

**Testimony for the Public Hearing
on the Governor's FY23 Recommended State Budget**

My name is Bonnie North and I serve on the Rockingham Selectboard and the Windham Regional Commission. Formally I served as the Chair of the Rockingham Planning Commission. I am writing today to express my strong support for significantly increasing the budget of Vermont's Regional Commissions.

Located along the Connecticut River, with its primary village, Bellows Falls, situated on the Great Falls, Rockingham was once a major economic, industrial and transportation hub in southern Vermont. Those days of affluence and grandeur are long past, however. The legacy that remains—abandoned mill buildings, long neglected former mansions in poor condition, hazardous brownfields etc., presents enormous challenges as we struggle to revive our town.

Nonetheless, we have seen some stunning accomplishments in recent years— such as the demolition and environmental clean-up of the former Robertson Papermill and the creation of a beautiful waterfront park in the “Under the Hill Area” in the southern part of Bellows Falls where the soils were especially contaminated by the refuse of former mills and industry.

These successes were achieved largely thanks to Windham Regional's assistance in navigating the labyrinthine tangles of legal and financial hurdles involved in brownfield clean-up, development grants and proper municipal mapping and planning. I cannot overemphasize how much the support we've received from the Windham Regional has meant to this community.

Most of Vermont's small towns are run by part-time community volunteers who rely heavily on the Regionals to help them with the challenges they face. I urge you to increase the funding for our Regional Commissions and not leave our communities without all the professional guidance they so sorely need.

Respectfully,

Bonnie North
Rockingham