion by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Dan Rourke, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:32 PM.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the Special Meeting of March 7, 2022.

Attest:  _____

Stephen Themelis, Clerk