

SB 502-FN - AS INTRODUCED

2026 SESSION

26-2098

07/08

SENATE BILL **502-FN**

AN ACT removing references to the department of business and economic affairs and the office of planning and development relative to the department of energy.

SPONSORS: Sen. Pearl, Dist 17; Sen. Lang, Dist 2; Sen. McGough, Dist 11; Rep. Moffett, Merr. 4; Rep. Wood, Merr. 13; Rep. Aures, Merr. 13

COMMITTEE: Executive Departments and Administration

ANALYSIS

This bill removes references to the department of business and economic affairs and the office of planning and development relative to the department of energy.

Explanation: Matter added to current law appears in ***bold italics***.
Matter removed from current law appears [~~in brackets and struckthrough.~~]
Matter which is either (a) all new or (b) repealed and reenacted appears in regular type.

STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE

In the Year of Our Lord Two Thousand Twenty-Six

AN ACT removing references to the department of business and economic affairs and the office of planning and development relative to the department of energy.

Be it Enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Court convened:

1 1 The State and Its Government; New Hampshire Geographic Information System Committee;
2 Geographic Information System (GIS) Committee Established. Amend RSA 4-F:1, I(a)(6) to read as
3 follows:

4 (6) [~~Office of planning and development~~] **Department of business and economic**
5 **affairs.**

6 2 The State and Its Government; Department of Business and Economic Affairs; Establishment;
7 Purpose. Amend RSA 12-O:2, I and II to read as follows:

8 I. There shall be a department of business and economic affairs under the executive
9 direction of a commissioner of business and economic affairs, consisting of but not limited to a
10 division of economic development, **a division of planning and community development**, and a
11 division of travel and tourism. The department's purpose shall be to ensure the efficient coordinated
12 function of the department, economic development policies of the state of New Hampshire and the
13 collaborative participation of all related state departments, agencies, and authorities.

14 II. The purpose of this chapter is to improve the administration of state government by
15 providing unified direction of policies, programs, and personnel in the field of economic development,
16 **planning and community development**, and travel and tourism development making possible
17 increased efficiency and economies from integrated administration and operation of these related
18 functions of the state government.

19 3 The State and Its Government; Department of Energy; General Provisions. Amend RSA 12-
20 P:3, II to read as follows:

21 II. The department of energy is authorized to work with [~~the department of business and~~
22 ~~economic affairs,~~] the public utilities commission[~~]~~ and the department of administrative services to
23 coordinate the implementation of the establishment of the department, and to transfer
24 appropriations and create the proper expenditure lines, if needed, for the establishment of their
25 respective operations, including but not limited to the relocation of personnel, work stations, books,
26 papers, personnel record files, and equipment, with the approval of the governor and council and of
27 the director of personnel.

28 4 Towns, Cities, Village Districts, and Unincorporated Places; Regional Planning Commissions;
29 Purposes. Amend RSA 36:45 to read as follows:

1 36:45 Purposes. The purpose of this subdivision shall be to enable municipalities and counties to
 2 join in the formation of regional planning commissions whose duty it shall be to prepare a
 3 coordinated plan for the development of a region, taking into account present and future needs with
 4 a view toward encouraging the most appropriate use of land, such as for agriculture, forestry,
 5 industry, commerce, and housing; the facilitation of transportation and communication; the proper
 6 and economic location of public utilities and services; the development of adequate recreational
 7 areas; the promotion of good civic design; and the wise and efficient expenditure of public funds. The
 8 aforesaid plan shall be made in order to promote the health, safety, morals and general welfare of
 9 the region and its inhabitants. To promote these purposes the ~~[office of planning and development]~~
 10 **division of planning and community development** shall delineate planning regions for the state
 11 so that each municipality of the state will fall within a delineated region and shall have the
 12 opportunity of forming or joining the regional planning commission for that planning region. In
 13 determining these regions the ~~[office]~~ **division** shall consider such factors as community of interest
 14 and homogeneity, existing metropolitan and regional planning agencies, patterns of communication
 15 and transportation, geographic features and natural boundaries, extent of urban development,
 16 relevancy of the region for provision of governmental services and functions and its use for
 17 administering state and federal programs, the existence of physical, social and economic problems of
 18 a regional character, and other related characteristics. To accommodate changing conditions, the
 19 ~~[office]~~ **division** may adjust the boundaries of the planning regions, after consultation with the
 20 respective regional planning commissions.

21 5 Towns, Cities, Village Districts, and Unincorporated Places; Regional Planning Commissions;
 22 Formation of Regional Planning Commissions. Amend RSA 36:46, I-II to read as follows:

23 I. If no regional planning commission exists in any specific planning region as delineated by
 24 the ~~[office of planning and development]~~ **division of planning and community development**,
 25 then 2 or more municipalities in said planning region and having planning boards may, by ordinance
 26 or resolution adopted by the respective legislative bodies of said municipalities, form a regional
 27 planning commission.

28 II. If a regional planning commission already exists in any specific planning region as
 29 delineated by the ~~[office of planning and development]~~ **division of planning and community**
 30 **development**, then any municipality in said planning region and having a planning board may, by
 31 ordinance or resolution adopted by the respective legislative body of said municipality, become a
 32 member of the regional planning commission. A regional planning commission may also include
 33 municipalities located in an adjacent state.

34 6 Towns, Cities, Village Districts, and Unincorporated Places; Regional Planning Commissions;
 35 General Powers and Duties. Amend RSA 36:47, III to read as follows:

36 III. In preparing a comprehensive plan for the development of the region within its
 37 jurisdiction, each regional planning commission may use the framework for the state's

1 comprehensive development plan in RSA 9-A:1, III as the basis for its plan. Such plan shall be
 2 updated every 5 years or sooner if desired by the regional planning commission. Prior to its adoption,
 3 the plan shall be distributed to every library, planning board, and board of selectmen/aldermen/city
 4 council in each of the communities within the region, and to the ~~[office of planning and development]~~
 5 **division of planning and community development**. The regional planning commission shall
 6 address in writing all comments received prior to the publication of a final draft. A public hearing
 7 shall be held by the regional planning commission with 30 days' notice published in all newspapers
 8 of general circulation in the region, and shall state where the document can be viewed, the time and
 9 place of the public hearing, and shall allow for written comments. For each regional plan, the ~~[office~~
 10 ~~of planning and development]~~ **division of planning and community development** shall offer
 11 comments as to its consistency with the state plan. The first regional development plans affected by
 12 this statute shall be adopted within 5 years of the effective date of this paragraph and renewed at
 13 least every 5 years thereafter.

14 7 Public Safety and Welfare; Community Development Block Grant Program; The New
 15 Hampshire Community Development Advisory Committee. Amend RSA 162-L:15, II to read as
 16 follows:

17 II. The committee shall consist of 11 voting members as follows:

18 (a) The chairperson of the board of directors of the community development finance
 19 authority, or designee, who shall serve as chairperson of the committee.

20 ~~[(b) The director of the division of planning and community development, or designee.]~~

21 ~~[(e)]~~ (b) The executive director of the New Hampshire housing finance authority, or
 22 designee.

23 ~~[(d)]~~ (c) The director of the division of economic development, department of business
 24 and economic affairs, or designee.

25 ~~[(e)]~~ (d) The executive director of a regional development organization, appointed by the
 26 governor.

27 ~~[(f)]~~ (e) ~~[Six]~~ **Seven** public members, at least ~~[3]~~ **4** of whom shall be municipal officials,
 28 who shall be appointed by and serve at the pleasure of the governor.

29 8 Housing and Redevelopment; Housing Finance Authority; General Powers. Amend RSA 204-
 30 C:8, V to read as follows:

31 V. Collect and correlate information regarding housing projects and housing laws either
 32 within or without the state, and upon request furnish local housing authorities, cities or towns,
 33 information and advice in connection with any housing project; conduct studies of housing needs in
 34 the state and use information gained thereby in planning how best to carry out the purposes of this
 35 chapter; work with other state and federal agencies in such studies and planning; develop such plans
 36 with the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, the ~~[office of planning and~~
 37 ~~development]~~ **department of business and economic affairs** and other state agencies; and when

1 in the opinion of the authority it is feasible to do so, select projects to fund consistent with the
2 requirements of the plan;

3 9 Public Recreation; Expansion of State Park System; Development Plan. Amend RSA 216-A:3-
4 c, V to read as follows:

5 V. In developing the plan, the department shall solicit local input. The director shall also
6 consult with the division of historical resources of the department of natural and cultural resources.
7 The ~~[office of planning and development]~~ **division of planning and community development**
8 shall provide the director of parks and recreation with such information on the recreational needs of
9 the state and other technical assistance as is necessary for the division to properly perform its
10 responsibilities under this section.

11 10 Water Management and Protection; General Provisions; Authority of Commissioner. Amend
12 RSA 481:3, X-a to read as follows:

13 X-a. To provide technical assistance to the ~~[division of economic development of the~~
14 ~~department of business and economic affairs when the division]~~ **department of business and**
15 **economic affairs when the department** requests such assistance in the promotion or development
16 of a hydro-energy project;

17 11 Water Management and Protection; New Hampshire Rivers Management and Protection
18 Program; River Corridor Management Plans. Amend RSA 483:10, I to read as follows:

19 I. The rivers coordinator shall provide technical assistance to local river management
20 advisory committees, regional planning commissions, and municipalities, and shall encourage the
21 development and implementation of local river corridor management plans pursuant to RSA 483:8-a,
22 III(c). In developing these plans, the department shall coordinate with the department of natural
23 and cultural resources, the department of fish and game, the ~~[office of planning and development]~~
24 **division of planning and community development**, the department of agriculture, markets, and
25 food, the department of transportation, the department of safety, and the division of historical
26 resources.

27 12 Water Management and Protection; Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act; Enforcement by
28 Commissioner; Duties. Amend RSA 483-B:5, I to read as follows:

29 I. The commissioner, with the advice and assistance of the ~~[office of planning and~~
30 ~~development]~~ **division of planning and community development**, department of natural and
31 cultural resources and department of agriculture, markets, and food, shall enforce the provisions of
32 this chapter.

33 13 Water Management and Protection; Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act; Shoreland
34 Exemptions. Amend RSA 483-B:12, III to read as follows:

35 III. With the advice of the ~~[office of planning and development]~~ **division of planning and**
36 **community development**, the commissioner shall approve or deny the request for an exemption
37 and shall issue written findings in support of his decision. A request for an exemption shall be

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1 approved only if the municipality demonstrates, using the evidence required under paragraph II,
2 that special conditions of urbanization exist along the portion of shoreland to be exempted.

3 14 Education; Innovation Research Center; Grant Program. Repeal.

4 I. RSA 187-A:31, relative to the innovation research center grant program, is repealed.

5 II. RSA 187-A:33-b, relative to fees collected by the innovation research center, is repealed.

6 15 Effective Date. This act shall take effect 60 days after its passage.

LBA
26-2098
Revised 1/7/26

**SB 502-FN- FISCAL NOTE
AS INTRODUCED**

AN ACT removing references to the department of business and economic affairs and the office of planning and development relative to the department of energy.

FISCAL IMPACT:

This bill removes references to the Department of Business and Economic Affairs and the Office of Planning and Development, relative to the Department of Energy, to which will have no fiscal impact. Additionally, this bill repeals the state-funded grant program for the NH Innovation Research Center (NHIRC) established at the University System of New Hampshire. This will also have no fiscal impact as funding for this program was discontinued in 2021, and the NHIRC has been closed to research applications since that time.

AGENCIES CONTACTED:

University System of New Hampshire