

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Doyle Center**

**464 Abbott Avenue**

**Leominster, MA 01453**

**February 6, 2020**

**1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements**

G. Corbosiero called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. All present introduced themselves.

**2. Approval of January 2, 2020 MRPC Minutes**

R. Swartz moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the January 2, 2020 minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**3. Fiscal Year 19 Audit Presentation – Roland Lambalot, CPA**

R. Lambalot distributed the FY2019 Audit handout to members.

He explained the content in the handout.

Statement of Net Position

- Statement of Net Position is a listing of items that MRPC owns (assets) and things that MRPC owes (liabilities).
- Current Assets (cash and cash equivalents - \$262,804) change from 2018 to 2019 is dramatic due to the collection of a significant amount of money from Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc.
- Non-current Assets (cash and cash equivalents - \$140,849) is money that is not available to MRPC at this time. This amount is monies owed to MRPC from the EPA Revolving Loan Fund.
- Long-term Liabilities (grants payable) relates to the MART contract in FY16. At that time, there was a determination that a payback was due to MART and recorded on MRPC's books. He suggested those funds be returned to MART in 2020.

Statement of Revenue and Expenditures

- Excess deficiency of revenue over expenditures is (258,264) due to the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) expense. GASB 75 requires OPEB expense be presented in the financial statement. He noted that there is a segregated line in the audit entitled "Operating Excess" and it shows an excess of \$49,434. Compared to prior years, MRPC has started making monies.

- Indirect cost rate for 2019 is 133.28%. Comparing the FY19 indirect cost rate to previous years, the indirect rate has been somewhat consistent over the last three years giving an indicating that expenses are being monitored appropriately.
- He noted that under indirect costs line item "Travel and Conferences", that expense has been substantially reduced compared to prior years, as less conferences were attended.

#### Notes to Financial Statements

- Custodial Credit Risk: section notes that \$57,000 was exposed to custodial credit risk. FDIC has \$250,000 limits on accounts. It is a requirement that this be noted in the financial statement.
- Changes in NET OPEB Liability: Liability has increased by \$307,698. If MRPC funded OPEB, that liability would reduce. GASB 75 does not require that OPEB be funded. MRPC pays retirees health insurance as invoiced and doesn't have a trust set up. Suggested possibly starting to fund a trust.
- Pension: – GASB 68 requires this disclosure. MRPC has taken a position that it is not responsible for retirees' pensions as the State has been funding pensions for over 50 years and MRPC is part of the States special funding situation. In 2014, State determined this should not be the case and MRPC should be responsible. The Commission has received notification from SBOR of a potential reimbursement of \$886,997. This pension matter affects other Regional Planning Agencies in the Commonwealth as well.

#### Budgetary Comparison Schedule

- Section shows that MRPC's FY19 budget predicted \$1.5 million, when MRPC actually received less, leaving a variance of approximately \$487,000 (including OPEB expense). It is important to prepare a final budget in June so budget variances won't be so extreme.

#### Summary Schedule of Prior Audit Findings

- There are no findings this year.
- There was one finding in the prior year audit: inadequate controls over the fiscal department.
- The finding was satisfactorily resolved and significant progress has been made in addressing the issues reported on.

A lengthy discussion followed regarding the pension issue.

J. Telepciak moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the Fiscal Year 2019 Audit as presented by Roland Lambalot. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### **4. Cash Schedule – January 2020**

R. Hoyt read the January 2020 Cash Schedule. Opening Balance \$280,132.76; Total receipts this month \$177,671.25; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$457,804.01; Less: amount of this warrant \$212,127.55; Balance after this warrant \$245,676.46.

J. Telepciak moved to accept the January 2020 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### **5. Administrative Matters**

##### **5.1 Information Security Awareness Training and Testing Policy for MRPC Employees**

J. Stanton reported that Last week, an Information Security Awareness Training and Testing Policy for MRPC Employees was emailed to MRPC members for review for adoption at tonight's meeting. The purpose of the policy is to better educate staff regarding cybersecurity, and to better protect the data and resources of the organization.

Questions were asked by Commissioners and answered by Jason Stanton.

R. Swartz moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission adopt the Information Security Awareness Training and Testing Policy as distributed. The policy will be added to the MRPC's Personnel Policies and Employees Procedures Handbook. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

##### **5.2 Executive Director Status Reports**

Comments concerning the Annual Audit of the MRPC's 2019 Fiscal Year

On or about January 15<sup>th</sup>, MRPC's Auditor, Roland Lambalot, CPA met with the Executive Director, Fiscal Manager and Administrative and Human Resources Director to review the MRPC's FY19 Audit in which no findings or concerns were noted. This is due to the significant amount of work and tenacity invested by the Fiscal Manager, Administrative and Human Resources Director and Executive Assistant in improving fiscal policies and procedures.

In January, the Executive Director:

Worked on the FY20 Budget update and drafted a revenue projection and corresponding draft budget plan for FY21.

Coordinated and moderated the MRPC's first Cyber Security Working Group meeting at which seven communities and four non-profit organizations attended. The group's members indicated that they'd like to see the MRPC issue a survey to all of our client-communities to learn about local business continuity planning efforts. The survey will be issued, results tallied and analyzed prior to the next meeting to be held, tentatively, on

April 9<sup>th</sup> at Noon at the MRPC. Confirmation of the day, date, time and meeting place will be issued to all parties in March.

Forged a new partnership with the new Director of the Community Foundation of North Central MA. Both of us pledged that our mutual organizations would work closely together in the coming years on better understanding the needs of the region and addressing those needs both singularly and cooperatively.

Met with Representative Natalie Higgins concerning homelessness and affordable housing in the region.

Held multiple meetings with members of the Board of Directors of LaunchSpace, Inc. concerning MRPC's preparation of this makerspace organization's feasibility study which has been targeted for completion in February.

Worked cooperatively with fellow colleagues in order to execute new contracts for services, such as with the:

Town of Ashby on, January 14, 2020 for up to **\$10,000** in order to complete tasks associated with Ashby's Green Communities Competitive Grant received in 2019. The contract term is January 14, 2020 through September 30, 2020.

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (EEA) for a new, **\$48,500** Planning Assistance Grant to complete master planning work in Hubbardston.

There are several contracts in the process of being negotiated and packaged for execution between the MRPC and some communities, such as the following:

Submitted a quote to the Town of Athol for **\$3,000** to complete a Social Services Plan for the community as it related to Athol Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) programming. This contract was awarded to the MRPC on Thursday, January 23<sup>rd</sup>. The Executive Director has prepared and delivered a contract for services for the completion of the plan within 60 days, as required by Athol.

This agency prepared and submitted quotes for services to multiple communities for a variety of services, such as the following:

Ayer has requested a quote from MRPC to deliver approximately **\$30,000** or more in services for the completion of the town's ADA Transition Plan.

Hubbardston and the MRPC are discussing the hiring of the MRPC to provide assistance to the town with its implementation of its Municipal Vulnerability Program (MVP) grant of **\$20,000**. If awarded to the MRPC about 50% of the funds would be used to hire and engineering firm and the balance of the funds would be used to pay for MRPC's services related to this project.

Another quote has been submitted to Hubbardston for **\$11,000** for the completion of the Implementation Chapter of the town's Master Plan.

Services to Leominster for organizing the City's Zoning Ordinance including the incorporation of approximately fifteen zoning amendments into the Ordinance. The quote included organizing the Ordinance and amendments for about **\$2,500** and another **\$250** per year for incorporating new amendments in the Ordinance in the future.

A **\$11,000** quote has been submitted to the Town of Lancaster for a fiscal analysis of the impacts upon adopting an Inclusionary Housing Bylaw in the town. About \$8,000 would be used to pay for the MRPC staff's time while the remaining balance of \$3,000 would be used for a consultant's number-crunching in a Fiscal Impact Tool (FIT) spreadsheet.

MRPC staff will submit a quote for services to Townsend for the delivery of MVP planning services by Friday, February 7, 2020. The amount is to be determined.

"Creative Placemaking" grant funds are now available to local housing authorities (LA's) in Massachusetts. Discussed the possibility of providing grant writing and/or planning assistance to the Templeton Housing Authority (THA) with the Executive Director of the THA. Our quote for grant preparation services will be **south of \$5,000**. It is a possibility that the MRPC may assist the THA with a public outreach component if this grant is awarded to the THA.

In addition to the above, the Executive Director held a conversation with a Public Works Superintendent about the possibility of creating a regional working group of all of MRPC's communities concerning flooding events, vulnerable infrastructure and protecting same. Many Montachusett communities have obtained MVP grants for planning and implementing projects. This Highway Superintendent encouraged the MRPC to consider submitting a regional grant to the MVP program to work with all MVP communities on a regional basis in order to coordinate climate change-related flooding mitigation measures.

The MVP Planning Grant offers funding to municipalities that wish to assess their vulnerability to and prepare for climate change impacts, build community resilience, and receive designation from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) as a Climate Change Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program municipality.

The MVP Action Grant offers financial resources to municipalities that are seeking to advance priority climate adaptation actions to address climate change impacts resulting from extreme weather, sea level rise, inland and coastal flooding, severe heat, and other climate impacts. Responses to the RFR may be submitted by municipalities who have received designation from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) as a Climate Change Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Community ("MVP Community"). All projects are required to provide monthly updates, project deliverables, a final project report, and a brief project summary communicating lessons learned. The municipality is also required to match 25% of total project cost using cash or in-kind contributions. All proposals must include the following:

- Completed application template;

- Project budget and deliverables;
- MVP yearly progress report describing any relevant work toward advancing community priorities since earning MVP designation;
- Statement of match; and,
- Letters of support from landowner (if applicable), partners, and the public.

**Project types include:**

- *Detailed Vulnerability and Risk Assessment* – In-depth vulnerability or risk assessment of a particular sector, location or other aspect of the municipality.
- *Public Education and Communication* – Projects that increase public understanding of climate change impacts within and beyond the community and foster effective partnerships to develop support.
- *Local Bylaws, Ordinances, Plans, and other Management Measures* – Projects to develop, amend, and implement local ordinances, bylaws, standards, plans, and other management measures to reduce risk and damages from extreme weather, heat, flooding and other climate change impacts.
- *Redesigns and Retrofits* – Engineering and construction projects to redesign, plan, or retrofit vulnerable community facilities and infrastructure (e.g., wastewater treatment plants, culverts, and critical municipal roadways/evacuation routes) to function over the life of the infrastructure given projected climate change impacts.
- *Energy Resilience Strategies* – Projects that incorporate clean energy generation and that are paired with resilience enabling technology to maintain electrical and/or heating and cooling services at critical facilities.
- *Chemical Safety and Climate Vulnerabilities* – Projects that seek to engage the business and manufacturing community through assistance or training on identifying vulnerabilities to chemical releases due to severe weather events, reducing use of toxic or hazardous chemicals, outreach to improve operations and maintenance procedures to prevent chemical releases and accidents, outreach to improve emergency and contingency planning, and/or identifying existing contaminated sites that pose chemical dispersion risks during flood events.
- *Nature-Based Storm-Damage Protection, Drought Mitigation, Water Quality, and Water Infiltration Techniques* – Projects that utilize natural resources and pervious surfaces to manage coastal and inland flooding, erosion, and other storm damage, such as stormwater wetlands and bio-retention systems, and other Smart Growth and Low Impact Development techniques.
- *Nature-Based, Infrastructure and Technology Solutions to Reduce Vulnerability to Extreme Heat and Poor Air Quality* – Projects that utilize natural resources, vegetation, and increasing pervious surface to reduce ambient temperatures, provide shade, increase evapotranspiration,

improve local air quality, and otherwise provide cooling services within the municipality.

- *Nature-Based Solutions to Reduce Vulnerability to other Climate Change Impacts* – Nature-based projects that address other impacts of climate change such as extreme weather, damaging wind and power outages, and increased incidence of pests and vector-borne illnesses and other public health issues.
- *Acquisition of Land to Achieve a Resiliency Objective* — Land purchases are eligible for grant funding if the parcel has been identified through a climate vulnerability assessment as an appropriate location for a specific eligible adaptation activity to occur, such as accommodating an infrastructure or facility redesign or retrofit project, providing natural flood storage to reduce downstream flooding, or removal of pavement and planting of trees to reduce flooding and heat island effects.
- *Ecological Restoration and Habitat Management to Increase Resiliency* – Projects that repair or improve natural systems for community and ecosystem adaptation, such as right-sizing culverts, dam removal, restoration of coastal wetlands, etc.
- *Subsidized Low Income Housing Resilience Strategies*— Investments in resiliency measures for affordable housing to protect vulnerable populations that may not have the resources to recover from an extreme climate event.
- *Mosquito Control Districts* — Projects to reduce the risk to public health from mosquito-borne illness and to increase mosquito surveillance and control capacity by incentivizing municipalities not in an organized mosquito control project or district to form a new mosquito control district or join an existing mosquito control district. Also funding for municipalities currently in a mosquito control district for new or proactive mosquito control measures.

The Executive Director attended the Massachusetts Historical Commission's (MHC) meeting in Lancaster on January 9<sup>th</sup> concerning the Secretary of State's/Massachusetts Historic Commission's Historic Preservation Projects Fund (HPPF). HPPF grant funds are limited; an allocation of \$800,000 is available statewide. The MHC provides this resource, on a dollar-for-dollar matching basis, to communities and non-profits implementing historic preservation projects on historic properties such as buildings, landscapes and burial grounds. While this year's grant proposal deadline is quickly approaching on March 20<sup>th</sup>, MRPC encourages all local historic commissions and community leaders to crafting well-designed and highly-competitive projects for this or next winter.

Lastly, while attending the January meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA), the Executive Directors agreed to prepare and send a letter to Secretary Mike Kennealy, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development concerning projects of local economic importance in each region. We agreed to retrieve projects from our respective Comprehensive and Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) documents, reduce them down to two to three projects and submit them to our lead author-volunteer for submission to Secretary Kennealy (The Montachusett CEDs contains



37 projects.) I examined all of the economic development projects within the Montachusett's CEDS, found a theme between three projects that could use funding (if funding was ever to be included within the upcoming Economic Development Bond Bill) and sent them to the lead author. These three projects were, as follows:

*"The support and continued development of two job-training facilities in Athol and Clinton and a business incubator in Gardner are of the utmost importance in the Montachusett Region. Those projects have been described, below.*

*Athol, LaunchSpace, Inc.*

*LaunchSpace, Inc. is a 501(c)3 nonprofit community makerspace offering classes and workshops in wide ranging topics including 3D printing, woodworking, pottery, metalworking, IT & robotics, and a variety of arts and crafts. In addition to being a member-based community workshop, LaunchSpace is partnering with local schools, community colleges, universities, and businesses to develop programming in workforce education and development as well as provide services in entrepreneurial support and business incubation. The organization hopes that with its three-tiered approach it will be able to create a replicable model for post-industrial revitalization in semi-rural communities. Currently, LaunchSpace operates two locations: one of which is a 24,000 square foot former elementary school in Athol – located inside the Montachusett Economic Development District (MEDD) – while the other is located on the third floor of the Orange Innovation Center (OIC) in the neighboring town of Orange just beyond MEDD's boundaries in Franklin County. To date, LaunchSpace has received \$380,000 in state funding through MassDevelopment's Collaborative Workspace Program (CWP) to support its mission of local economic and community development. Future funds will be used to support facility upgrades as well as operations and the delivery of job-training programs.*

*\$100,000*

*Clinton, Collaborative Workspace*

*The development of the Clinton Collaborative Workspace originated in recommendation made within the Bigelow Mills Feasibility Analysis. The project will aim to create jobs and advance innovation in the region. Initial funding is needed to complete a market assessment, form the 501(c)3 non-profit and pursue capital grants for machinery and equipment.*

*\$100,000*

*Gardner, Wachusett Business Incubator*

*The Wachusett Business Incubator (WBI) is located in newly renovated space at the New England Woodenware campus in Gardner. Developed by a consortium of local business leaders, the goal of the WBI is to foster economic growth in the North Central Massachusetts area by providing targeted assistance in a cooperative environment to*



*innovative entrepreneurs developing intellectual property that will be produced in the region employing many more people in manufacturing sector. The WBI will guide them to cultivate their business skills, and provide the assistance necessary to take their startup companies along the path to commercial maturity.*

*\$100,000*

### **5.3 FY20 Budget Amendment**

G. Eaton presented the FY20 Budget amendment. The Executive Director recommends the elimination of the following, “budgeted-but-unfilled” employee positions from the FY20 Budget ending June 30, 2020, as follows:

- Part Time Planner for Planning and Development for \$30,000;
- Planning Intern #1 for Planning and Development for \$5,000;
- Planning Intern #2 for Planning and Development for \$5,000;
- Planning Intern #3 for Planning and Development for \$5,000;
- Planning Intern #4 for Planning and Development for \$5,000; and,
- Part Time Planner for Planning and Development for \$30,000.

The total decrease in the FY20 budget will be \$80,000.

The Executive Director recommends that increases be made to the following administrative (“indirect cost”) line items:

- Unemployment Insurance from \$15,000 to \$18,000;
- Electric (utility account paid to the Trustees of Reservations) from \$7,000 to \$9,000.

An increase is needed for unforeseen costs that occurred in the middle of the fiscal year.

Based on input from fiscal, corrections to the budget presented at the meeting were as follows: Decreasing of the line item for retirees’ health insurance to \$19,950; elimination of the match amount for the MART contract; and addition of a match amounts for Community Transit Grants.

J. Telepciak moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby adopts the amendments to the FY20 budget as identified above. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### **5.4 FY21 Revenue Projection**

G. Eaton explained the table, below identifies potential revenue through the end of FY2020 (June 30, 2020) and also projects a revenue estimate for FY21 (beginning on July 1, 2020 and ending on June 30, 2021).

	FY20	FY21*		
Municipal Assessments	\$ 79,304	\$ 81,287		
All Direct Salaries	\$ 571,205	\$ 585,485		
All Other Direct Costs	\$ 207,119	\$ 212,297		
All Indirect Costs	\$ 930,146	\$ 953,400		
TOTAL ALL REVENUE**	\$ 1,787,774	\$ 1,832,469		
	\$ 79,304			
CALC CHECK	\$ 1,708,470			
* FY20 line items increased by 2.5% for FY21 revenue estimate.				
** Total All Revenue is based upon all staff receiving 2.5% annual increase.				
This total figure will increase if Compensation Plan is implemented.				

The total of all, projected expenditures will be refined through June 4, 2020 when the Commissioners approve the FY21 Budget.

## 6. Status Reports

### 6.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

#### **MRMapper & MOBILE APPS (GENERAL)**

One new public regional application has been added to the site- Census Opportunity Zones. Data and applications are continuously being updated throughout the year. The traffic count data and application have also been updated.

#### **COMMUNITY-RELATED**

Lunenburg Conservation Lands Mapping – The Lunenburg Conservation Commission received the grant that it applied for to create and install maps at the intersections of the trails on its properties. Once the Conservation Commission reaches out to start the project, we will work on creating a series of “You Are Here” maps. This project will be ongoing for the next several months.

Ashburnham Street Map – We are working with the Police Department to update road data in the Town and create a street map with grid to be used by first responder personnel. It is expected that this project will be complete in February.

Lancaster Land Use Map – The Town Planner approved the second draft of the Land Use Map so we printed it out. This project is not complete.

#### **COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING-RELATED**

ADA Compliance Checklist Survey Creation – We’ve created four digital surveys that can be completed out in the field using tablets. They will be used by MRPC staff to inventory the features and amenities of public spaces to see if they are ADA compliant. We will train

staff to use these digital surveys and we will continue to provide any technical assistance as needed until the project is complete.

#### DLTA

Ashburnham Housing Production Plan Mapping – After meeting with the town, MRPC planning staff requested that we remove some parcels and also add some parcels as having the potential for affordable housing production. We also provided a list of the parcels. This project has been completed.

Shirley Windshield Surveys – We have created a mobile application to be used to collect windshield survey data in the Town as part of a CDBG application. Data is currently being collected and will be mail merged into individual property docs to be included in the application. It is expected that this project will be complete in February.

Greenway Property Identification – In hopes of working with North County Land Trust (NCLT) and the municipalities in their region for upcoming DLTA applications, MRPC planning staff identified the major rivers and streams in NCLT's region. We created a 300-foot buffer around these major waterways and began to select and highlight the non-protected parcels within the buffer. We also began to create a map that shows these parcels, the major waterways, and protected open space. This map will aid in the identification and prioritization of parcels to acquire and conserve with the aim of creating greenways along the major waterways. Our portion of the project is currently complete but we will create any data products or make any edits as requested.

HUD LMI Map – We created a choropleth map showing the HUD's low/moderate income percentage and points by municipality for our region. This map will be used for identifying possible joint CDBG efforts. Our portion of this project is complete.

### **TRANSPORTATION-RELATED**

Trail Data Application – We are currently in the process of preparing a mobile application that will allow communities to update the existing Trail Inventory data in 'live' or 'offline' (disconnected) editing session. Outreach will begin in February and March. This work will be ongoing throughout the winter and spring.

2020 Census PSAP – We recently received confirmation that the Census Bureau approved all of our proposed changes to the census geographies (census tracts and block groups). We reached out to the communities that had changes in order to make them aware of the approval and to allow them to review the census geographies for 2020 data releases onward. We requested that they respond back to us by January 31<sup>st</sup> if there are any issues. This portion of the project will be completed by the beginning of February.

### **TRANSIT-RELATED**

MART Proposed Fitchburg/Worcester Commuter Shuttle – Our portion of the project is currently complete but the project will be ongoing as MART finalizes the route.

MART Proposed Eastern Shuttle – Our portion of this project is currently complete but we will make any edits or additional maps as requested.

MART Stop Count – We were asked to add up the outbound and inbound stops for all routes run by MART. We were also asked to calculate the total number of individual stops. This number will be used to estimate the amount of time it would take to survey all the stops that MART services. The counts have been sent and our portion of the project has been completed but we will answer any questions and make any edits as requested.

## 6.2 Planning and Development

### *Comprehensive Planning Division*

#### **FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)**

As part of this contract, MRPC provides assistance to communities seeking grant funds to improve economic vitality. MRPC staff are working to assist the Town of Shirley to put together a Community Development Block Grant application. Applications are due March 6, 2020.

#### **FEDERAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (EPA), MONTACHUSETT REGION BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT PROGRAM**

A Montachusett Brownfields Group (MBG) meeting was held at MRPC offices on Wednesday, January 8<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m. to review Site Nomination requests. The following Site Nominations were approved by the MBG:

- Athol (62 Canal Street) Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
- Ayer (43 West Main Street) Phase I Environmental Site Assessment
- Lunenburg (925 Massachusetts Avenue) Phase II Environmental Site Assessment
- Winchendon (4 Summer Drive) Phase I Environmental Site Assessment

#### **MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (EOEEA)**

MRPC was awarded an FY20 Planning Assistance Grant (PAG), for \$48,500, to fund Master Plan Chapters for the Town of Hubbardston. On January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, MRPC received a notice to proceed on the project from the funding agency (Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs). The Master Plan Chapters are Statement of Goals and Objectives, Transportation, Services and Facilities, Open Space and Recreation, and Housing. MRPC staff has initiated work on the project and will be meeting with the Hubbardston Planning Board on February 5<sup>th</sup> to discuss the scope of work and timeline.

#### **DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA)**

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has executed a District Local Technical Assistance contract with the MRPC. This is the thirteenth year of this State-funded initiative. MRPC issued a Request for Service Delivery (RSD) on December 31<sup>st</sup> that was distributed to Mayors/Boards of Selectmen and Planning Boards with a proposal due date of February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 for the first round and March 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2020 for the second round. DLTA applications received by MRPC from communities on or before February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 will be reviewed for approval at the February 6<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission Meeting.

### 6.2.1 Round #1 District Local Technical Assistance Applications

J. Hume reported that in response to a first solicitation, on or before February 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2020 a total of thirteen (13) proposals were received for use of District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) resources to provide a variety of services. The proposals received are as follows:

1. **Hubbardston:** Land Use Master Plan Chapter.
2. **Ayer:** ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Project to be matched with ADA Planning Grant from MA Office on Disability to the Town of Ayer.
3. **Townsend:** Amend zoning bylaws to provide more age restricted market rate housing opportunities in Town.
4. **Townsend:** Provide statistical data to confirm the feasibility of the Town adopting M.G.L. 43D – Expedited Local Permitting Program.
5. **Athol:** Millers River Greenway Planning Assistance.
6. **Athol:** Urban Renewal Planning Assistance (Phase 2).
7. **Westminster:** Open Space and Recreation Plan update assistance (maps and statistics generated from maps, and updating tables in Community Setting Section).
8. **Sterling:** Transportation Master Plan Chapter.
9. **Sterling:** Implementation of Housing Production Plan Action Items: A. Amend accessory apartment bylaw and incorporate accessory apartments into the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and; B. Explore adoption of affordable housing on non-complying lots.
10. **Petersham:** Community survey, facilitating public input at community meetings, and identifying any funding options concerning the Nichewaug Inn & Academy building. It should be noted that this DLTA request also included assessing technical viability of the building and preparing schematic site plans and elevations – however, MRPC does not provide these services and therefore they are not DLTA eligible.
11. **Harvard:** Build – Out Analysis Update and Fiscal Impact Analysis.
12. **Lunenburg:** ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (Phase 2). Phase 1 was completed using last round of DLTA.
13. **Lancaster:** Draft language for a new center-village zoning district or overlay district.

This year's DLTA financial award to the MRPC is for \$207,475. This State grant must be matched by 10% in cash from the MRPC or \$20,747.50. Therefore, a total of \$228,223 is available for all DLTA programming this calendar year ("aka" Program Year 13). As this program commenced in January 2020 and will be terminated on December 31, 2020, approximately one-half of the matching funds will come from the MRPC's FY20 budget and the other half from the FY21 budget; about \$10,373.75 each fiscal year. The initial budget created by MRPC staff for the above, 13 projects is \$193,000. Thus, a balance of \$35,223 remains for the second round of applications that are due on March 2, 2020.

R. Hoyt moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) recommends that #1 through #13 of the above-named project requests for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA), if eligible, be **conditionally** awarded based upon further communication/ clarification/ negotiation with the applying communities and **approval from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)**. Moreover, all activities in some applications may not be awardable under the DLTA program: MRPC staff reserves the right to negotiate an awardable detailed scope of services.

Those requests conditionally awarded (#1 through #13) are subject to the conditions listed below.

1. The services to be delivered to the communities will be completed commencing no earlier than a fully executed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the subject (lead) community and the MRPC.
2. Services will be delivered to the subject community(ies) during the implementation of the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program year (2020).
3. The award of services from the MRPC is subject to the:
  - a. Funding available to the MRPC during the program year (2020);
  - b. Successful negotiation of a detailed scope of services, schedule for the completion of the tasks identified in the scope of services, and budget utilizing DLTA and other funds, if available and eligible for the aforementioned project;
  - c. Execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the MRPC and the community(ies); and,
  - d. The MRPC's receipt of a letter from the Chief Elected Official (CEO) of all of the affected communities indicating agreement to this proposal and willingness to participate in this analysis. (Communities may agree to participate in this analysis after the full execution of the MOU between the subject (lead) community and the MRPC but must agree to participate in order to receive the results of the report.)
4. Where and when possible the MRPC will deliver the tasks related to "analysis, preparation and presentation ... report(s) ..." as indicated above. The MRPC and the community requesting services will "outsource" consulting services only when absolutely deemed to be necessary by both the lead community and the MRPC.
5. This is an award of services from the MRPC to the applicable community(ies). This is not a cash award.
6. If at any time DHCD determines that the project is ineligible, the award of services will be null and void.
7. The municipality and all municipal departments shall provide MRPC with cooperation/access/assistance to public data applicable to the DLTA project including the provision of such materials. Related costs associated with this

(data collection, photocopying, etc.) will be at the expense of the municipality(s).

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

#### **MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESOURCES (DOER)**

MRPC received a Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) grant award in the amount of \$59,065 in August and the contract has an effective date of 9/10/19, with an end date of 5/30/21. REPA grant award funds were used by MRPC for Green Communities Program Designation Application Submissions on November 22<sup>nd</sup> for Groton, Hubbardston and Templeton. All three communities have been designated Green Communities by the DOER as a result of MRPC's assistance with the Applications. One additional grant application is required of the designated communities in order to receive their grant funds, which will be due in February, and MRPC staff will assist those three communities.

REPA grant award funds were also used to assist Ashby, Athol, Fitchburg, Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley, Townsend, and Westminster to complete and submit Annual Reports due December 6, 2019. MRPC staff will also assist Athol, Harvard, Lunenburg, and Shirley under REPA to put together Competitive Grant Applications due March 27, 2020.

#### **6.2.2 Cash Match to EDA Planning Grant**

J. Hume stated that MRPC received an invitation from the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) to submit its EDA Capacity Building grant proposal to the EDA-Philadelphia Office. A \$17,500 cash match is required. The \$17,500 straddles over two fiscal years (FY20 and FY21); the final three months of FY20 (April 1, 2020 through June 30, 2020) and the first nine months of FY21 (July 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021).

J. Telepciak moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission will authorize up to \$17,500 in cash to match a \$70,000 Economic Development Administration Planning Assistance grant for the period beginning April 1, 2020 and ending March 31, 2022, enabling the MRPC to provide economic development and administrative support to:

1. Communities in the Montachusett Region
2. Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
3. Montachusett Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (MRCEDS) Committee
4. Montachusett Brownfields Group Steering Committee
5. Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC)
6. Montachusett Economic Development District (MEDD) Board of Directors

The purpose of this grant is to enable the MRPC to implement regional economic development strategies, provide economic development technical assistance to municipalities and implement the Montachusett Region Comprehensive



Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). An in-kind match in the amount of at least \$52,500 will also be gained through District Local Technical Assistance Projects that involve economic development.

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

### *Community Development Division*

#### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT BLOCK GRANT (CDBG) PROGRAM IN SHIRLEY**

##### **FY17 CDBG Program**

This grant has been extended through March 31, 2020. However, all Housing rehabilitation program activities will be completed no later than March 5<sup>th</sup> so as to enable Shirley to be eligible to apply for additional dollars on March 6<sup>th</sup>. The Fuel Assistance program was concluded in later 2019.

##### **FY20 CDBG Proposal**

This year's CDBG application is due on March 6<sup>th</sup>. At least five employees are involved with preparing a competitive grant application this year on Shirley's behalf.

MRPC advised the Shirley Board of Selectmen to create a Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) to advise the Selectboard on projects that should be prioritized not only for the FY20 CDBG proposal that is due in one month, but for the next five years. Three of five residents requested to serve on the CDAC have been sworn-in and they attended today's first meeting that was held today at 10:00 a.m. in Shirley's Town Hall (a quorum being present). The CDAC members voted to recommend to the Selectboard that housing rehabilitation and fuel assistance be included in the FY20 CDBG proposal. The Planning and Development Director and the Executive Director will be on-hand at the final CDBG public hearing to be held on Monday, February 10<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM to carry the CDAC's recommendation to the Selectboard and close-out the public hearing process.

##### **MEC, Inc.**

MEC, Inc. had an annual meeting in January, authorized the sale of its final real estate asset (30 Powers Mill Road, Phillipston), which took place on January 10<sup>th</sup>. The Town of Phillipston was repaid in full; \$145,000. A past, CDBG award to the community and subsequent mortgage to MEC made the purchase of this property possible several years ago.

Staff advised the members of the Board that MEC, Inc. should focus upon delivering services in the areas of housing (first time homebuyer, foreclosure assistance counseling and addressing the homelessness crisis), economic development (i.e. job training) and other areas of need (i.e. age-friendly planning) in our communities. To date, MEC has received a \$10,000 grant from the Tufts

Healthcare Foundation to develop a plan to, “Become and Age-friendly Montachusett Region.” A contract between MEC and the MRPC has been created to enable MRPC staff to deliver the planning services through MEC to the Tufts Healthcare Foundation. Another \$75,000 grant to this organization has been completed and submitted to continue this process.

The Board of Directors changed the Director’s title to Executive Director.

The Board of Directors authorized the expansion of its boundaries to include the entire, nine-town North Quabbin region. To the best of my knowledge, the only two non-profit organizations that have included the North Quabbin region within our respective catchment areas include Community Foundation of North Central MA and MEC, Inc. I have learned that this is welcome news to many that live in this region.

### **6.3 Transit**

#### **AYER PARKING FACILITY**

The construction of the Ayer Commuter Rail Parking Facility is complete. On January 20, 2020 the Parking Facility was officially opened for commuters. On February 3<sup>rd</sup>, MART will start charging a parking fee of \$4.00 a day and \$65.00 a month. Phase Two of the project is the Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza at the MBTA Station. Phase Two construction will start this Spring and will include turn around for transit vehicles, pedestrian plaza, restroom facility and shelter.

### **6.4 Transportation**

#### **AMERICANS WITH DISABILITIES ACT (ADA), PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY (PROW) TRANSITION PLAN DEVELOPMENT FOR THREE COMMUNITIES**

Draft plans for Lancaster, Lunenburg and Winchendon have been received and forwarded to the communities for their review. Public meetings have been scheduled to present the plans in the towns as follows:

- Lunenburg – Tuesday February 11, 2020
- Lancaster – Tuesday February 18, 2020
- Winchendon – Monday February 24, 2020

Please confirm dates, times and locations with the individual towns.

#### **FFY 2021-2025 TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM (TIP)**

Development of the FFY 2021 to 2025 Montachusett TIP is underway. Staff has compiled a listing of target eligible projects for review and scoring through the Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC). A meeting between MARPA and MassDOT was scheduled for January 29<sup>th</sup>. Target figures were presented at this meeting and will be used to develop a fiscally constrained TIP. TIP Readiness Day

for the MRPC has been scheduled for February 11<sup>th</sup>. Staff will meet with MassDOT personnel in Worcester and Boston to discuss identified TIP projects and their current status. A TIP development schedule has been prepared and is available as a handout. We are looking at May 2020 for endorsement by the MPO.

#### **FFY 2021 UNIFIED PLANNING WORK PROGRAM (UPWP)**

Staff is continuing development of the next Montachusett UPWP for the upcoming FFY 2021 program year that will begin on October 1, 2020. Previously a memo was sent to member communities soliciting their ideas for potential tasks for the UPWP. To date, we have received task requests from Hubbardston, Sterling, Fitchburg and Townsend. These requests will be reviewed and pared down to 2 to 3 tasks for inclusion in the UPWP. The actual number will depend on our expected "PL" allotment for FFY 2021 and the number of other tasks that will be required by MassDOT and FHWA. MPO endorsement of the UPWP is set for May 2020.

#### **6.4.1 Authorization for MRPC Chairman to endorse the FFY 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #2**

B. Harris explained that the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) met on January 22<sup>nd</sup> at which time they reviewed draft Amendment #2 FFY 2020 Transit Element of the FFY 2020-2024 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The MPO then voted to release for a 21-day public review and comment period, Draft TIP Amendment #2. Amendment #2 includes the addition of 6 transit project as a result of recent Community Transit Grant Program awards and additional funding to MART for vehicle replacement. Under the Community Transit Grant program, vehicles will be given to: Ashburnham COA (1 vehicle); GAAMHA, Inc. (2 vehicles); and MART (7 vehicles). The additional funding provided to MART will allow them to replace 6 buses that have reached the end of their useful life. The public comment period began on January 29, 2020 and will run until the close of business on Tuesday February 18, 2020.

J. Telepciak moved that the MRPC has reviewed the FFY 2020-2024 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #2 and based upon this review as well as the review of any comments received, authorizes its Chairman to endorse the FFY 2020-2024 TIP Amendment #2 at a MPO meeting scheduled for Wednesday February 19, 2020 at 1:00 PM at the MRPC offices. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) Meeting – February 12, 2020 at 6:30 PM at MRPC Offices  
MMPO Meeting – February 19, 2020 at 1:00 PM at MRPC Offices

#### **7. New Business**

There was no new business for discussion.

## 8. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.

Meeting Attendance					
Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	PRESENT	ABSENT
Meissner, Rosemarie	A	Ashburnham	3.2019		
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	X	
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001		X
Stacy, Wayne	A	Ashby	7.2005		X
Truehart, Duane	M	Athol	7.2016		X
Rebecca Bialecki	A	Athol	7.2017		X
Vacant	M	Ayer			X
Vacant	A	Ayer			X
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011		X
Vacant	A	Clinton			X
Lowitt, Peter	N/V	DREZ	7.2001		X
Caron, Paula	M	Fitchburg	7.2002		X
Vacant	A	Fitchburg			
Swartz, Robert	M	Gardner	7.2019	X	
Cruz, Maribel	A	Gardner	8.2017		X
Burke, Russ	M	Groton	7.2016		X
Vacant	A	Groton			X
Donahue, Stacia	M	Harvard	7.2018		X
Vacant	A	Harvard			X
Vacant	M	Hubbardston	7.2016		X
Stauder, Michael	A	Hubbardston			X
Christopher, Thomas	A	Lancaster	7.2016		X
Williston, Russell	M	Lancaster	11.2018		X
Carignan, Thomas	M	Leominster	7.2019		X

Vacant	A	Leominster			X
Bertram, Paula	M	Lunenburg	7.2019		X
Adams, Kathryn	A	Lunenburg	7.2018		X
Vacant	M	Petersham			X
Allen, Nancy	A	Petersham	7.2015		X
Vacant	M	Phillipston			X
Telepciak, John	A	Phillipston	10.201	X	
Natrowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2015		X
Barclay, James	A	Royalston	7.2017		X
Widing, Sarah	A	Shirley	7.2015		X
Yocum, Barbara	M	Shirley	8.2017		X
Page, Patty	M	Sterling	7.2019		X
Maki, Dick	A	Sterling	7.2014		X
Rich, Dennis	M	Templeton	7.2017		X
Terenzini, Carter	A	Templeton	9.2016		X
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2018		X
King, Cindy	A	Townsend	7.2016		X
Smith, Mike	M	Westminster	7.2019	X	
Vacant	A	Westminster			X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	
Ward, Rick	A	Winchendon	7.2019	X	

**STAFF PRESENT:** Glenn Eaton, Brad Harris, Linda Parmenter, Jason Stanton, Linda Quinlivan

**GUESTS:** Roland Lambalot, Auditor; Scott Lambalot, Auditor; Michael Antonellis, Lancaster; Ann Lewis, Petersham; Chaz Sexton-Diranian, representing Laura Shifrin, Townsend

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS PRESENTED AT MEETING

February 6, 2020 MRPC Handout

January 2, 2020 MRPC Minutes

Cash Schedules – January 2020

FY20 MRPC Budget

FY19 Audit

MRPC information Security Awareness Training and Testing Policy

FFY2021-2025 Montachusett TIP Development Schedule

