

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)



Thursday, March 4, 2021

7:00 PM

REMOTE: GoToMeeting App

MEETING MINUTES

1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements

G. Corbosiero called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. G. Corbosiero stated in accordance with Governor Baker's Covid-19 Executive Order regarding the Open Meeting Law and remote participation, votes will be taken through Roll Call.

2. Approval of February 4, 2021 MRPC Minutes

L. Shifrin moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the February 4, 2021 minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Alyne Butland- yes
Barbara Yocum- yes
Laura Shifrin- yes
Robert Swartz- yes
Staci Donahue- Abstain
Veronica Kell- yes
Jaqueline Doherty- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes
Russell Burke- yes

3. Cash Schedule – February 2021

L. Shifrin read the February 2021 cash schedule.

Opening Balance \$389,968.22; Total receipts this month \$300,348.95; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$690,317.17; Less: amount of this warrant \$141,500.84; Balance after this warrant \$548,816.33.

R. Burke moved to accept the February 2021 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Alyne Butland- yes
Barbara Yocum- yes
Laura Shifrin- yes

Guy Corbosiero- yes
Robert Swartz- yes
Staci Donahue- yes
Veronica Kell- yes
Jaqueline Doherty- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes
Russell Burke- yes

4. Administrative Matters

4.1 COVID-19 Office Space Management Update

G. Eaton stated there are no changes to the office status. We are hoping to be back in the office by September. When we do return to the office, it may have to be in teams or alternating days.

4.2 Update Concerning H. 48: An Act Relative to Non-commonwealth Entities within the State Employees' Retirement System

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) engaged a consultant to create legislation to counter the MA Board of Retirement's Bill to address the issue concerning past payments of retirement compensation for the retirees of regional planning agencies. H. 1684/S. 1334, An Act Relative to Regional Planning Agencies has finally been filed.

The legislation has been filed on behalf of the regional planning agencies by Representative Arciero and Senator Gobi. This legislation aims to provide financial stability to the state's regional planning agencies (RPAs) and allow us to continue to be indispensable partners of the Commonwealth and its municipalities long into the future.

G. Eaton stated this legislation issue easily take five to seven years to wind its way through both Houses before it hits the Governor's desk for signature. This item will remain on the agenda until it is resolved.

G. Eaton will send out a letter next week to our legislative delegation. Educating them on the pros and cons of this where we cannot lobby. The Commissioners will be cc'd on this and will be asked to discuss this matter with their respective legislators when and if they are able to do so.

4.3 Attorney General Grant (AGO) to MRPC, Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP)

G. Eaton stated this will be the last report on the Small Business Assistance Program. We made 12 loans to small businesses in the amount of \$1,000. The remaining \$13,000 will be returned to the Attorney General's office.

4.4 FY20 Community Development Block Grant, COVID Response Award of \$296,100 to Shirley (lead community), Lunenburg, Royalston, Townsend, and Westminster

This program is specifically for micro-enterprise businesses. We currently have inquiries to the program however we are still pending any complete applications to be reviewed. After speaking to M. Cruz, the former Economic Development Coordinator in Gardner, G. Eaton feels we do not have enough staff to properly market the grant and assist businesses with the application process.

4.5 Strategic Planning for the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) and its Affiliate the Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC)

G. Eaton is still working on drafting an outline so he can put a document together for the May meeting.

4.6 Discussion of the FY20 Audit – Audit Presentation Planned for Late March 2021

- Our Auditor, Roland Lambalot, CPA will present the FY20 Audit at 7:00 p.m., Thursday, March 25th.
- Please be reminded there will not be a Commissioners' meeting on Thursday, April 1st.
- The next meeting of the Commissioners, following the meeting of March 25th, will be held on May 6th.

4.7 Executive Director's Request to Hire Loan Originator to Assist with FY19 Shirley Community Development Block Grant-COVID Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP) – Approval Requested

G. Eaton is requesting to hire a loan originator to work with C. McDermott to help with marketing the Micro-enterprise Assistance Program as well as work with the applicants to help expedite the application process.

We would use non CDBG funds to pay the salary of the Loan Originator. The funds used to pay the salary of the Loan Originator would come from Economic Development Administration (EDA).

R. Burke moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby authorizes its Executive Director to advertise and hire a part-time, temporary Loan Originator up to 22.5 hours weekly within the salary range of \$20.30 and \$24.59 to provide assistance to the agency in the successful administration of the FY19 CDBG-CV-funded Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP) providing grant application processing services for small business grants up to \$10,000 per application for companies located in Lunenburg, Royalston, Shirley, Townsend, and Westminster. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Veronica Kell- yes
Stacie Donohue- yes
Russell Burke- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes
Robert Swartz- yes
Laura Shifrin- yes
Jaquelin Doherty- yes
Guy Corbosiero- yes
Barbara Yocum- yes
Alyne Butland- yes

4.8 Proposed, Temporary Salary Adjustment – FY21 – Planning and Development Director Sunday, March 7, 2021 through Friday, July 2, 2021

G. Eaton stated since September 2020 John Hume, Planning and Development Director has taken on extra duties and his workload has increased, substantially, as can be seen in Table A, below and summarized here.

- The number of contracts for which he is responsible has jumped to 25 (an increase by a factor of 2.8);
- The amount of dollars included in all the relevant contracts exceeds \$1.8 million (an increase in the amount of money managed by this department by a factor of 3.8; and,
- Where he used to oversee two employees, he now manages ten.

Table A

FY16	FY17	FY18	FY19	FY20	5 YR. AVG.	FY21	% Inc.
13	9	12	9	14	8.8	25	284%
\$	\$	\$	\$	\$	\$		
558,039	558,896	403,257	381,457	557,167	491,763	\$1,857,918	378%

The increase in his work can be attributed to several factors:

- The overall success of the Planning and Development Department in delivering high-quality planning services to federal and state agencies, communities, and non-profit organizations in the Montachusett Region which has contributed to the success in increasing "repeat business" with satisfied clients.
- An increase in new contracts (much higher than in past years);
- The substantial increase in funding awarded to the Montachusett Economic Development District (to which MRPC staff provides support) from the CARES Act via the federal Economic Development Administration (EDA); and,
- A significant increase in the hiring of permanent and temporary employees (both full- and part-time), all of which have been hired for the Planning and Development Department (since September 2020) and report to the Planning and Development Director.

Additional, relevant information includes the following:

- The average number of contracts typically administered by the Planning and Development Director has increased from a five-year average of nine (actually 8.8) to 22 in FY21 (a 250% increase); and,
- The average number of dollars involved with all, Planning and Development Department contracts has increased from a five-year average of \$491,763 to \$1,857,918 in FY21 (a 378% increase). TYPO
 - Early in FY21, Mr. Hume was overseeing two, full-time employees. The current staffing within the Planning and Development Department now includes the following:
 - There are now ten employees for which the Planning and Development Director is now responsible.
 - Three are full-time employees.
 - Seven of the employees are part-time (up to 18+/- hours weekly); and,
 - Oversight of a total of 6.5 full-time equivalents (FTE) persons.

Due to the temporary increase in the workload of the Planning and Development Director the Executive Director recommends that this employee be temporarily compensated at a higher level as detailed in the **"RESOLUTION,"** below. **This is only a temporary increase as the spike in contracts, new employees, and intensity of work is anticipated to end on June 30, 2021.**

L. Shifrin moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approves of the Executive Director's recommendation to temporarily increase the compensation of the Planning and Development Director, John Hume from his current level of compensation of \$77,528 to \$79,478 (an increase of \$1,950 or 2.52%) commencing on Sunday, March 7, 2021 and terminating on Saturday, July 3, 2021. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Veronica Kell- yes

Stacie Donohue- yes

Russell Burke- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes
Robert Swartz- yes
Laura Shifrin- yes
Jaquelin Doherty- yes
Barbara Yocum- yes
Alyne Butland- yes

5 CONTRACT STATUS REPORTS

5.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

MRMapper & Mobile Apps (General):

1. **Data & Applications:** Continuous project to update and maintain data and applications throughout the year; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton
 - Updates to the data and applications on the site are continuously performed. Check back periodically at <https://mrmapper.mrpc.org> to see what's new.

Community-Related:

1. **Crocker Pond Recreation Area Trail Mapping:** Project to create a trail map of the Crocker Pond Rec. Area in Westminster with points of interest; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff finalized the first draft of the map and sent it to the Chair of the Crocker Pond Recreation Area Committee so that the Committee can review it and have the chance to provide feedback. GIS staff will incorporate any feedback that is received.
2. **Lunenburg Conservation Lands Mapping:** Project to create a series of “You Are Here” trail maps that will be installed at the kiosks and intersections of multiple conservation lands owned by the town; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - MRPC GIS staff colored the trails as dictated by the Town contact and updated the site maps accordingly. GIS staff also provided the sum of trail lengths by color by property.
 - GIS staff created a draft of a town-wide map that depicts the Conservation Commission trails and properties. After it was approved by the Town contact, an 11”x17” version was created.
3. **Westminster Parcel Updates:** Project to update the parcel data, maps and MRMapper sites for the Town of Westminster; Project Lead/Staff - Jason Stanton
 - We are currently working on updating the parcel data using Coordinate Geometry (COGO).
 - Once the parcel data is updated, we will update the paper maps and MRMapper sites for the Town.
4. **Shirley Parcel Updates:** Project to update the parcel data, maps and MRMapper sites for the Town of Shirley; Project Lead/Staff - Jason Stanton
 - We are currently working on updating the parcel data using Coordinate Geometry (COGO).
 - Once the parcel data is updated, we will update the paper maps and MRMapper sites for the Town.

Comprehensive Planning-Related:

1. **ADA Compliance Checklist Survey Creation:** Project to facilitate the collection of data regarding the ADA compliance of features and amenities of public spaces; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress
 - We have 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 developed a training manual for data collectors to use to complete these digital surveys and we will continue to provide any technical assistance as needed until the project is complete. Planning staff recently began the data collection process.
2. **Athol Exchange St Abutters Mapping:** A project to identify priority sites and property owners as the MRPC works to enable to the area's rejuvenation; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff is expecting to receive map updates from MRPC planning staff.
 - Once data regarding roadway width is received by GIS staff, they will work on calculating the area of excess roadway.
 - GIS staff was requested to begin creating a 3D model of the buildings adjacent to Exchange Street but cannot begin until the server transition has been completed.
2. **Fitchburg Trail Maps for the Field:** A project to create trail maps for field installation; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff was contacted by City staff to create trail maps that will be installed at parking kiosks and at trail intersections. GIS staff is waiting for information regarding the exact locations of the trail intersections and what they should be numbered/labeled as. In the meantime, GIS staff is resizing and preparing the map documents.
 - This project is expected to be completed by the end of March.
3. **Harvard Buildout Analysis:** A DLTa project to update the Build-Out Analysis and Analyze Fiscal Impact; Project Lead/Staff – John Hume/Jason Stanton
 - This project is complete.
4. **Sterling Aquifer Protection Bylaw Map:** A project to create a map depicting area affected by the proposed Aquifer Protection Bylaw; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff received a request from Sterling staff to create a map depicting the area that would be affected by the proposed Aquifer Protection Bylaw. GIS staff created the map and calculated the acreage and number of parcels affected by the proposed bylaw and the current bylaw.
 - This project is complete.

Transportation-Related:

1. **Data Collection & Analysis Program:** Program to collect and analyze various data sources in support of studies and regional databases: Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff collected new ACS demographic data that will aid in the completion of various reports and projects.

2. **Unified Planning Work Program:** Program to develop the annual UPWP; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/Brad Harris and Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff used new demographic data for the Montachusett region to update the analysis criteria for identifying Environmental Justice and Title VI populations.
3. **Walkability Study(s):** Program to improve walkability and access in identified study areas in Sterling and Townsend; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean / Brad Harris, Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff updated the Point of Interest map for the Townsend Walkability Study and used Town input to create a map of the study area. Data collection for these projects will continue in the spring and GIS staff will digitize the data as it is collected.
4. **Regional Pedestrian Plan:** Program to develop a regional bike plan based upon the statewide bike plan. Additionally, a program to develop a handheld app for use in the field to collect data on trails throughout the region: Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress
 - Development of the app is complete, and we are currently in the process of rolling this out to interested communities and organizations.
 - GIS staff finished recording the video for the WebApp tutorial and is working on editing it. An additional video for Apple devices will also be created.
 - In order to compile and analyze the most recent bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, GIS staff has begun to create maps that depict sidewalks, bike lanes and rail trails/pathways that will be sent to MRPC member communities for their confirmation, comment, and review of the data.

Transit-Related:

1. **MART Title VI Map Update:** Project to update the maps in MART’s Title VI report; Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale/Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff compiled the most recent ACS demographic data and used the data to update the maps used in MART’s Title VI report.
 - This project is complete.

Please contact Jason Stanton, GIS/IT Director and/or Kayla Kress, GIS Analyst for further information concerning GIS projects.

5.2 Planning and Development

Comprehensive Planning Division

District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA Applications (Round #2) – Approval Requested

Reviews and Awards for Services: District Local Technical Assistance

K. Chapman stated in response to a second solicitation, on or before March 2nd, 2021 a total of two (2) 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. **Ashburnham:** Mapping of infrastructure – water distribution system, sanitary sewer system and storm drainage infrastructure.

2. **Ayer:** Build-Out Study of the Downtown Ayer / Park Street FBC district (DAPSFBC).

R. Burke moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) recommends that #1 and #2 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 and #2) 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 (2021).
3. The award of services from the MRPC is subject to the:
 - a. Funding available to the MRPC during the program year (2021);
 - 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 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 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.

B. Yocum asked what a Form-Based Code district was. K. Chapman explained it is a type of zoning where you decide how you want your buildings to look. This would include how high your windows can be, how far back the buildings need to be from the sidewalk and what kind of roofline you can have.

Roll call vote followed.

Veronica Kell- yes

Stacie Donohue- yes

Russell Burke- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes
Robert Swartz- yes
Laura Shifrin- yes
Jaquelin Doherty- yes
G. Corbosiero- yes
Barbara Yocum- yes
Alyne Butland- yes

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

A full review of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) continues. This review is focused upon identifying any information which needs to be compiled and any priorities that need to be removed, revised, or added. Work to locate and access any necessary data sources and draft potential revisions has likewise begun. MRPC will hold a CEDS meeting on February 23rd at 5 p.m. to provide a status report on the CEDS Update along with a presentation by Mary Giannetti, Director of Resource Development, Heywood Hospital concerning the update of Heywood Healthcare 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment – MRPC was contracted to assist Heywood with this project. MRPC also anticipates a contract to assist HealthAlliance to assist to update their 2018 Community Health Needs Assessment.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director or Chris McDermott concerning this program.

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

This 3-year grant award, beginning October 1, 2019, is for \$300,000. Funds have been utilized and allocated for several projects. While all funds appear to be utilized/allocated, MRPC encourages communities to continue to submit Site Nominations in hope of additional future funding.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director concerning this program.

MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (EOEEA)

MRPC was awarded an FY20 Planning Assistance grant for \$48,000 to fund Master Plan Chapters for the Town of Hubbardston. MRPC will present the Land Use Element in its entirety to the Hubbardston Planning Board on January 21, 2020. MRPC was also awarded \$18,000 in November 2020 to complete the Implementation Element of the Master Plan.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jennifer Burney, Senior Planner for further information concerning this project for Hubbardston.

AYER ADA SELF-EVALUATION AND TRANSITION PLAN

The MRPC has a contract with the Town of Ayer for \$30,000 to complete this plan. The Town is utilizing an ADA Planning Grant Award from the MA Office on Disability to the Town of Ayer and has used DLTA 2020

Grant for matching funds. Moreover, MRPC is contributing to the project in terms of Public Rights of Way (PROW) where MRPC's Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) (Transportation Department) funds are being used to complete this component.

Jonathan Vos continues completing ramp slopes of municipal buildings and Blair Haney is initiating work on the ADA Transition Plan Report.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESOURCES (DOER)

Karen Chapman continues to assist the Towns of Royalston, Ashby, Templeton, Lunenburg, and Hubbardston with their Green Communities Grant Awards. Tasks associated with managing the grant awards include reporting, procurement, and data management, as well as project initiation and management. Royalston is looking to complete their Designation Grant projects and submit a competitive grant application this year. Ashby and Lunenburg are looking to close out their existing competitive grant awards and apply for new grant funds. Karen will complete Final Reports for these communities and assist with competitive grant applications. Templeton and Hubbardston are working on projects from their designation grant award. Karen is assisting to get projects completed.

Karen prepared and submitted Annual Reports for the towns of Ashby, Athol, Fitchburg, Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley, and Westminster that were due November 6th. John Hume did the same for the Annual Report for Townsend. Questions from reviewers on the Annual Reports are beginning to come in and these will be addressed with the communities.

Karen submitted a Green Communities Designation application to DOER on December 23rd on behalf of the Town of Clinton. Questions will come back from the application reviewers; which Karen will address. Then we wait for word from the state on designation.

This contract with DOER ends on May 31, 2021. A new assistance grant solicitation will be released in March and due in May to apply for funds to continue to assist our communities with becoming and staying Green Communities. We plan on applying on behalf of communities interested in our assistance.

Please contact Karen Chapman, Senior Planner for further information concerning the Green Communities Program.

MA DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESOURCES (DOER), AFFORDABLE ACCESS REGIONAL COORDINATION (AARC)

A grant in the amount of \$104,039 has been received from the MA Department of Energy Resources (DOER). The DOER's Energy Efficiency Division is funding regional planning agencies (RPAs) to develop programs and provide clean energy training to municipal or community organizations that support low-income populations. This funding will allow RPAs to increase knowledge of the Commonwealth's low-income residential clean energy programs, expanding the reach of existing successful programs. The contract began October 9, 2019 and ends September 30, 2021. MRPC is scheduling outreach meetings and training in all our communities as soon as we can under COVID-19 restrictions.

Please contact Karen Chapman, Senior Planner for further information concerning the AARC project. Moving forward, the new MRPC staff person, Senior Planner Meagan Donoghue, will be project manager for this project.

HEALTHY AGING TUFTS MOMENTUM FUND

MEC has a \$10,000 grant for a pilot program to assist the Towns of Ashburnham, Westminster, and Winchendon to become certified Age Friendly. This contract ends December 2020. Research for comprehensive assessment continues. Staff are seeking a grant deadline extension to June 30, 2021 guarantee project completion by the end of the grant and help ameliorate difficulties created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information.

HEALTHY AGING TUFTS FUND

MRPC was awarded a \$75,000 grant to help all the non-Age Friendly communities in the Montachusett Region become certified as Age Friendly. MRPC received the executed contract on July 24, 2020. MRPC staff are currently finalizing a virtual public forum for all non-Age Friendly communities and several other participating organizations, including Fitchburg State University, to review the Age Friendly process, answer questions, and establish working groups with each participating community. Comprehensive assessment and community engagement plans to serve as benchmark indicators are in the process of being submitted and evaluated by the grant manager.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MA DOT), MORE RIDES PLANNING PROJECT

The Montachusett Enterprise Center (MEC) was awarded \$48,000 by Mass DOT. The executed contract was received July 23, 2020 with an end date of June 30, 2021. Seniors and disabled residents within the Montachusett Region have expressed persistent gaps in transportation access for many needs – primarily medical, employment, education, and other health/social services. MRPC staff will work to identify the resources and partners needed to create a Transportation Connections program to help address these gaps. Additional staff have been hired and will assist with this grant project.

MRPC staff and the Town of Ayer have assembled a steering committee that has begun to evaluate other community ride connector programs to service both health and employment needs. Currently areas of focus have been selected by the steering committee for in-depth data gathering and analysis to determine suitability with local resources and needs, which continues apace.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information.

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION (MA DOT) WINCHENDON VOLUNTEER DRIVER PLANNING PROJECT

The Montachusett Enterprise Center (MEC) was awarded \$24,000 by MassDOT. The executed contract received July 23, 2020 with an end date of June 30, 2021 Seniors and disabled residents within the Montachusett Region have expressed persistent gaps in transportation access for many needs – primarily medical, employment, education, and other health/social services. staff are continuing analysis of data to support the further development of various strategies that can be used to meet and mitigate these persistent gaps in local area transportation. Additional staff have been hired to help complete this grant project.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information.

COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT OF NORTH CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS

MRPC recently signed a contract with Heywood Hospital. Heywood Healthcare requires assistance from the MRPC to conduct and complete a 2021 Community Health Assessment for Heywood Hospital and Athol Hospital. Professional services are expected by MRPC to achieve the timely completion of the relevant tasks, by Thursday, September 30, 2021. The report will consist of a broad scope of data from multiple sources including but not limited to primary and secondary data sources, input from stakeholder interviews, community member focus groups, and a survey to provide a status of health in the service area. MRPC updated the 2018 Community Health Assessment, and this will provide staff with a model. Contact Matt Leger, Principal Planner for further information.

STERLING COMPLETE STREETS

The MassDOT Complete Streets Funding Program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. Eligible municipalities must pass a Complete Streets Policy, which Sterling has done, and develop a Prioritization Plan. MRPC has a contract with the Town of Sterling to conduct and complete a Sterling Complete Streets Tier 2 Prioritization Plan. MRPC staff Jen Burney has been compiling existing data and studies and is in the process of procuring engineering services to assist with Project Identification and the Prioritization Plan itself.

Community Development Division

The Executive Director will present his report on the CDBG projects at the MRPC Meeting under Section 4, Administrative Matters.

MONTACHUSETT ENTERPRISE CENTER, INC.

The Executive Director will present his report on MEC at the MRPC Meeting under Section 4, Administrative Matters.

5.3 Transit

MRPC staff is working on the following projects:

1. Support of Transportation Planning Operations (Referred to as “3C” which is defined as comprehensive, cooperative, and continuing transportation planning process): To provide administrative and technical support to the 3C Process such as providing community liaison and short-term technical planning assistance on mass transit matters to the followings: local officials and member communities, state representatives and federal representatives. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

- **Ayer:** Staff discussed with Town representative the construction issues of Depot Square improvements. Also, followed up with National Grid representatives the issues regarding the temporary lighting at Depot Square.
- **Public Meetings:** Staff met with the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – February 10th; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – February 17th; Staff attended a webinar on (Expanding Mobility with the Community Transit Grant Program) presented by MassDOT and Mass Mobility-January 26th.

2. Technical Assistance to MART: Provide technical planning services and assistance to the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) which included the coordination of short-range special transit planning projects, technical assistance at RTA advisory board meetings. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

- **Ayer Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza:** During the past month, MRPC assisted MART and the Town of Ayer to move forward the construction of Phase III of Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza located at the MBTA Station. Phase III of the project is the restroom facility at the pedestrian plaza. This part of the project is in the design. Staff is also working with National Grid to

provide Depot Square with temporary lighting. MART anticipates completion of the project by Spring 2021.

- **Shirley Station Commuter Parking:** MRPC staff continues working with MBTA representatives on redevelopment of the Shirley MBTA Station commuter parking lot improvement. This project is in the pre-design phase.
- **Athol-Orange Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and is also working on a new schedule to provide Saturday service for the Athol-Orange Shuttle. MRPC is also providing relevant recommendations to MART. Since the pandemic started in last March 2020 the ridership of the Athol Shuttle maintained an average of 323 rider per week.
- **Worcester Commuter Shuttle:** Staff continues working on the development of the new bus route and corresponding schedule for the proposed Fitchburg/Canton/Worcester Commuter Shuttle and providing MART with relevant recommendations. Last month, staff conducted a bus route survey “dry run” regarding this potential service. The Shuttle has been funded \$90,000 from the State Workforce Development Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) Improvement Program funds. The new shuttle service started on February 22nd.
- **MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020:** Staff continues to attend the bi-weekly virtual online meetings with AECOM Consultant regarding MART’s Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020 and reviewed updates. The report is still in draft format and the consultant is still doing edits and revisions to the study.
- **MART Operation Managers Meetings:** Staff attended MART Operation Managers monthly meeting virtually online to discuss the operation strategies and update on the impact of COVID-19 on transit operations. Impacts include low ridership system-wide and empty parking garages in the four facilities MART operates.
- **APC-Route Performance:** During the past month MRPC staff continues to assist MART on the obtaining a consultant for Automatic Passenger Counters (APC) and Route Performance; reviewed and evaluated 3 proposals submitted by consultants.

3. Bus Stop ADA Accessibility Evaluation: During the past month MRPC staff continued to compile data on the Path to Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI)** (which is a State recommendation). PATI is assessing the accessibility of the bus stops in the Massachusetts Regional Transit Authority (MART) Region. The purpose of the study is to determine the level of accessibility of each stop in MART system by collecting field information and determines its ranking for capital improvement (critical, high, medium, low). The higher the “score” the less a bus stop complies with accessibility requirements and the more it needs capital improvements. This will be a multiyear project to assess all the stops in the MART system. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

*** (the Governor created a Council to assess the barriers to healthy aging and living independently in the communities, hence the Governor’s Council to Address Aging was created (EO576). The Council had 5 work groups, each focusing on large barriers to independent living at an older age, including housing, employment, long-term care, transportation, and technology. The work groups came back with a set of recommendations to the Governor at the end of 2018. Among other things, the transportation work group recommended that transit officials across the State understand the accessibility of each bus, rail, subway stop in the Commonwealth}.*

Contact George Kahale, Transit Projects Director for further information.

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)

The MJTC met Wednesday February 10, 2021. The next MJTC meeting will be held on Wednesday March 10th at 2:30 PM. At the February meeting, members were given updates related to the developments of the FFY 2022-2023 TIP and the FFY 2022 UPWP. For copies of the meeting handouts, please follow this link: [February 10, 2021](#)

Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Montachusett MPO met on Wednesday February 17, 2021. The major topics were updates to the development of the FFY 2022-2023 TIP and the FFY 2022 UPWP. In addition, a presentation was made by Green International on behalf of the town of Clinton. This presentation was on MassDOT Project #610681 Reconstruction of Sterling Street (Route 62), From Willow/Lawrence Street to Main Street. A copy of the presentation can be found through the following link: [MPO Meeting Handouts for February 17, 2021](#) The presentation is titled: *Clinton Sterling Street Handout*.

Unified Planning Work Program FFY 2021

The MRPC has begun work on various tasks included in the FFY 2021 UPWP which runs from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021.

- 1. Support of 3C:** Program to provide assistance with Various meetings and activities with Communities, Regional Groups, Federal and State Officials; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty
 - Staff attended various meetings including on February 10th the initial meeting of the “John Fitch Highway - A Climate Resilient Corridor” Steering Committee. MRPC was invited to be part of the Steering Committee. The City of Fitchburg, through its Department of Public Works, received funding from the Commonwealth’s Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grant program to begin a redesign of the John Fitch Highway corridor between Lunenburg Street and Summer Street to mitigate flooding, reduce urban heat island impacts, and provide equitable mobility and access options in this environmental justice neighborhood. Named *John Fitch Highway - A Climate Resilient Corridor*, this project plans to employ best practices in the development of a preliminary design including nature-based solutions (like rain gardens) and Complete Streets elements (such as shared use paths and improved crosswalks) within the right of way to improve the corridor and the City’s climate resilience. John Fitch Highway is home to critical assets that will be better protected today and into the future under climate change through this project.
 - Staff participated in a webinar put on by the TET Coalition (The Eastern Transportation Coalition) titled RITIS-PDA Suite User Group on February 11, 2021. The web meeting provided a presentation on the new Transportation Energy Analytics Dashboard and a review of new RITIS tools and recent enhancements.
- 2. Unified Planning Work Program:** Program to develop the annual UPWP; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/Brad Harris
 - Staff continued to work on the development of the FFY 2022 UPWP. This included a review of task requests from various communities.
 - At the January 26th MARPA/MassDOT meeting, information on funding for the FFY 2022 contract year was presented.

		Combined		
		Total	5303	PL
Montachusett RPA	FFY 2022	\$747,979	\$80,719	\$667,260
	FFY 2021	\$770,478	\$99,021	\$671,457
	Difference	-\$22,499	-\$18,302	-\$4,197

- GIS staff used new demographic data for the Montachusett region to update the analysis criteria for identifying Environmental Justice and Title VI populations.

3. Development of TIP: Program to develop the annual TIP; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/Brad Harris

- Staff met with MassDOT on February 9th for “TIP Readiness Day”, to discuss project statuses and readiness.
- Updated project information and Target allotments were presented to the MJTC and the MPO.
- Staff began to work on the development of financial scenarios for project placement.

Montachusett Federal Target Comparison
FFY 2021-2025 TIP vs. FFY 2022-2026 TIP

TOTAL REGIONAL TARGET COMPARISON			
FFY 2021-2025 TIP Target \$		FFY 2022-2026 TIP Target \$	
	Target		Target
FFY 2021		FFY 2021	
Total Federal Aid ►	\$10,851,652		
FFY 2022		FFY 2022	
Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,072,618	Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,072,618
FFY 2023		FFY 2023	
Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,314,453	Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,314,453
FFY 2024		FFY 2024	
Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,462,749	Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,462,749
FFY 2025		FFY 2025	
Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,195,149	Total Federal Aid ►	\$11,195,149
		FFY 2026	
		Total Federal Aid ►	\$10,904,432
			Total Federal Aid
		FFY 2022	\$11,072,618
		FFY 2023	\$11,314,453
		FFY 2024	\$11,462,749
		FFY 2025	\$11,195,149
		FFY 2026	\$10,904,432

4. GIS Mapping & Analysis: Program to conduct GIS work & support; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress

- Refer to GIS updates for information on various projects for MassDOT.

5. Data Collection & Analysis Program: Program to collect and analyze various data sources in support of studies and regional databases: Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty

- Traffic count guidance was received from MassDOT.
- MRPC staff have updated the regional traffic count listing (147 counts) and hope to begin the process of hiring traffic interns in March/April.
- Due to COVID restraints and staff working from home, we will not be taking community requests at this time.

- 6. Pavement Management Systems:** Program to collect, analyze and support pavement conditions on regional roadways; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty
 - Staff is continuing to develop a schedule for the 2021 program.
- 7. Intersection Analysis:** Program to review regional locations to identify issues and/or deficiencies and develop potential alternatives to address them; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/George Snow
 - Staff received information from the WPI students working on the Route 2A/Route 12/Route 31 intersection in West Fitchburg. Their analysis is complete, and they are now looking to meet with City officials to discuss the study. MRPC will plan to participate in this meeting once it is established.
- 8. Walkability Study(s):** Program to improve walkability and access in identified study areas in Sterling and Townsend; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean / Brad Harris, Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff updated the Point of Interest map for the Townsend Walkability Study and created a map of the study area.
 - Both Sterling and Townsend have established their study areas for this project.
 - Data collection has begun and will continue into the spring.
 - Public outreach and further analysis will occur once the nicer weather is here.
- 9. Fitchburg Corridor Study:** Program to review and identify issues and deficiencies along the Route 12 corridor in Fitchburg; Program Manager – Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/ George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty
 - Staff met with City officials at the end of January to discuss the study area and scope of the Corridor Study.
 - After this meeting, the study area was redefined based upon local input and concerns.
 - Work continued on crash data and traffic volume information.
- 10. Regional Pedestrian Plan:** Program to develop a regional ped plan based upon the statewide ped plan: Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/George Snow, Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff Map templates for the Pedestrian Plan were developed.
 - Sidewalk maps have been started for each community to establish existing pedestrian infrastructure. It is expected that these maps will be sent out to all MRPC communities for review.
- 11. ADA Prow Database:** Program developed to provide technical assistance to member communities with issues related to the Public Right of Way (PROW) elements of their ADA Plans: Project Lead/Staff – George Snow/
 - Staff completed ADA PROW Data Collection Guides for the Curb Ramp, Sidewalk, Crosswalk and Accessible Pedestrian Signal Surveys.
 - Staff worked with MassDOT District 2 and the town of Athol on developing a Route 2A sidewalk project.
- 12. Roundabouts and The MRPC Region:** Program developed to review, analyze, and document roundabouts in member communities: Project Lead/Staff – George Snow/
 - Staff updated the draft inventory of the circular intersections in the Region after receiving input from member communities.
 - Staff initiated development of a draft of the Roundabouts in the Region study.

Please contact Brad Harris, Transportation Project Director, George Snow, Principal Planner, Sheri Bean, Principal Planner and/or Brian Doherty, Principal Planner for further information concerning the Transportation program.

6. New Business

This time is being reserved for topics that the chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

E. Wood asked if there was a comprehensive list of all opportunities and or services available to communities. G. Eaton will create a simple list, will review it with all the department heads and will send that out within three business days to E. Wood as well as all Commissioners.

7. Adjournment

Next MJTC Meeting – March 10, 2021 – 2:30pm to 4:00pm

Next MPO Meeting – March 17, 2021 - 1:00pm to 2:00pm ([Remote GoToMeeting](#))

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Meeting Attendance					
Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	PRESENT	ABSENT
Ashburnham BOS	A	Ashburnham	7.2020		X
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	X	
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001		X
Vacant	A	Ashby			X
Doherty, Jacqueline	M	Athol	7.2020	X	
Rebecca Bialecki	A	Athol	7.2017		X
Vacant	M	Ayer			X
Copeland, Shaun/ Archambault, Mark	A	Ayer	7.2020		X
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011		X
Vacant	A	Clinton			X
Lowitt, Peter	N/V	DREZ	7.2001		X
Butland, Alyne	M	Fitchburg	7.2020	X	
Skwierawski, Tom	A	Fitchburg	7.2020		X
Swartz, Robert	M	Gardner	7.2019	X	
Cruz, Maribel	A	Gardner	8.2017		X
Burke, Russ	M	Groton	7.2016	X	

Cunningham, Peter	A	Groton	9.2020		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
Brenner, Matthew	M	Lunenburg	7.2020		X
Marino, James	A	Lunenburg	7.2020		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
Oelfke, Bill	A	Shirley	7.2020		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
Bennett, Jeff	A	Templeton	7.2020		X
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2018	X	
Kell, Veronica	A	Townsend		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	

GUESTS PRESENT: Elizabeth Wood, Leominster

STAFF PRESENT: George Kahale, Holly Ford, Brad Harris, Karen Chapman, Glenn Eaton, Meaghan Donoghue, Linda

Parmenter, Linda Quinlivan, Jason Stanton

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:

February 4, 2021 MRPC Minutes

March 4, 2021 Meeting Handout