

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES  
SEPTEMBER 30, 2008**

**1. PRELIMINARIES**

V. Koivumaki called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

**PRESENT**

J. Meehan (M), Athol; D. Lowe (A), Clinton; P. Caron (M), Fitchburg; R. Grubb (A), Gardner; V. Koivumaki (M), Lancaster; T. Bodkin (M), Lunenburg; ; R. Bowen (A), Lunenburg V. Andreliunas, Royalston; P. Haley (M), Templeton; P. McCloy (A), Townsend; J. White (M), Winchendon

**ABSENT**

B. Whitney (M), Ashburnham; M. Whitney (A), Ashburnham; A. Pease (M), Ashby; W. Stacy (A), Ashby; J. Gibbons, (M), Ayer; C J. Ryan (A), Ayer; P. Lowitt (N/V), Devens; A. Gross (M), Gardner; D. Manugian, (M) Groton; A. Eliot (A), Groton; K. McGuire Minar (M), Harvard; L. Wallace (A), Harvard; P. Hale (A), Hubbardston; L. Brisbois (M), Hubbardston; E. Christoph (A), Lancaster; J. Raymond (A), Leominster; E. Anderson (A), Petersham; C. Colburn (M), J. Hardie (A), Royalston; Shirley; J. Lynch, (A) Shirley; C. Hajdu (M), Sterling; R. Columbus (A), Templeton; N. Thalheimer (M), Townsend; A. Sears (M), Westminster; J. Kreidler (A), Winchendon

**STAFF**

G. Eaton, G. Snow J. Hume, S. Brow, J. Stanton, G. Kahale, S. Hatch

**GUESTS**

John Oelfke, Shirley MJTC Representative

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**

From the desk of the Executive Director:

- Please see a separate handout concerning a vote of the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) that recommends that the MRPC seeks Federal Fiscal Year 2010 (FFY10)“earmarked” funds for transit planning for a report and requested resolution.
- On Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup>, approximately one-half of the MRPC’s employees provided assistance to the Town of Harvard, holding a community forum concerning success criteria as they relate to the future disposition of Devens. This community forum was held in response to work assigned to the MRPC by the Devens Joint Boards of Selectmen (JBOS). The MRPC employees involved were:
  - Sheri Bean
  - Nancy Belliveau
  - Robert Biagi \*\*\*
  - Brian Doherty
  - Shelly Hatch
  - Bobbi Jo Johnson
  - John Hume \*\*\*
  - Renee Marion
  - Chantell Wead
- \*\*\* *Kudos to Bob Biagi and John Hume for spending a significant amount of time preparing for this successful event throughout the month of September.*
- MRPC staff will prepare a report for the Harvard Board of Selectmen and the Devens JBOS within one month.

- The MRPC's Annual Meeting will be held from 5:30 PM through 8:30 PM, on Thursday, November 13, 2008, at the Colonial Hotel, Betty Spring Road, Gardner. (The Board of Directors of the Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. [MEC] will also hold its Annual Meeting at the same time, day and place.) Guest speakers include Mr. John Mullin, Phd. FAICP, Dean of the Graduate School, UMASS, Amherst and Mr. Joseph Mullin, Member Board of Directors and Director of Public Relations, Wellesley Advisors Corporation aka Clock Tower Place, Maynard. Invitations will go out this week.
- The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is preparing contracts for all regional planning agencies (RPAs) related to the delivery of District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) services. MRPC's contract amount for FY09 is anticipated to exceed \$150,000: This is higher than the originally estimated figure of \$131,200. A contract is not anticipated to be available until November 2008.
- The Executive Director respectfully requests authorization to attend the Annual Conference of the New England Association of Regional Councils. The event will be held from Thursday, October 23<sup>rd</sup> through Saturday, October 25<sup>th</sup>, in Northampton, MA. The total budget shall not exceed \$450.00 (for conference registration and travel and no lodging).

### **1.2 "Whitepaper" Federal Funding Requests**

G. Eaton indicated that John Oelfke, an MJTC Representative from Shirley, presented the proposal for whitepaper funding from Congressman Olver's Office. The MJTC endorsed the MRPC applying for earmarked funds for transit planning, for a program to investigate a pilot multimodal program, which integrate the needs of rural communities into the transportation backbone of the Fitchburg line, that supports commuter and non-commuter needs into the year 2020.

J. Oelfke stated that he has been looking at regional, multimodal transportation. While talking with Kristin Wood of Congressman Olver's office, she indicated that MRPC could submit this whitepaper in order to acquire funding to look at people who have to come from the Athol, Royalston area to be able to get to the Commuter Rail in order to get to doctors appointments or into the city.

G. Eaton indicated that the whitepaper will be submitted tomorrow, and then there is another deadline in November to submit a more detailed proposal.

J. Meehan moved to authorize MRPC staff to proceed with the submission of a whitepaper as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## **2. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 26, 2008 MEETING MINUTES**

R. Grubb made a motion to approve the minutes of August 26, 2008; the motion was approved and passed unanimously.

## **3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

**3.1** Cash Situation

**3.2** Approval of the September Warrant

J. Meehan read the September 30, 2008 cash schedule. Balance after last warrant \$99,992.30; Total receipts this month \$45,514.14; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$147,436.51; Less: amount of this warrant \$106,903.35; Balance after last warrant \$40,533.16.

R. Grubb moved to accept the September 2008 cash schedule as read, subject to audit and placed on file. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### 4. EOT TRANSPORTATION WORKSHOPS DISCUSSION

G. Eaton indicated that EOT is creating a civic outreach to Massachusetts citizens. Mr. Eaton stated that he plans on attending one of the workshops in October to relay the comments and concerns of the Montachusett Region.

#### 5. STATUS REPORTS

##### 5.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & HOUSING

5.1.1 **Ashburnham Senior Center Feasibility Study, Town of Ashburnham**  
Project completed. Final disbursement to MRPC was received last week.

5.1.2 **Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)**

5.1.2.a **Lancaster, Lunenburg, Townsend, Ashburnham (LLTA) First Time Home-Buyer Program (FTHB)**

**REPORT for FY 2007:**

**Lancaster Regional Housing Rehab Program (LLTA):** Twenty-one cases have been given to the housing rehab consultant for the inspections to begin. They are as follows:

Lancaster: 6 cases  
2 septic: one completed, one under construction  
4 housing rehab: 2 completed, 2 withdrew

Lunenburg: 4 cases  
2 housing rehab: 2 under construction, 2 completed

Townsend: 5 cases  
4 housing rehab: 1 completed, 2 under construction, 1 in inspection/bidding stage  
1 septic: 1 in design stage

Ashburnham: 6 cases  
2 septic: 1 in design stage, 1 under construction  
4 housing rehab: 1 in construction, 2 completed, 1 withdrew

**LLTA First Time Homebuyer Program (FTHB):** Sessions are being scheduled for September and October.

5.1.2.b **Sterling Infrastructure Housing Rehab Grant**

**REPORT for FY 2009**

**Sterling:** MRPC staff met with WVHA staff and distributed letters, brochures and applications for the residents of the WVHA neighborhood in regards to the housing rehab program. The Town is looking to apply in the next grant round to continue the housing rehab program in the same neighborhood as the sewer project that is underway currently and was funded through the CDBG FY07 program.

**Regional Housing Rehab Grant:** MRPC staff has met with several towns to see if they are interested in participating in a regional housing rehab program. Staff has already started working on the Community Development Strategies for several towns.

**Sterling Infrastructure and Housing Rehab Grant:**

**Infrastructure project:** The construction on the project is ongoing and moving right along.

MRPC continues to work and meet with the Citizen Advisory Committee to assist with the infrastructure project at WVHA. Monthly pay requisition meetings will be held at the WVHA office at 10:00 a.m. the first Tuesday of every month during the construction of the new sewer system. WVHA

officials, Underwood Engineering, MRPC, Breezeway Farm Consulting, Ricciardi Construction and RD officials will be present.

**Housing Rehab project:** one housing rehab case has been given to the Housing Rehab specialist to date. The title rundown has been completed, the initial inspection was conducted and the project is out to bid.

**5.1.3 Septic Management Program  
Townsend DEP Phase III - Septic Management Program  
REPORT:** Project completed.

**Ashby DEP Funds for Septic Replacement Projects**

**REPORT:** Three projects completed. One new project in the construction phase.

**5.1.4 American Dream Down Payment Initiative (ADDI)  
REPORT:** One case closed the end of July.

**5.1.5 Get The Lead Out Program (GTLO)  
REPORT:** No new cases.

**5.1.6 Post Purchase Counseling  
REPORT:** Letters were sent to past participants of the ADDI program, MOC's IDA classes, and the TCCDC's First Time Home Buyer classes to join us for a 4-part series on Post-Purchase Counseling. The first session was held on September 4<sup>th</sup> in Fitchburg and was well attended.

**5.2 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

**5.2.1 Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

The MRPC received an award of \$60,000 from the EDA to continue the delivery of technical assistance to MRPC communities and increase capacity of the MRPC and its communities where able. Eligible uses of the funding will include the continued planning of affordable housing activities related to the development of the Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC), providing technical assistance to communities with preparing grant applications, pursuing additional brownfields redevelopment funding, managing the EDIP Tax Incentives Program, and maintaining the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs).

A shared meeting of the Small Towns, Montachusett Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (MRCEDS) and the Montachusett Economic Development District (MEDD) will be held on Wednesday, October 1<sup>st</sup> at 5:00 pm at MRPC Offices. The meeting will feature a presentation by Marybeth Campbell, Public Education Manager of the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative. The discussion will include the Commonwealth Solar Initiative; rebates for solar electricity for individuals, communities, and businesses. Anyone interested is highly encouraged to attend. RSVP to John Hume at [jhume@mrpc.org](mailto:jhume@mrpc.org) or (978) 345-7376 X302.

**5.2.2 Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)**

A Montachusett Region Brownfield Reuse Initiative (MRBRI) Committee meeting was held at MRPC Offices on August 28. Discussion included review and approval of Phase 1 Site Nominations from the Town of Athol for 19 Harvard Street, 62 Canal Street, and 210 Canal Street.

The 19 Harvard Avenue (Phase 1) for the Town of Athol was completed on September 17<sup>th</sup> and forwarded to the community.

Work on 210 Canal Street has been delayed until Athol decides whether or not to proceed because of possible liability issues.

Work on a previously approved site assessment for a Phase 2 Site Assessment of the former CSX Railroad Line located in Fitchburg and Leominster continues.

### **5.2.3 Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Expedited Permitting Services Chapter 43D**

In consideration of a growing demand on Chapter 43D grant funds, the state's Interagency Permitting Board voted to implement some changes to the Chapter 43D grant program effective Wednesday, September 17<sup>th</sup>. Changes include the reduction of the maximum grant award for the Chapter 43D Program from \$100,000 to \$60,000. This maximum shall apply to all existing and future applicants to the program. In addition, permit tracking programs will no longer be funded through the Chapter 43D grant. In January 2009, Massachusetts Permit Regulatory Office (MPRO) will release a free Access-based permit tracking program and user guide for all communities to utilize (developed by the Town of Grafton). The program will be downloadable from the MPRO website free of charge.

### **5.2.4 Ayer Zoning and Chapter 43D**

MRPC has been working to improve the Ayer Zoning Bylaw including taking existing language and cleaning up grammar, spelling, and errors as well as identifying flaws and providing a more logical set of sections, a better enumerative system, a complete Table of Contents, and a cross referencing system. A draft document was reviewed by the Town of Ayer Director of Planning Development. MRPC staff incorporated edits/comments into the document. The document is being reviewed by the planning board. MRPC's consultant, Bill Scanlan, continues to work with the town on a draft version of zoning bylaw recommendations relating to the downtown area.

### **5.2.5 Joint Board of Selectmen, Devens**

MRPC executed a contract with the Joint Boards of Selectmen, Devens (JBOS) to deliver a variety of planning and administrative services to the JBOS through April 2009. The contract enables the JBOS to access MRPC on an "on call" basis. As part of this contract, MRPC facilitated a Harvard Success Criteria Community Forum that was held on Saturday, September 27<sup>th</sup> in the Town of Harvard.

### **5.2.6 Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA), Section 203 Capacity Building Grant, Amendment to Work Plan**

MRPC executed a contract with the Joint Boards of Selectmen, Devens (JBOS) to deliver a variety of planning and administrative services on an "on call" basis to the JBOS through April 2009. The intention of this resolution is to amend the current EDA Work Plan to complement MRPC's contract with JBOS as needed to provide professional planning, technical assistance and administrative support services for the purpose of providing professional research, economic analysis, staff support and planning services to the Joint Boards of Selectmen of Ayer, Harvard, Shirley and the Devens Committee (JBOS) concerning potential impacts to the communities of Ayer, Harvard, Shirley and Devens related to the future disposition of the Devens Regional Enterprise Zone.

An additional and separate amendment to the EDA Work Plan includes conducting research concerning the feasibility of regionalization of purchases and/or services within the Montachusett Region.

P.McCloy moved that the MRPC endorses the Amendments to the Work Plan of the EDA, Section 203 Capacity Building Grant contingent upon agreement of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Members at a meeting to be held on October 1<sup>st</sup>. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **5.2.7 Pre-Disaster Mitigation Planning**

Final draft plans issued to all 22 Montachusett municipalities through summer. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) are reviewing and commenting on all plans.

The MRPC will request approvals of the planning documents this fall.

MRPC will complete the Regional All Hazard Mitigation Plan by the end of the calendar year.

### **5.3 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEM (GIS)**

#### **5.3.1 Trail Inventory Project**

Follow-up meetings will be held in the early fall for each community (Ayer, Clinton & Leominster). These meetings are conducted in order to add attribute (descriptive) data for each trail. Following these meetings final maps and data analysis, will be created and included into the plan.

#### **5.3.2 Winchendon Water & Sewer Infrastructure Mapping Project**

This project has been completed.

#### **5.3.3 Ayer Zoning Map**

The MRPC is working with the town on how to proceed with outstanding questions regarding specific Zoning Districts. A memo was delivered to Chris Ryan and the Planning Board detailing these outstanding questions and requesting guidance. A decision is expected to be made sometime in October

#### **5.3.4 Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Mapping**

The MRPC continues to work on mapping for the participants of this program (Page Hilltop School-Ayer, Briggs Elementary School- Ashburnham, Waterford Street School-Gardner & the Gardner Middle School). A series of maps have been, and will be completed, as part of this project. Some of the final maps will include Major Routes/Most Traveled Roadways, Dangerous Areas, Crash locations, Traffic Volumes and Sidewalk Locations. It is anticipated that this round of SRTS will be completed by the end of October. The next round of SRTS will include Elm Street School & Helen Mae Sauter Elementary School in Gardner and Lura A White School and Shirley Middle School in Shirley.

#### **5.3.5 MART Bus Route System Mapping**

The MRPC is in the process of updating bus route data for the Gardner & Fitchburg/Leominster Fixed Bus Routes. This updated data will be used to create maps that will be included in the MART System Map & Schedule pamphlets. The MRPC is awaiting MART's comments before continuing with the project.

#### **5.3.6 Townsend Parcel Updates**

This project has been completed.

#### **5.3.7 Sterling Open Space Plan Update Mapping**

A contract has been signed between the MRPC and the Town of Sterling to perform GIS Services for the town. In conjunction with this contract additional updates to data and maps related to their Open Space Update Plan will be completed. It is anticipated that these updates will begin in October or November.

#### **5.3.8 Oblique Imagery**

Informational mailings regarding the imminent release of the new Pictometry Software and Images were sent to ten departments in each MRPC Community. These departments include BOS/City Council, Town Managers/Mayors, Police, Fire, Emergency Mgmt, DPW, BOH, Planning, Assessor's and Building Dept. Upon receipt of this package the MRPC will be contacting interested parties to determine their delivery, training and installation options.

### **5.3.9 GIS Department Marketing**

Recently a GIS Department Brochure was created and included with the Oblique Imagery mailing referenced above. This hope is to enhance the visibility of the MRPC GIS Department, educating people about what a GIS can do, and obtain more business.

## **5.4 TRANSIT**

### **5.4.1 Wachusett Commuter Rail Station Facility**

Mr. Kahale, MART, EOT, PAN AM and MBTA interviewed the following consultants on August 22, 2008. For the Architectural and Engineering Services to design Wachusett Commuter Rail Station Facility:

Parsons Brinkerhoff, Boston  
Gannett Fleming, Braintree  
Jacobs Edwards & Kelsey, Boston  
McMahon Associates, Boston

The selection committee will be meeting soon to select a consultant to start working on the project.

### **5.4.2 Gardner MART Storage and Maintenance Facility**

The project is on schedule and moving forward. The building has been completed. Work on the studs, partition walls, plumbing, fire protection, electrical work and concrete slab are completed. The Fueling Island and Canopy are completed. MART anticipates a project completion by October, 2008.

### **5.4.3 Parking Expansion at North Leominster Station**

Mr. Kahale continues to work with the consultant Jacobs Engineering of Boston on the architectural and the engineering design alternatives for the expansion of N. Leominster parking garage structure facility for the three-hundred fifty (350) plus parking spaces.

### **5.4.4 Expansion of MART Storage Facility**

Mr. Kahale, MART and the consultant Gannett Fleming Engineers and Planners of Braintree met on Wednesday September 10, 2008 to discuss the architectural and the engineering design alternatives for the expansion of MART Storage Facility project in Leominster.

### **5.4.5 Ayer Parking Facility**

MART has received an approval agreement from EOT-PW to release the funding of \$ 88,250 for an assessment study and preliminary environmental study for Ayer Commuter Rail parking facility at the Rail Trail parking lot Location, MART and MRPC are working on development of a Schedule to complete this project.

## **5.5 TRANSPORTATION**

### **5.5.1 Amendment to the FFY 2009 Element of the Montachusett FFY 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)**

The Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMPO) at its September 19, 2008 meeting released for a 30 day public review and comment period running from September 25, 2008 to October 24, 2008 a draft Amendment to the FFY 2009 Element of the FFY 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MJTC will review the draft document and the comments received to date at their scheduled October 15, 2008 meeting. Due to the time schedule the MRPC may not meet before the MPO meeting to be held to endorse the TIP Amendment in late October. Therefore, a resolution to endorse the Amendment to the FFY 2009 Element of the FFY 2007-2010 TIP is presented this month.

R. Grubb moved that the MRPC has reviewed the draft Amendment to the FFY 2009 Element of the FFY 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and based upon this review authorizes it Chairman to endorse the Amendment to the FFY 2009 Element of the FFY 2007-2010 TIP at an MPO meeting to be scheduled. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **5.5.2 Extension of Traffic Technician Employment**

Because of delays in the traffic count program due to weather conditions as well as the need for data assistance with several ongoing projects, the MRPC would like to extend the employment of Matthew Brough as a temporary part time Traffic Technician from September 30, 2008 to January 31, 2009 at a rate of \$11.89 per hour. Mr. Brough will be paid through the "3C" transportation planning contract.

J. White moved that the MRPC extends the employment of Matthew Brough as a temporary part time Traffic Technician at a rate of \$11.89 per hour from September 30, 2008 until January 31, 2009. Mr. Brough will be paid through the "3C" Transportation Planning contract. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **5.5.3 Route 140 Task Force**

The Route 140 Task Force had its first public meeting on September 5, 2008 at 7:00 PM at the Princeton Town hall Annex. Members of the Task Force included representatives from Sterling, Princeton, Westminster, MassHighway, MRPC and CMRPC. In addition, approximately 20 concerned citizens were in attendance. Dennis Rindone, the Princeton Town Administrator, coordinated the meeting and helped to lead the general discussion on what the Task Force should seek to accomplish. Discussion included issues such as the roadway lacking shoulders, the many trees next to the road, safety conditions, and the lack of funds the Towns possess to make the necessary improvements. The next meeting is scheduled for October 16, 2008 at the Princeton Town Hall Annex.

### **5.5.4 "You Move Massachusetts" – EOT Public Workshops**

This fall, the Executive Office of Transportation is kicking off a civic outreach effort to talk to Massachusetts residents about their experiences using the transportation system. A series of 10 Public Workshops are being held across the state to give residents an opportunity to "Tell us what you observe every day as you move around on the roads, rails, and trails of our state. Come to one of the public workshops ...and help us to make our transportation system better for everyone."

The MJTC spent time discussing issues and concerns so that MRPC staff could summarize these items for presentation to EOT at one of the workshops.

### **5.5.5 Title VI Compliance Documents**

As part of our FTA Transit Planning contract, the MRPC was contacted by the Civil Rights Division of EOT for additional information and documentation. As a result, a Notice of Public Protection and Complaint Procedure and Form have been developed and posted/published in the MRPC offices and transportation newsletter, as well as on the MRPC website.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

There was no old business for discussion.

## **7. NEW BUSINESS**

D. Lowe invited the MRPC Members to a breakfast on the state of the Wachusett Economy, to be held by the Wachusett Chamber of Commerce, at The Manor in West Boylston from 7:30-9:00 a.m. on Friday October 3<sup>rd</sup>. The breakfast is being held to get input from the communities in the Wachusett area to pull together data for each of the towns and look at the needs of the communities.

P. Caron indicated that she wanted to tell the Commission about theoilbuyersnetwork.com. It is a network people can join in Massachusetts and Connecticut available to people to all incomes and businesses; where they can purchase heating oil for almost a dollar less per gallon than the average oil company.

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, V. Koivumaki adjourned the meeting at 8:05 p.m.