

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)



Thursday, September 3, 2020

7:00 PM

REMOTE: GoToMeeting App

MEETING MINUTES

1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements

J. Telepciak called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m. J. Telepciak 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. L. Parmenter read the roll call.

2. Approval of August 6, 2020 MRPC Minutes

A. Pease moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the August 6, 2020 minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Alan Pease – yes
Guy Corbosiero – yes
Roger Hoyt – yes
Russell Williston – yes
John Telepciak – yes
Matthew Brenner – yes
Barbara Yocum – yes
Shaun Copeland – yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Russell Burke - yes

3. Cash Schedule – August 2020

R. Hoyt read the cash schedule.

Opening Balance \$355,349.46; Total receipts this month \$115,060.13; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$470,409.59; Less: amount of this warrant \$127,015.08; Balance after this warrant \$343,394.51.

A. Pease asked about the EPA account increase of about \$10,000.00. L. Quinlivan explained there was a deposit of assessments made into the account in error. This error was corrected, however; it took place on September 1, 2020 so it is not yet reflected in the numbers.

A. Pease moved to accept the August 2020 cash schedule as read. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Alan Pease – yes
Guy Corbosiero – yes
Roger Hoyt – yes
Russell Williston – yes
John Telepciak – yes
Matthew Brenner – yes
Barbara Yocum – yes
Shaun Copeland – yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Russell Burke - yes

4. Administrative Matters

4.1 COVID-19 Office Space Management Update

G. Eaton stated employees are working in the office on a reduced schedule. Some employees are working at the office on Monday and Thursday, others work at the office. Tuesday and Wednesday. Some employees work from home due to childcare issues or not feeling safe.

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

G. Eaton explained that he has communicated the importance of the H.48 issue with Senator Gobi and will continue to follow-up as needed.

4.3 Other Administrative Matters

4.3.1 REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS TO HIRE STAFF

G. Eaton reviewed the need for additional help based on the current workload. MRPC is seeking to hire three new employees, as follows:

1. Christopher McDermott has been hired as the new Economic Development Manager at a salary of \$59,116.00. The position is funded 100% by the (EDA) CARES Act grant for \$400,000.00. This is a two-year position with the possibility of continuing this position depending on the candidate's success in identifying, applying-for, and obtaining new revenue.
2. We have advertised for an Economic Development Intern at the rate of \$13.00/hour. This is a temporary, part-time individual for a period of less than six months and up to 18 hours weekly with no benefits from the MRPC. This position is to assist with ongoing DLTA projects and other projects, as needed.
3. We are also advertising for a Regional Planner at the rate of 24.04/hour. This is also a temporary/part-time position for a period of less than six months and ups to 18 hours weekly with no benefits from the MRPC. The primary responsibility of this employee will be to provide researching, analyzing, writing, and reporting duties that will support the Planning and Development Director and the Executive Director in our delivery of projects under the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program Year #13 that need to be completed by December 31, 2020, and other projects, as needed.

Russell Williston moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the hiring of Christopher McDermott as the Economic Development Manager effective September 21, 2020; apart-

time, temporary Economic Development Intern and part-time, temporary, Regional Planner as described above. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Alan Pease – yes
Guy Corbosiero – yes
Roger Hoyt – yes
Russell Williston – yes
John Telepciak – yes
Matthew Brenner – yes
Barbara Yocum – yes
Shaun Copeland – yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Russell Burke - yes

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

G. Eaton gave an update on the Small Business Assistance Program (SBAP) stating that marketing material will be distributed between 9/4/20 and 9/8/20. We need to expend all funds by 9/30/20.

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

G. Eaton stated that a \$296,100 grant awarded was awarded to Shirley to be distributed as direct grants, up to \$10,000 for businesses negatively impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic economic conditions and to provide food bank assistance to food banks located in Shirley, Lunenburg, and Townsend.

B. Yocum asked why Shirley is the lead community. G. Eaton explained with any CDBG grant awarded to two or more communities, there needs to be a lead community to contract with to flow all the funds through.

4.3.4 Strategic Planning

G. Eaton requested the Commissioners consider the following.

That the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and its affiliate, the Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC) implement a strategic planning process for both organizations, where the Executive Director will initiate this process at the annual meeting of the Board of Directors of MEC by September 30, 2020 (concurrent with our annual meeting) and he respectfully requests that a significant amount of time be allocated to this topic be conducted at the monthly meeting of the Commissioners to take place on December 5th of this year.

That a combined strategic plan for both organizations include the following: a mission statement; an outline of goals, objectives, and activities; an assessment of current resources; and a strategic analysis with each section being a few paragraphs to a few pages long.

4.3.5 Budget Updates and Commissioners' Requested Approval

G. Eaton requested that this topic be deferred until one of the following, monthly meetings to take place on October 1st or November 5th of this year.

4.3.6 Compensation plan (discussed at the August meeting) proposed for implementation on July 1, 2021

G. Eaton requested this topic be deferred until one of the following, monthly meetings to take place on October 1st or November 5th of this year.

5. CONTRACT STATUS REPORTS

5.1 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

GIS: MRMapper & MOBILE APPS (GENERAL)

- Data and applications are continuously being updated throughout the year. Check <https://mrmapper.mrpc.org> periodically for updates.
- Assessor sites for the Towns of Ayer, Clinton and Townsend will be updated with new data by the end of August/beginning of September.

GIS: COMMUNITY-RELATED

- Lunenburg Conservation Lands Mapping – The Lunenburg Conservation Commission received a grant to create and install maps at the intersections of the trails on its properties. We will be working on creating a series of “You Are Here” maps that will be installed at the kiosks and intersections of multiple conservation maps. We have reached out to the town to begin discussing the specifics of the maps and we are currently wait for a response. This project will be ongoing for the next several months.
- Winchendon Zoning Map Updates – We are currently in the process of updating the Official Zoning map for the Town of Winchendon. 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.
- Templeton Cemetery – We are currently working with the Town of Templeton to update their cemetery GIS data. The updated data will be used to create internal (with editing/database maintenance functionality) and public MRMapper WebApps. 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.
- Clinton Parcel Maintenance – We finished updating the Town of Clinton’s parcel data and we are currently working on updating the MRMapper sites. We anticipate that their MRMapper sites will be updated by the end of August/beginning of September.
- Townsend Parcel Maintenance – We finished updating the Town of Townsend’s parcel data and we are currently working on updating the MRMapper sites. We anticipate that their MRMapper sites will be updated by the end of August/beginning of September

GIS: COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING-RELATED

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

- **DLTA**

- Westminster OS Update – We are waiting for feedback from the Town Planner and his committee regarding the draft maps that we sent. Once we receive the feedback, we will make any changes as necessary. Also, once the Action Plan Concepts are finalized in late fall by the committee, we will map them out and update the Five-Year Action Plan map and the Unique Features map. We finished updating the data tables in Section 3 and sent them to the Town Planner. We have begun updating the statistics in Section 4. We also still need to update Table 19 in Section 5. This project will be ongoing for the next several months.
- Harvard Buildout Analysis – We are currently working with the Town on a buildout style analysis. We will develop a scenario-modeling spreadsheet and series of maps detailing current areas of developed, absolute and partial development constraints and developable lands in Town. The goal will be to assess what current zoning will result in regarding full development in terms of housing units, school children and miles of new road.
- Shirley Housing Production Plan – We identified all of the town-owned parcels in Shirley and used the most-recently updated data from MassGIS to create a layer of absolute and partial development constraints and used it to determine the level of development constraint for all of the town-owned parcels that we identified. Using the level of constraint, we determined if the town-owned parcels are developable or possibly developable for affordable housing. Once MRPC Planning staff reviews the information with the town, we will incorporate their feedback into the list and map. The entire project is expected to be completed by the end of December.
- Sterling Housing Production Plan Implementation – We identified all of the undeveloped properties in town and are using the absolute and partial environmental constraints on development to determine if the property could be built on. We are also utilizing the lot dimension requirements by zoning district to identify nonconforming lots in order to create a list of undeveloped, non-environmental constrained, nonconforming lots that could be included in an overlay district that allows for the development of affordable housing. The final list will be completed by early September and the whole project will be completed by the end of December.
- Townsend Chapter 43D Feasibility Study – We will aid in the identification of potential priority development sites (PDSs) within the Town of Townsend that we will recommend that they include in a Chapter 43D application. We will help eliminate potential PDSs but utilizing environmental constraints for development. We will also create site maps that can be used by the Town in their application. This project will be completed by the end of December.

GIS: TRANSPORTATION-RELATED

- Trail Data Application – We have finalized the two data sets and two applications that will allow communities to update the existing Trail Inventory data in ‘live’ or ‘offline’ (disconnected) editing session. We are currently in the process of outreach to deploy the applications and determine the best training method. At this time, we are anticipating that the trainings will be deployed as recorded videos. This project will be ongoing throughout the summer.
- Bike Inventory – MRPC Transportation staff is reaching out to the communities for their input regarding the locations of bike lanes. Once we start to receive their feedback, we will begin to incorporate it into our Bike Lane inventory. Our portion of this project is currently complete but we will continue to provide support and technical assistance as necessary.
- UPWP Freight Corridor Analysis – We compiled 2010-2019 crash data for the state and narrowed down the dataset to only include crashes that happened in the Montachusett

region. We then identified the crashes that included freight vehicles and sent the data to MRPC Transportation staff for analysis. Our portion of this project is currently complete but we will create any maps or provide any assistance as necessary.

- Public Rights-of-Way (PROW) Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Data Collection App – We are currently in 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 the development of the surveys will be completed by the end of August/beginning of September and then field data collection will begin thereafter.

5.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive Planning Division

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

In July 2020, MRPC was awarded a two-year duration grant for \$400,000 from EDA. The scope of work includes updating the Montachusett Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) with a focus on pandemic recovery and resiliency and funding for MRPC to hire an Economic Development Manager for a two-year period to serve the communities and local governments and work with business leaders across the geographic region to stimulate economic growth within the business community.

MRPC advertised to hire an Economic Development Manager and a Planner Intern to work on the scope of work for this grant. MRPC Executive Director Glenn Eaton and Planning and Development Director held a total of three interviews for the Economic Development Manager position in mid-August.

Please contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director 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; and, \$111,151.52 remain to conduct additional Environmental Site Assessments (ESA). MRPC Communities are encouraged to contact John Hume (jhume@mrpc.org) if there is an interest in conducting a Phase I or Phase II ESA in your community. The sites can be publicly owned or privately owned but must be nominated by the municipality.

Work continues on the following projects:

- Fitchburg: 49 Snow Street Phase II Environmental Site Assessment.
- Lunenburg: 925 Massachusetts Avenue Phase II Environmental Site Assessment.
- Winchendon: 4 Summer Drive. Phase II Environmental Site Assessment.

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. In August, MRPC worked on and completed a draft Services and Facilities Inventory and Analysis to addresses comments that were received at a July Planning Board Meeting. MRPC continues to work on a Housing Element. MRPC staff member John Hume provided a status report to the Hubbardston Planning Board on August 6th.

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

- A scope of work and contract has been executed and work has commenced. Karen Chapman held a virtual meeting with the Planning Board on August 12th to discuss the project. She will provide potential housing survey questions to solicit public opinion on Housing and recommendations for housing goals and objectives to the Planning Board for discussion at their September 9th meeting for the Housing Master Plan Chapter. Karen is also revising Ashburnham's zoning bylaws with recommendations for wetlands and water protection district bylaw revisions. The next meeting with the Planning Board is scheduled for September 23rd.

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

- A contract has been forwarded to the community and MRPC staff persons John Hume and Karen Chapman are attending a virtual meeting with the Planning Board on August 25th to discuss the project.

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

- MRPC staff met virtually in August with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments who are partners in this project and are working for the Town of Orange. An Athol – Orange Collaboration Meeting will be held on Thursday, August 27th at 1:30 p.m. where MRPC and FRCOG staff will review the scope of work and report on research conducted to far.

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

- MRPC's Executive Director, Glenn Eaton, is working out a contract for services with Athol and met and presented materials to local officials on August 12th.

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 Manager, John Hume and Jonathan Vos.

- Because of no access to municipal buildings due to COVID-19, MRPC was not able to commence this project until the week of July 20 when MRPC performed a self-evaluation assessment at the municipal Fire Department and the Police Department. Since the latter part of July and into August, John Hume and Jonathan Vos completed a self – evaluation assessment at the Ayer

Council On Aging, Public Works Building, Pubic Library, Town Hall, the new Parks and Recreation Building, Sandy Pond Beach Building, and the Ayer Dog Park.

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

- MRPC GIS staff person, Jason Stanton, has nearly completed developing draft buildout maps and narrative report of results that will be presented to local officials over the next 30 days. MRPC, with assistance from a subcontractor (Mullin Associates) will then perform a fiscal impact analysis evaluating each of the land uses provided by the buildout analysis. Mullin Associates will build a residential model and non-residential model and MRPC will use the models for scenario simulations.

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

- MRPC staff continues to put together a draft Inventory and Analysis section that will be presented to the Planning Board in the fall.

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

- Karen Chapman put together a scope of work and Memorandum of understanding which was signed by MRPC's Executive Director and the Town of Lancaster's Town Administrator and work has been initiated. Karen is researching model bylaws around the state to find the best language for Lancaster's zoning needs.

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

- Phase 1 was completed using the last round of DLTA; Due to COVID-19, access to municipal buildings was not possible, delaying this project. Work on this project can and is being initiated now that access to municipal buildings can be attained.

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 all summer refining a survey that will be released to the public in September. Karen will be meeting with the Nichewaug Committee on August 24th and with the Select Board on August 25th to finalize the survey. The survey asks residents if they would like to reuse the buildings on the site or demolish them all, what uses they would like to see on the site and how they would like to fund the redevelopment. Once results are tabulated, MRPC will assist in a public forum to present the survey results and solicit additional more detailed opinions on uses for the property. Karen will be researching all the funding possibilities for redevelopment of the property as part of the project.

11. Shirley: Housing Production Plan; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- MRPC staff has a final scope of work and a signed contract with the community. Karen met virtually with the Planning Board on July 22nd to discuss the project. Karen will meet with the Planning Board again on September 9th to give a presentation on the Housing Needs Assessment and potential public survey questions.

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

- MRPC staff worked on and completed a draft Inventory and Analysis section of the Transportation Element and presented the draft version to the Sterling Master Plan Committee on July 23rd. MRPC staff received numerous comments and is in the process of addressing them. MRPC will attend the Master Plan Committee Meeting on August 20th to provide a status report.

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 has a final scope of work and a signed contract with the community and met with Sterling's Housing Committee in July to discuss the project. Work on this project entailing research continues. Karen will provide draft bylaws for discussion for the Housing Committees' next meeting on September 14th. The GIS department is creating a map of all non-conforming lots that could be developed as part of a non-complying lots overlay district to allow affordable housing on such lots. This will also be presented at the Sept. 14th meeting.

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

- John Hume met with local officials and then the Planning Board to finalize a scope of work for this project. The scope of work/contract was finalized and has been signed by MRPC and the community and work is underway.

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

- John Hume and Kayla Kress met with the Planning Board to discuss the scope of work for this project. This contract has now been fully executed and MRPC staff has initiated work.

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

- MRPC GIS Department finished a draft update of a number of maps and forwarded them to Westminster for review and is waiting for community comments/edits.

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 is assisting the Towns of Royalston, Ashby, Groton, Templeton, and Hubbardston under their Green Communities Grant Award administrative costs with tasks associated with managing the grant awards such as reporting, procurement, and data management. Karen is completing the procurement process for an LED Lighting Retrofit to be completed at Ashby's Elementary School. In Royalston, Karen is developing a Supplemental Energy Reduction Plan (ERP) to include their Raymond School in their Green Communities umbrella (the school was previously leased to a private school and was therefore not under

town control). Now that Royalston has control of the school, a Supplemental ERP must be submitted to DOER.

Karen Chapman:

- Assisted the Towns of Athol and Lunenburg under REPA to develop Competitive Grant Applications which were successfully submitted to DOER May 1st. We still have yet to hear if these grants were awarded;
- Is preparing to complete Annual Reports for the towns of Ashby, Athol, Fitchburg, Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley, and Westminster by sending out emails to towns to gather data for the reports. John Hume is doing the same for the Annual Report for Townsend; and,
- Is working with the Town of Clinton to submit a Green Communities Designation application this fall.

MRPC has applied for and received grants totaling \$1.3M for our communities since 2017. In the MRPC region, 19 out of our 22 communities are Green Communities. Our goal is 100% participation. Clinton is in the process of becoming a Green Community. We encourage Sterling and Phillipston to reach out to the MRPC if the communities wish to become Green Communities and obtain grant funds for local projects.

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 the project is also using MRPC DLTA Program 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.

Because of no access to municipal buildings due to COVID-19, MRPC was not able to commence this project until the week of July 20 when MRPC performed a self-evaluation assessment at the municipal Fire Department and the Police Department. Since the latter part of July and into August, John Hume and Jonathan Vos completed a self – evaluation assessment at the Ayer Council On Aging, Public Works Building, Pubic Library, Town Hall, the new Parks and Recreation Building, Sandy Pond Beach Building, and the Ayer Dog Park.

Contact John Hume, Planning and Development Director for further information.

HEALTHY AGING TUFTS MOMENTUM FUND

MRPC 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. MRPC staff has established contact with all participating communities and have begun to create working groups. Ground work continues with the data gathering stage to discover the current state of the towns and how the communities currently line up with Healthy Aging Best Practices.

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 of the non-Age Friendly communities in the Montachusett Region become certified as Age Friendly. MRPC received the executed contract on July 24, 2020. MRPC is preparing for a virtual public forum for all non-Age Friendly communities to review the Age Friendly process, answer questions, and establish working groups with each participating community.

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 MA DOT with an 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. MRPC staff will work to identify the resources and partners needed to create a Transportation Connections program to help address these gaps within the Greater Gardner Area, (Ashburnham, Gardner, Hubbardston, Templeton, Westminster, and Winchendon).

MRPC staff is preparing for and putting together a steering committee that will evaluate other community ride connector programs, and design a similar program serving the Greater Gardner community. Seniors and disabled residents are the primary intended audience of the More Rides program. The primary intention of the proposed project is to ensure these community members have reliable and affordable transportation to critical services including healthcare appointments, grocery store visits, and to and from places of education and employment.

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 MA DOT with an 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. Montachusett Regional Planning Commission staff have initiated work to develop strategies to address gaps in service for residents in need.

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 will be scheduling outreach meetings and training in all our communities as soon as we are allowed to under COVID-19

restrictions. Holly Ford, Executive Assistant sent out an introductory email to all Housing Authorities and Councils on Aging in our region, including brochures from MassSave and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Network (LEAN) to introduce these organizations to the services that are available. Some organizations have responded that they would like more information and we will be following up with them to provide additional information. MassSAVE and LEAN provide no cost audits of housing units and no cost (if income eligible) energy efficiency upgrades such as insulation, new windows, new furnaces/boilers, new a/c units, weatherstripping, etc.

Please contact Karen Chapman, Senior Planner for further information concerning the AARC project.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

MONTACHUSETT ENTERPRISE CENTER, INC.

An annual meeting of MEC will be held this month.

Please contact Glenn Eaton, Executive Director for further information concerning MEC.

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

- **Winchendon:** Staff discussed the issues of Winchendon Central Street reconstruction project with Winchendon Town Planner and with MassDOT consultant Tighe & Bond regarding Transit Bus Stop Shelter on Central Street.
- **Bolton:** Staff discussed with Bolton Council on Aging Director the issues of the public transportation in Bolton regarding the ridership survey conducted by MART consultant.
- **Devens:** Staff attended a virtual meeting online with representatives of Mass Development, Devens Enterprise Commission and MART regarding Devens Shuttle issues and ridership.
- **Shirley:** Staff met with Shirley Assessor and Shirley DPW assistance and follow up the issues with DPW Director regarding Shirley Station Commuter Parking Lot Plans.
- **Ayer:** Staff discussed the issues of the Ayer Project with Ayer Director of Community & Economic Development regarding the Pedestrian Plaza at Depot Square.
- **Clinton:** Staff discussed with Clinton Director of Office of Community & Economic Development the new shuttle service for Commuters between Fitchburg/Leominster and Worcester via Clinton.
- **Public Meetings:** Staff met with the RPA Transportation Managers Group – August 4th; the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – July 8th; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – July 15th; Also, Staff attended a virtual meeting of the State Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) regarding Virtual Public Involvement Sharing & Listening Session.

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:** Staff continues to assist MART and the Town of Ayer; and working with the Engineer (Weston & Sampson) to move forward the construction of the 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. Depot Square Improvement Phase I has begun and the construction is underway by the contractor RA Powell Construction Corp of Lunenburg, MA. Staff reviewed Design drawings of the Pedestrian Plaza submitted by the Consultant and provided MART with recommendations. Staff met with Ayer Director of Community & Economic Development and Erickson Antique Stove consultant regarding the design issues of Depot Square improvements and the Pedestrian Plaza Fountain. Staff continues to conduct site visits monitoring the construction of Depot Square improvements. MART anticipates completion of the project by October 31, 2020.
- **Shirley Station Commuter Parking:** MRPC Staff continues working with MBTA and MART on redevelopment of the Shirley MBTA Station Commuter Parking Lot Improvement and prepared Request for Proposal (RFP) to conduct a survey of the station existing parking lot and beyond.
- **Athol-Orange Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and schedule for the Athol-Orange Shuttle and providing recommendations.
- **Devens Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and meeting with MART Staffs regarding Devens Shuttle and providing recommendations.
- **Gardner/Wachusett Shuttle:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding Gardner/Wachusett Shuttle and discussed with Gardner Dispatcher the issues of the Shuttle service.
- **Worcester Commuter Shuttle:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding the new service of Worcester Commuter Shuttle between Fitchburg/Leominster and Worcester via Clinton to service work force in the region.
- **MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020:** Staff continues to attend the bi-weekly virtual online conference call with AECOM Consultant regarding MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020.
- **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 Advisory Board Meetings:** Staff attended MART Advisory Board meeting Virtually online regarding MART Budget and the impact of COVID-19 on the Transit operation.

3. Bus Routes Performance Evaluation: The purpose of the study is to track on-time performance of buses on all individual bus routes over time to establish a base line of bus performance reliability to determine whether the bus service is running on-time or not beyond the current daily tracker. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

Staff continues to compile data on-time performance during the COVID-19 pandemic on all MART Bus Routes. This will be a multiyear project spanning from the origination of the performance measure to

monitoring the rise or fall in service reliability by route. This tool should factor into future decision making by focusing on more problematic routes and increasing reliable bus service through appropriate means when possible.

Contact George Kahale, Transit Projects Director for further information.

5.4 TRANSPORTATION

MRPC staff is working on the following projects:

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 Montachusett Regional Trail Committee (MRTC) – August 4th; the RPA Transportation Managers Group – August 4th; the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – July 8th; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – July 15th;
- Regional Trails Coalition – Met in person on 8/4 for the first time since February in an outdoor location. Work will begin again with the startup of the steering committee and sub-committees.
- Staff completed a draft safety analysis and safety improvement recommendations for the Sterling master plan. The recommendations highlight several hazardous intersections on Route 140 for further study and project development. Staff also updated information related to pavement, infrastructure, roads and trails as well.

2. Unified Planning Work Program: Program to develop the annual work plan and budget; Lead/Staff Sheri Bean/Brad Harris

- Staff work on a budget amendment to the currently active FFY 2020 UPWP; MPO endorsement was received and MassDOT and FHWA submitted approvals.

3. Public Information & Participation Program: Program to guide how and where to engage the general public in participating in the transportation planning process; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty

- Staff continued to review and develop an updated Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the Montachusett MPO.

4. Environmental Justice/Title VI: Program to ensure adequate outreach and coordination with various EJ and Title VI populations: Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/Sheri Bean

- CHNA 9 – The transportation group is ramping back up after a brief break due to Covid-19. This group will likely be reformed into the Housing, Transportation and the Built Environment group based on recently established regional need by the members.

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 counter tests have been completed. Traffic counters will start to go out within the next week or so. This year MassDOT is requesting 32 traffic counts. MRPC will not be doing our regular programmed counts due to the late start of the traffic count season.

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- **6. Pavement Management Systems:** Program to collect, analyze and support pavement conditions on regional roadways; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty
- Staff is in the process of finishing up road surveys for this year. The annual Regional Pavement Profile report will be available at the end of September and will detail the condition of federal aid eligible roads in the region and report on state and regional performance measures.
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- **7. Before & After Safety Analysis:** Program to examine the safety performance of projects implemented within the region to determine effectiveness: Project Lead/Staff – George Snow
- Draft reports for the John Fitch Hwy at Ashby State Rd in Fitchburg and Route 70 at Old Union Turnpike in Lancaster roundabouts have been developed and are under internal review.
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- **8. Freight Corridor Analysis:** Program to examine various freight corridors in the region and determine and issues or deficiencies; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/George Snow
- Freight: In 2019 staff identified certain critical freight corridors surrounding freight/rail offloading facilities. These corridors are the focus of a report which will look at deficiencies in getting freight off of rail and onto major highways of the region. Staff began working on the safety analysis for the identified Freight Corridors. This safety analysis will focus on heavy truck crashes in the region with a focus on three freight corridors in the communities of Ayer and Leominster.
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- **9. Travel by Tourism:** Program to review and identify access to various local tourist destinations/sites: Program Manager – Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean
- A draft report is complete. The maps will be incorporated. The final document will be available on the MRPC website by the end of September at the latest.
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- **10. 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
- As part of the Climate Change UPWP task, the staff inventories vulnerable infrastructures in the region annually. This annual report will be available at the end of September.
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- **11. Regional Bike & Ped Plan:** Program to develop a regional bike plan based upon the statewide bike plan: Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/George Snow
- Data collection has continued; a draft report is 40% complete. Outreach to communities and bike/trail related groups has been on going throughout the process through the Montachusett Regional Trail Committee (MRTC). Due to Covid-19, additional public input will be conducted simultaneously with the development of the pedestrian plan next program year. Staff continued work on a safety analysis for the Regional Bike Plan. This safety analysis focuses on bike crashes and high bike crash locations that occurred in the MRPC region from 2008 – 2017.
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- **12. Local ADA Transition Plan Development:** 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 continued to research and develop a draft ADA public right of way data collection checklist for sidewalks, crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals and curb ramps in order to conduct assessments to

determine ADA compliance. The checklists were submitted for review and comment to various parties. Staff developed a region ADA transition plan survey results table. The table informs the reader about which MRPC member communities have, or have not, completed ADA transitions plans. Staff also began an ADA transition plan development discussion with Shirley.

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- 13. **Trail Data Application:** 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
- GIS staff has developed an app that is currently undergoing field trials. The full app should be available for public use by the end of September.
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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.

Next MJTC Meeting – October 14, 2020 at 2:30 PM at MRPC Offices

Next MPO Meeting – October 21, 2020 at 1:00 PM at MRPC Offices

6. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:38 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	
Stacy, Wayne	A	Ashby	7.2005		X
Doherty, Jacqueline	M	Athol	7.2020		X
Rebecca Bialecki	A	Athol	7.2017		X
Vacant	M	Ayer			X
Copeland, Shaun	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	

Vacant	A	Groton			X
Donahue, Stacia	M	Harvard	7.2018		X
Vacant	A	Harvard			X
Vacant	M	Hubbardston	7.2016		X
Stauder, Michael	A	Hubbardston			X
Christopher, Thomas	A	Lancaster	7.2016		X
Williston, Russell	M	Lancaster	11.2018	X	
Carignan, Thomas	M	Leominster	7.2019		X
Vacant	A	Leominster			X
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
Vacant	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: Glenn Eaton, George Kahale, Jason Stanton, Linda Quinlivan, Linda Parmenter, Holly Ford, John Hume

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:

August 6, 2020 MRPC Minutes

September 3, 2020 Meeting Handout