

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)



Thursday, January 7, 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 October 1, 2020 MRPC Minutes

P. Cunningham moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the December 3, 2020 minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Jacqueline Doherty– yes
James Marino- yes
John Telepciak- Abstained
Matthew Brenner– yes
Patty Page- Abstained
Peter Cunningham- Abstained
Bob Swartz – yes
Roger Hoyt– yes
Stacey Donahue– yes
Barbara Yocum– Abstained

3. Cash Schedule – December 2020

G. Eaton read the December 2020 cash schedule.

Opening Balance \$452,248.21; Total receipts this month \$123,683.14; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$575,931.35; Less: amount of this warrant \$177,481.44; Balance after this warrant \$398,449.91.

P. Cunningham asked if this information could be emailed prior to the meeting so it could be reviewed before the meeting. L. Quinlivan stated she would do her best to have it available to all, the day before the meeting providing the meeting was not held on the first of the month as the information would not be complete and/or available before the first of the month.

L. Shifrin asked if a separate spreadsheet could be provided to show a representation of exactly where the funds are being spent for each grant. This would help to determine best use of tax dollars.

G. Eaton will look into creating a spreadsheet showing a more detailed explanation of funds spent per contract.

L. Shifrin moved to accept the December 2020 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Barbara Yocum– yes
Guy Corboseiro- yes
Jaqueline Doherty– yes
James Marino- yes
John Telepciak- yes
Laura Shifrin – yes
Maribel Cruz– yes
Matthew Brenner- yes
Patty Page– yes
Peter Cunningham– yes
Bob Swartz- yes
Stacey Donahue- yes
Roger Hoyt- yes

4. Administrative Matters

4.1 COVID-19 Office Space Management Update

G. Eaton stated he continues to monitor the daily COVID-19 statewide case reports issued each evening by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). Due to a spike in cases, a new directive was sent out to all employees indicating that MRPC employees may only visit the office briefly, and one at a time, until further notice. The relevant email was sent to all MRPC employees on December 2nd for implementation starting December 4th.

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

All regional planning agencies continue to educate our respective legislative delegations concerning the adverse financial impacts of H. 48 upon regional planning agencies and councils of government in Massachusetts.

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

G. Eaton explained we received \$25,000 to provide up to 25 \$1,000 grants to small businesses. Originally this program expired on December 31, 2020, it has been extended through January 31, 2021.

Highlights of this program include the following:

- A total of 18 business grant requests have been received by MRPC staff. No less than 15 of the 18 grant applicants did not supply all the information required.
- Three awards of \$1,000 each have been made to businesses in Fitchburg, Groton, and Westminster.
- MRPC staff reached out to the remaining grant recipients and offered them the opportunity to submit all required documents.

- As of January 7th, approximately four of these 15 businesses responded affirmatively and provided all, required documents: and,
- Another four business grants are anticipated to be approved and an equal number of checks processed by January 8th.

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

G. Eaton stated he still needs to prepare and send out contracts for the three food banks which he plans to do this month however we have ramped up the marketing for the Microenterprise Assistance Program.

Chris McDermott has been pulled in to assist with the upfront work or taking the phone calls of potential applicants.

MRPC has received eight inquiries into the Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP). Applications have been provided to the inquiries. MRPC staff are waiting for the applications to be submitted.

This program will be managed through December 31, 2021.

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

The goal would be to develop one strategic plan for both organizations to be completed by the spring 2021. Elements of this plan are proposed to include the following:

- Mission statement
- An assessment of current resources; and,
- Outline of goals, objectives, and activities for the future.

Each section should be a few paragraphs to a few pages long.

A draft of the MEC, Inc. plan and two final strategic plan examples were provided to the attendees of a prior meeting of the Commissioners.

- A draft of the strategic plan for the Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC, a private-non-profit affiliate of the MRPC) and the MRPC
- Strategic Plan for the North Quabbin Community Coalition's (NQCC) Prevention, Addiction, Recovery, and Treatment (PART) Task Force; and,
- 2015 – 2020 Strategic Plan of the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC),
<http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FINAL-StrategicPlan-12-2-14-web.pdf>

G. Eaton provided and presented a draft of MEC and MRPC strategic plans.

4.6 Budget Updates for Commissioners' and Related Policy Matters

A more detailed FY21 MRPC Budget will be presented to the Commissioners on February 4, 2021. A summary of the current budget, as of December 30, 2020, is as follows:

- Total revenue was projected to be: \$ 1,824,395.93
- Total expenses were projected to be: \$ 1,694,424.16
- Total surplus was projected to be: \$ 129,971.77

The increase in the total amount of revenue is due to a variety of new contracts that have been awarded to the MRPC that will be described in more detail at the next meeting of the Commissioners that will take place on February 7th.

The State's inclusion of \$3 million for the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program in its annual FY21 budget, of which the MRPC anticipates receiving approximately \$207,000+/- for Program Year 14 (PY14), will provide an additional bucket of funds to the MRPC for the last half of FY21 and the first half of FY22. This will add another \$103,500+/- to the FY21 budget as about 50% of the allocation will be expended in FY21 (through June 30, 2021) and the other half of the allocation will be expended between July 1 through December 31, 2021.

G. Eaton stated an updated FY21 budget for the MRPC will be provided at the next meeting of the Commissioners that will take place on February 7th. In addition, A draft of the MRPC's FY22 budget will be completed in January and presented to the Commissioners on February 4, 2021 as per the G.L. of MA c. 40B, s. 7.

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

G. Eaton stated we should have a copy of the FY20 Audit by mid-March. There will be a discussion at the next Meeting to determine a date for an audit presentation.

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

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

- Once the Trail Data Collection App and instruction materials have been finalized and are available to the public, they will be sent to the Committee so they can use it to GPS the trails that were not GPS'd by MRPC staff. The new trail data from the committee will be incorporated into the Trail Map of the Crocker Pond Recreation Area and sent to the Committee for review.

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 staff added all the new trail updates into to the trail inventory.
- GIS staff discussed the timeline and finalized some map specifics with the Town contact during a phone conversation.
- Staff updated the previously created conservation lands maps and created four new trail maps of Northwest Town Forest, Table Rock Conservation Area, Proctor Park, and Clark's Hill. These maps were sent to the Town contact for review.

3. **Templeton Cemetery:** Project to update the Town's cemetery GIS data which will be used to create internal (with editing/database maintenance functionality) and public MRMapper WebApps; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton

- A draft data set was sent to the Town for their review and we are awaiting a response to finalize the data. A draft WebApp has been created and tested. Once the data is finalized, we will

finalize the WebApp and present it to the Town for their review. This project is currently on hold until the Town can get back to us regarding some database questions.

4. Winchendon Zoning Map Updates: Project to update the Town's Official Zoning Map; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton

- The decision was made to update the zoning layers to match the current parcel data where applicable. This project is currently on hold until the Town can collect data regarding the origins of the zoning districts and provide it to the MRPC.

G. Corbosiero asked why this project was on hold? J. Stanton explained we are waiting for clarification on what language was used as well as other specifics to make sure we are providing the correct information. G. Corbosiero stated he would get back to Jason to help with some of the clarification.

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'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 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. This project remains ongoing.

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 updated the map to reflect changed desired by planning staff.

3. Harvard Buildout Analysis: A DLTa project to update the Build-Out Analysis and Analyze Fiscal Impact; Project Lead/Staff – John Hume/Jason Stanton

- We worked with the Town on a buildout style analysis. We have updated a scenario-modeling spreadsheet template and created a series of maps detailing current areas of developed, absolute and partial development constraints and developable lands in Town. The goal is to assess what current zoning will result in regarding full development in terms of residential and commercial development.
- This project is complete.

S. Donahue commented that she didn't think this project was complete as stated above. J. Hume mentioned that GIS has completed their portion of the project. Planning and Development is still working on the project and has scheduled a meeting with the town of Harvard for January 25, 2021 at 7:00 pm.

4. Hubbardston Master Plan - Land Use Section: A DLTa Project for the Land Use Section of the Hubbardston Master Plan; Project Lead/Staff – Jennifer Burney/Jason Stanton

- A series of nine maps were created for this project.
- This project is complete.

5. Lancaster Village-Center 40R District: A DLTa project to draft language for a new Center-Village overlay district; Project Lead/Staff – Karen Chapman/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff created a map displaying the parcels recommended for inclusion in a 40R application and in the Center Village Overlay District and sent it to MRPC planning staff.
- This project is complete.

6. Shirley Affordable Housing Production Plan: A DLTA project to identify undeveloped town-owned properties that could potentially be developed for affordable housing; Project Lead/Staff – Karen Chapman/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff sent the updated map and parcel list, along with the demographic and housing data, to MRPC Planning Staff.
- This project is complete.

7. Sterling Housing Production Plan Implementation: A DLTA project to explore the adoption of affordable housing on non-complying lots; Project Lead/Staff – Karen Chapman/Kayla Kress

- The criteria for identifying a non-conforming lot were finalized by the Committee members of the Housing Initiatives so GIS staff used them to identify the undeveloped, non-environmental constrained, non-complying lots.
- GIS staff created a map depicting these parcels and provided it, along with a list, to MRPC Planning staff.
- This project is complete.

8. Sterling Transportation Master Plan Chapter: A DLTA project to update the Transportation Chapter of the Sterling Master Plan; Project Lead/Staff – John Hume/Jonathan Vos and Kayla Kress

- No more maps or data deliverables were requested so this project is complete.

9. Townsend Chapter 43D Feasibility Study: A DLTA project to confirm the feasibility of the Town adopting M.G.L 43D – Expedited Local Permitting Program; Project Lead/Staff – John Hume/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff received feedback from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs regarding the exact data that is needed for inclusion in the application and the best methodology for sending the data.
- GIS staff prepared and sent the data accordingly.
- This project is complete.

L. Shifrin questioned if this was in fact complete as stated. J. Stanton and J. Hume stated the GIS part of this project is complete and Planning and Development are still working on this project. Additional details of this project can be found in the Planning and Development portion of the report.

10. Westminster Open Space and Recreation Plan Update: A DLTA project to update the maps, the statistics generated from the maps, and the data tables; Project Lead – Kayla Kress

- GIS staff received the finalized Action Plan items from the Town and digitized them. GIS staff updated the Action Plan map with the new items and sent the final map to the Town.
- This project is complete.

Transportation-Related:

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

- GIS staff received confirmation that our submitted changes to the state's Roadway Inventory File were approved

2. 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

- GIS staff is currently working on finding data relating to the number of residents from Fitchburg, Leominster, and Gardner that work in Devens

3. Walkability Study(s): Program to develop and monitor regional performance measures; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty, Kayla Kress

- GIS staff created maps of Sterling and Townsend that identify the main points of interests within the towns. The maps will be used to identify the study areas for the projects
- Townsend has requested that data relating to the Squannacook River Rail Trail be added to their points of interest map so that the Town can better identify their desired study area
- Sterling staff identified the desired study area for the project. GIS staff has created a quarter mile buffer around the roadways and points of interest in the chosen area to create a finalized study area. GIS staff is currently finalizing the map that depicts the study area

4. Regional Pedestrian Plan: Program to develop a regional bike plan based upon the statewide bike plan:
Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/George Snow/Kayla Kress/Jason Stanton

- GIS staff gathered statistics relating to the percentage of people from each Montachusett community that bike or walk to work.
- We have completed the development of an app to collect popular bike route data in the region. Users are currently adding data and comments to the app.
- GIS staff collected data from a couple of popular bike data apps.
- Transportation and GIS staff met to review data from the popular bike route comment app and other relevant bike route data for the region to compile a master database.

5. 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/Jason Stanton

- We have completed the process of developing surveys, based on Esri's Survey123 technology, to be used in collecting ADA compliance data on PROW's in the Montachusett Region. There will be four different surveys in the app, focusing on Curb Ramps, Crosswalks, Pedestrian Signals and Sidewalks. We anticipate that field data collection by transportation staff will begin soon.

6. Roundabouts and The MRPC Region: Program to develop a handheld app for use in the field to collect data on trails throughout the region: Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Brad Harris, Sheri Bean

- Development of the app is complete, and we are currently in the process of rolling this out to interested communities and organizations.
- GIS staff has recorded the video for the Android tutorial and is in the process of editing it. Additional videos for Apple and the WebApp are being worked on now.

Transit-Related:

1. Route Calculations: Project to maintain an updated record of the lengths of bus routes within each community; Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff reviewed the new schedule for the Wachusett Shuttle and established the new routes that needed to be calculated.
- GIS staff mapped out the new routes (open-door and closed-door) and separated them by community. Staff updated the spreadsheet and sent to MRPC Transit Staff
- This project is complete.

2. Shirley Station Commuter Parking: Project to redevelop and improve the Shirley MBTA Station Commuter Parking Lot; Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff transposed the boundaries of the potential parking easements onto the PDF CAD plan previously created by consultants. Staff also added annotation of the dimensions and area of the potential easements.
- 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

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

A full review of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) continues. The CEDS was published in July 2019 and therefore needs to be updated to account for COVID-19 and the ensuing economic downturn it precipitated. 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 staff is also putting together an RFP to hire a consultant to do a Marketing Analysis of the Montachusett Region.

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 last winter to fund Master Plan Chapters for the Town of Hubbardston. MRPC continues to work on a Housing Element and an Open Space Element and the Land Use Element will be presented to the community soon. MRPC was also awarded funds in November 2020 to complete the Implementation Element of the Master Plan.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information concerning this project for Hubbardston.

DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA)

MRPC staff is working on the following projects:

1. Ashburnham: Housing Master Plan Chapter and Wetlands Bylaw Update; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- Karen and the newly hired staff person, Jennifer Burney are working to complete the Wetlands Bylaw project. A meeting is scheduled with the Planning Board on January 20th to review a potential draft of the bylaw.
- Karen and the newly hired staff person Chris McDermott are working to complete the Housing Master Plan and will also present status at the Jan. 20th meeting with the Planning Board.

2. Ashby: Natural Resource Protection Bylaw; Project Managers, John Hume and Karen Chapman

- John Hume and Karen Chapman have completed work on this project.

3. **Athol:** Millers River Greenway Planning Assistance; Project Manager, John Hume and Karen Chapman.

- MRPC staff will complete work on this project in December with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments who are partners in this project and are working for the Town of Orange. MRPC met with the stakeholders in Athol and Orange, as well as FRCOG to review the white paper on Dec. 22nd. This project is completed.

4. **Athol:** Urban Renewal Planning Assistance (Phase 2);

- The final report is being drafted.

5. **Ayer:** ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan. Project matched with ADA Planning Grant from MA Office on Disability to the Town of Ayer. Project Managers, John Hume and Jonathan Vos.

- John Hume and Jonathan Vos completed a self-evaluation assessment at all municipal buildings and specified parks. Evaluation of ramp slopes is the next step. The DLTA portion of this project is complete.

6. **Harvard:** Build-Out Analysis Update and Fiscal Impact Analysis; Project Manager, John Hume

- MRPC is working to finish this project and a meeting with the Harvard Planning Board to present the final product has been scheduled for January 25th.

7. **Hubbardston:** Land Use Master Plan Chapter; Project Manager, John Hume

- MRPC has completed a final draft of this project that will be presented to Hubbardston Planning Board.

8. **Lancaster:** Draft language for a new center-village zoning district or overlay district; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- Karen has been meeting with the Planning Board virtually discussing the Village Center Bylaw, as well as a map and spreadsheet created by Kayla Kress, our GIS Analyst, that summarizes all the potential parcels to be included in the new overlay district. A final report is being presented to the Planning Board on Jan. 25th.

9. **Lunenburg:** ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan (Phase 2); Project Managers, John Hume and Jonathan Vos.

- Phase 1 was completed using the last round of DLTA. Jonathan Vos and Blair Haney have completed all data collection and are working to write a report.

M. Brenner asked if there is an expected completion date for the report. J. Hume stated all data has been collected and we have a Sr. Planner currently working with J. Vos to write the report. We anticipate a meeting at the beginning of February to discuss the report.

10. **Petersham:** Community survey, facilitating public input at community meetings, and identifying any funding options concerning the Nichewaug Inn & Academy building; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- Karen Chapman has been meeting virtually with local officials. The survey was mailed to all households and was also available online via Survey Monkey and is now completed and analyzed. The public input at a community meeting is yet to be scheduled due to COVID restrictions. Karen is researching all the funding possibilities for redevelopment of the property as part of the project.

11. **Shirley:** Housing Production Plan; Project Manager, Karen Chapman and Blair Haney

- The final draft Housing Production Plan is being drafted with a meeting scheduled with the Planning Board on January 13th.

12. **Sterling:** Transportation Master Plan Chapter; Project Manager, John Hume

- MRPC is addressing additional comments made by the Sterling Master Plan Committee. The remaining work on this project shall be funded under a grant awarded to MRPC from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

13. **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; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- MRPC met with Sterling's Housing Committee back in September to provide a draft bylaw for Accessory Dwelling Units and mapping work done by the GIS Analyst, Kayla Kress, for non-complying lots available for affordable housing. Changes to the draft bylaw were made as requested by the Housing Committee and were presented on October 27th. Also, at the October 27th meeting, the Housing Committee members discussed draft criteria for determining if non-complying lots would be a viable option for developing affordable housing. Karen met with the Housing Committee on Dec. 21st to discuss the final draft bylaw amendments for Accessory Dwelling Units and non-complying lots to be utilized for affordable housing.

14. **Townsend:** Amend zoning bylaws to provide more age restricted market rate housing opportunities in Town; Project Manager, Christopher McDermott.

- MRPC staff has been meeting/communicating with the Land Use Department staff on a regular basis as refinement of the bylaw continues. A Public Hearing will be held on January 11th.

15. **Townsend:** Provide statistical data to confirm the feasibility of the Town adopting M.G.L. 43D – Expedited Local Permitting Program; Project Managers, John Hume and Kayla Kress.

- John Hume and Kayla Kress completed data collection and mapping products for this project prior to December 31. Kayla Kress is now drafting a final report for the Town.

16. **Westminster:** Open Space and Recreation Plan update assistance (maps and statistics generated from maps, and updating tables in Community Setting Section); Project Managers, John Hume and Jason Stanton

- GIS staff completed this project.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director, Karen Chapman, Senior Planner, and/or Jonathan Vos, Regional Planner for further information concerning the DLTA program.

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.

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.

Karen worked with the Town of Clinton and submitted a Green Communities Designation application by the deadline of December 30th.

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

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.

John Hume and Jonathan Vos continue completing ramp slopes of municipal buildings.

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

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. Work continues on this project.

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 December 31, 2020 and MRPC is negotiating a contract extension due to delays from the pandemic. 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.

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 December 31, 2020. 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. Staff is currently seeking a grant deadline extension to 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.

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 Green Communities 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 are allowed to 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 Jennifer Burney, will be project manager for this project.

Community Development Division

The Executive Director presented information concerning the FY19 CDBG-CV award to Shirley (lead community), Lunenburg, Royalston, Townsend, and Westminster earlier in the meeting.

MONTACHUSETT ENTERPRISE CENTER, INC.

The Executive Director presented this information earlier in the meeting.

5.3 TRANSIT

MRPC staff is working on the following projects:

- 1. Support of 3C:** Provided 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
 - **Harvard:** Staff discussed with Town representative the issues of the proposed Harvard Shuttle.
 - **Ayer:** Staff discussed with Town representative the construction issues of Depot Square improvements. Also, discussed with National Grid representatives the issues regarding the temporary lighting at Depot Square.
 - **Public Meetings:** Staff met with the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – December 9th; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – December 16th; Staff attended MassDOT webinar on (Conveyal Analysis) – November 24th; Staff attended a webinar regarding Traffic Monitoring during COVID-19 pandemic impact on Highway Traffic and – December 10th.
- 2. Technical Assistance to MART:** Staff provided 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 staff assisted MART and the Town of Ayer and worked with the Engineer (Summit Engineering) to move forward the construction of Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza located at the MBTA Station. The project includes Transit Vehicles turn around, Pedestrian Plaza, Restroom Facility, Pedestrian Access to the Station and Commuters Shelter. The Depot Square Improvement Phase I and II has been completed. Phase III of the project is under design Staff reviewed design drawings of the Restroom Facility submitted by the Consultant and provided MART with recommendations. Also, staff continues to work with National Grid to provide the Depot Square with temporary lighting. MART anticipates completion of the project by Spring 2021.
 - **Shirley Station Commuter Parking:** MRPC staff continues working with MBTA and the consultants HNTB and Fuss & O'Neill Engineering on redevelopment of the Shirley MBTA Station Commuter Parking Lot Improvement.
 - **Athol-Orange Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and schedule for the Athol-Orange Shuttle and providing recommendations.
 - **Fitchburg/Leominster Bus Route Schedule:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding MBTA Commuter Rail New Schedule and its impact on MART Bus Services.
 - **MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020:** Staff continues to attend the bi-weekly virtual online meetings with AECOM Consultant regarding MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020 and reviewed updates.

- **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 the Transit operation.
- **MART APC Proposal:** Staff attended MART meeting regarding the Automated Passenger Counting (APC) and Route Performance Systems RFP and (“Where’s my Bus?”) scope and procurement.

3. Bus Stop ADA Accessibility Evaluation: The Path to Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) is assessing the accessibility of the bus stops in the Montachusett 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 is in need of capital improvement. This will be a multiyear project to cover all the stops in the MART system. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

Contact George Kahale, Transit Projects Director for further information.

5.4 Transportation

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)

The MJTC met in December. Major topics of discussion were the recent FFY 2021 TIP Amendment #1, the Worcester UZA MOU and the development schedule for the FFY 2022-2026 TIP. The next MJTC meeting will be held on Wednesday January 13, 2021 at 2:30 PM.

Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The Montachusett MPO met on Wednesday December 16th. Items included the endorsement of the FFY 2021 TIP Amendment #1, the approval and endorsement of the Worcester UZA and the TIP development schedule. The next MPO meeting will be on Wednesday January 20, 2021 at 1:00 PM.

Unified Planning Work Program FFY 2021

The MRPC has continued 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 met with the towns of Harvard and Hubbardston to discuss current and future projects within the towns. Staff also reviewed the Worcester UZA MOU and attended a virtual meeting with the CMRPC to discuss the MOU. Staff answered questions from MassDOT of a SWOT Analysis for MPO Staff.

2. Unified Planning Work Program: Program to develop the annual UPWP; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/Brad Harris

-Staff has begun the compilation of a work schedule for the development of the FFY 2022 UPWP. The UPWP is targeted for endorsement in May of 2021.

3. Development of TIP: Program to develop the annual TIP; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/Brad Harris
Staff has reviewed with the MJTC and the MPO a work schedule for the FFY 2022-2026 TIP. A listing of regional projects is under development. Staff will meet with other RPA's at the annual MARPA/MassDOT meeting in late January. Further data for the TIP will be discussed.

-Staff met with the town of Harvard to discuss the Ayer Road project (#609213).

Development of the 2022-26 TIP is underway. Staff has begun to update projects statuses and met with projects proponents for prospective TIP projects.

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

Staff participated in a Road Safety Audit (RSA) for the Route 2 EB at Exit 34 Interchange in Lancaster. Staff also reviewed the pre virtual RSA documents, participated in the virtual RSA and provided comments on the draft RSA.

-Traffic data that was collected during the summer 2020 has been uploaded to the MassDOT MS2 website. All traffic counts can now be found at <https://mhd.ms2soft.com/tcds/tsearch.asp?loc=Mhd&mod=>

6. Pavement Management Systems: Program to collect, analyze and support pavement conditions on regional roadways; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty

-Database and survey schedule preparation is being conducted for the 2021 program year.

7. Intersection Analysis: Program to and issues or deficiencies; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/George Snow

-Staff met with WPI students involved in the analysis for the Rt 12 and Rt 12/31 intersection in Fitchburg on December 21st. Various sections of the study were discussed.

8. Walkability Study(s): Program to develop and monitor regional performance measures; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty

-A study area was established for Sterling and Townsend. Staff will be discussing the study area at their Planning Board meeting on 12/21. Data collection is ongoing, but some components will be on hold until the snow melts.

9. Climate Change Program: Program to review and assess climate change issues and impacts on various vulnerable infrastructure in the region: Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/

-Staff participated in a webinar entitled Massachusetts' Roadmap to a Net-Zero 2050: Webinar on Climate Change Planning in the Commonwealth on December 7th.

10. 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/

-The completed ADA PROW Data Collection App for Curb Ramps, Sidewalks, Crosswalks and Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Ped facilities) Surveys has been ready to be field tested in communities.

11. Roundabouts and The MRPC Region: Program to develop a handheld app for use in the field to collect data on trails throughout the region: Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Brad Harris, Sheri Bean

-Staff finalized and sent the compiled list of the regions existing roundabouts, rotaries, traffic circles and planned roundabouts to MRPC member communities for their confirmation, comment and review. Staff conducted further research into roundabout safety and operation.

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

G. Eaton presented a draft of the MRPC Strategic Plan for 2020-2022. Glenn asked for participation from the commissioners to provide feedback, suggest goals to be added and direction to go on.

7. New Business

There was no new business for discussion.

8. Adjournment

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

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

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

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:11 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	

STAFF PRESENT: George Kahale, Jason Stanton, Linda Quinlivan, Holly Ford, Brad Harris, John Hume, Glenn Eaton, Linda Parmenter

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:

December 3, 2020 MRPC Minutes
January 7, 2021 Meeting Handout
NQCC PART Strategic Plan (FINAL) 2_13_2020
FINAL-Strategic Plan MAPC 12-2-14
DRAFT MRPC Strategic Plan framework 1-6-2021 (2)