

# MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)



**Thursday, October 1, 2020**

**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. G. Corbosiero read the roll call.

### 2. Approval of September 3, 2020 MRPC Minutes

B. Swartz moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the September 3, 2020 minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Matthew Brenner – yes  
Shaun Copeland – yes  
Guy Corbosiero – yes  
James Marino – yes  
Alan Pease – yes  
Mike Smith – yes  
Bob Swartz – yes  
John Telepciak – yes

\* Stacia Donahue- Abstained as she was not present at the September 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

### 3. Cash Schedule – September 2020

G. Eaton read the September 2020 cash schedule.

Opening Balance \$343,394.51; Total receipts this month \$158,866.96; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$502,261.47; Less: amount of this warrant \$121,200.24; Balance after this warrant \$381,061.23.

G. Eaton pointed out that the balance of the EPA account is not for operational cash, it is money paid back on an revolving loan that had been made to clean up a Brownfield site in Clinton about 10-15 years ago.

A. Pease moved to accept the September 2020 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Matthew Brenner – yes  
Shaun Copeland – yes  
Guy Corbosiero – yes  
James Marino – yes  
Alan Pease – yes  
Mike Smith – yes  
Bob Swartz – yes  
John Telepciak – yes  
Stacia Donahue - yes

#### **4. Administrative Matters**

##### **4.1 COVID-19 Office Space Management Update**

The office remains closed to the public and staff continues to work on alternate day schedules for safety.

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

The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) continues to monitor H. 48. MARPA has hired a consultant to protect the interest of all agencies. The consultant is advising MARPA to wait until the end of December and then file legislation in January.

G. Corbosiero asked about the cost of the consultant. G. Eaton stated he could not recall the actual cost. The cost, however, is covered by MARPA, funded by dues paid by the planning agencies.

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

The Executive Director is managing this grant and has received a dozen applications. All applications are currently pending due to additional information is needed. Two or three more applications were received this week that have not yet been reviewed. We expect to receive some supporting documents next week, applications to be approved and checks to be cut the following week when G. Eaton returns from vacation.

G. Corbosiero asked if money was still available. G. Eaton stated the AGO offered to extend the grant through December 31, 2020. We are still waiting to receive the signed amendment from the AGO's office.

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

G. Eaton pointed out that this should read FY19 not FY20. All required documents for this grant have now been submitted and are now pending signatures from DHCD. H. Ford will be the key player in the grant with the support the of Executive Director. The grant will run through December 31, 2021. MRPC will receive about \$39,000 for administrative expenses.

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

MEC held a Board Meeting last week to begin discussing a strategic planning process. MEC would like to have this completed prior to the end of November. R. Bialecki will be creating a spreadsheet to be used to share with the Commissioners on December 5<sup>th</sup>.

#### **4.6 Budget Updates for Commissioners' Requested Approval and Related Policy Matters**

A budget amendment had been requested in the September meeting. G. Eaton now requests this for the November meeting.

We have four new contracts signed this week.

- A contract with the town of Sterling for the delivery of a Complete Streets Plan in the amount of \$39,839.25;
- Two contracts for \$500, each were executed with Athol and Townsend for the preparation of ADA grant proposals due this month to the Massachusetts Office on Disabilities; and,
- Shirley and MRPC will execute a CDBG-CV management contract for \$38,621.74

L. Parmenter and L. Quinlivan met with the Executive Director to discuss the current overhead rate. After determining a significant increase from 133.28% in FY19 to 143.63% in FY20, recommendations on how to decrease the overhead costs were discussed.

#### **4.7 Discussion of the Compensation Plan (Discussed at the August Meeting) and Proposed for Implementation on July 1, 2021 be Discussed at the Commissioners' Meeting of November 5, 2020**

G. Eaton stated this topic is just a reminder that we will be discussing the compensation plan at the November 5<sup>th</sup> meeting. G. Corbosiero asked that the proposed plan be emailed out to all.

### **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

2. **Assessor Sites:** Project to update the Assessor sites of the Towns of Ayer, Clinton, and Townsend; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton

- This project has been completed.

##### Community-Related:

1. **Crocker Pond Recreation Area Trail Mapping:** Project to create a trail map of the Crocker Pond Recreation area in Westminster with points of interest; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress

- Staff met with Committee members to GPS the new trails and points of interest.
- Staff georeferenced existing map and used it to update trails and points of interest that weren't GPS'd.
- Staff updated the attribute table to facilitate the addition of the data into the MRPC's existing trail inventory.

- Staff created a template for the map layout and are currently finalizing a draft so the Committee can review the data and provide feedback.

**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

- Staff currently waiting for a response to an inquiry regarding the specifics of the map design.

**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.

#### 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 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 remains ongoing.

**2. Fitchburg COVID-19 Dashboard and Data Visualization:** A project to create and continuously update graphics and a data dashboard containing information about the cases of COVID-19 in the City of Fitchburg; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff created a draft of the data dashboard containing a heat map of cases, a graph of new cases per day, and chart that breaks down the demographics of patients who were tested for COVID-19.
- GIS staff created a graphic that displays the daily number of new cases (confirmed and probable) as well as the number of cumulative cases. GIS staff also created a graphic that shows the testing outcomes.
- On September 1<sup>st</sup>, Jason Stanton and Kayla Kress met with the Superintendent of Fitchburg Public Schools, Fitchburg’s Director of Public Health, Fitchburg Public School’s District Nurse Director, and Fitchburg Public School’s Finance and Operations Director to discuss their data needs and pertinent time periods to show. Among other things, it was decided that GIS staff would update the data dashboard and five graphics on a weekly basis.

**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 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 residential and commercial development.
- 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.

**4. 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 is waiting for feedback regarding the list and map of town-owned properties with the potential for affordable housing production. Once that is received, any edits will be made as necessary.

**5. 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

- GIS staff finished analyzing the conformity of undeveloped, non-environmental constrained lots and created a list and map for presenting them to the town.
- Planning staff met with the Housing Initiatives Committee on September 14<sup>th</sup> to review the list and map and the Housing Initiatives Committee and Town Planner are going to provide the MRPC with finalized criteria for identifying a non-complying lot.

**6. 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

- GIS staff created a map of the bridge structures in town and symbolized them based on ownership. A list of these structures was also provided.
- GIS staff provided a previously created map of formal trails and related points of interest in Sterling.

**7. 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

- John Hume and Kayla Kress met with the Planning Board on September 14<sup>th</sup> to inform the Board of the criteria for a Potential Priority Development Site and using that information, the Board provided MRPC staff with a few properties to analyze.

**8. 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 finished updating the statistics in Section 4 – Environmental Inventory and Analysis and the table of the Summary of Protected Open Space in Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest and provided them to the Town Planner.

- The Open Space Plan Update Committee met on September 15<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the maps and data. Members were pleased with the work and no edits were requested.
- GIS staff is currently finalizing the acreage of tax-exempt lands within the Town so the Town Planner can complete an appendix.
- GIS staff will continue to work with the Town to finalize the Unique & Scenic Resources and the Action Plan items that will be displayed on the final two maps.

#### Transportation-Related:

**1. 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/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff updated the ‘Bridges and Flood Zones’ and ‘TIP Projects and Flood Zones’ maps and created a new map showing only the TIP Projects within Flood Zones.
- GIS staff also provided lists of the structurally deficit bridges and TIP Projects within FEMA’s 100-Year Flood Zone.

**2. 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 and Kayla Kress

- GIS staff assigned corridor names to the freight crashes and summarized the number of crashes, injuries, and crashes by severity for each freight crash corridor.

**3. 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/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.

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

- Data collection has continued; GIS staff added paved rail trails and pathways to the bike route inventory.
- Database reorganization and updates have been completed.

**5. 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

- 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 working on finalizing the user manuals and developing training videos to assist users with connecting to the applications and collecting data. It is anticipated that this project will be completed by the end of the month.

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)**

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 to work on the scope of work for this grant. Chris McDermott was hired for this position and started working for MRPC on September 21<sup>st</sup>, 2020.

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](mailto: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. The towns of Athol, Lancaster, and Groton have recently expressed an interest and sites are being investigated by MRPC and MRPC's consultant (BETA Group) for program eligibility.

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. MRPC has completed a draft Services and Facilities that will be presented to the Planning Board. MRPC continues to work on a Housing Element.

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 12<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project. Potential housing survey questions to solicit public opinion on Housing and recommendations for housing goals and objectives were provided to the Planning Board for discussion at their September 9<sup>th</sup> 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 23<sup>rd</sup> when the housing goals and objectives and survey questions will be discussed.

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

- A contract has been signed by the community and MRPC staff persons John Hume and Karen Chapman attended a virtual meeting with the Planning Board on August 25<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project. The project has been initiated. John Hume and Karen Chapman met virtually with Ashby Land Use Planner on September 17<sup>th</sup> to work on the project as a team.

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

- MRPC staff continues to work 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 was held late August where MRPC presented the scope of work and FRCOG staff presented on research conducted to date.

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

- MRPC's Executive Director, Glenn Eaton, attended a walk - through of the area with local officials on September 16<sup>th</sup>. Work on this project continues.

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.

- John Hume and Jonathan Vos completed a self – evaluation assessment at all municipal buildings and specified parks. Evaluation of ramp slopes continues.

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. MRPC staff persons Jason Stanton and John Hume met with the Harvard Town Planner and MRPC's subcontractor (Mullin Associates) to discuss final details. MRPC's subcontractor will then perform a fiscal impact analysis (with MRPC assistance) 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. Karen will meet virtually with the Planning Board on Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> to review the project and discuss Lancaster's 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. MRPC staff persons Jonathan Vos and John Hume were in the field on Thursday, September 24<sup>th</sup> measuring and calculating ramp slopes on the exterior of municipal buildings. The next step is to write a draft report that will be presented for comment/edit to local officials and the public.

10. Petersham: Community survey, facilitating public input at community meetings, and identifying any funding options concerning the Nichewaugh 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 on September 22<sup>nd</sup>. Karen met with the Chair of the Nichewaugh Committee virtually on September 11<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> to finalize the survey. The survey will close on October 21<sup>st</sup>, at which time results will be analyzed and MRPC will hold a public forum of some sort 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 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss the project. Karen will meet with the Planning Board again on September 23<sup>rd</sup> 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 is in the process of addressing multiple comments/edits made by the Sterling Master Plan Committee. John Hume and Jonathan Vos attended a virtual meeting with the Master Plan Committee on September 17<sup>th</sup> and provided 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 on September 14<sup>th</sup> 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. Work on this project entailing research continues. Changes to the draft bylaw and map will be made as requested by the Housing Committee and presented at their next meeting on October 27<sup>th</sup>.

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

- John Hume met with the Townsend Planning Board on September 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss the project and determine which model bylaw(s) would be appropriate for Townsend.

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, and Kayla Kress.

- John Hume and Kayla Kress met with the Townsend Planning Board on September 14<sup>th</sup> to discuss and determine potential Priority Development Sites that can be mapped. Some sites were chosen and mapping is being initiated.

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

- GIS staff member Kayla Kress finished updating the statistics in Section 4 – Environmental Inventory and Analysis and the table of the Summary of Protected Open Space in Section 5 – Inventory of Lands of Conservation & Recreation Interest and provided them to the Town Planner. The Open Space Plan Update Committee met on September 15<sup>th</sup> and reviewed the maps and data. Members were pleased with the work and no edits were requested. GIS staff is currently finalizing the acreage of tax-exempt lands within the Town so the Town Planner can complete an appendix. GIS staff will continue to work with the Town to finalize the Unique & Scenic Resources and the Action Plan items that will be displayed on the final two maps.

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.

### **5.3 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, as well as project initiation and management. In Royalston, Karen completed 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). The Supplemental ERP will be approved by the Royalston Select Board and submitted to DOER for approval. Once the ERP is approved, projects at the Raymond School may be submitted to DOER for approval to use their Designation Grant funds.

Karen Chapman:

- Assisted the Towns of Athol and Lunenburg under REPA to develop Competitive Grant Applications which were successfully submitted to DOER May 1st. These grants were awarded to Athol and Lunenburg in an announcement from the Governor;
- 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. The Annual Reports that were previously due the first week in December, are now due November 6<sup>th</sup>. 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 \$1.4M 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.

- John Hume and Jonathan Vos completed a self – evaluation assessment at all municipal buildings and specified parks. Evaluation of ramp slopes continues.

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. Groundwork is ongoing with the established working groups. Currently focus is on data gathering and analysis to create a comprehensive assessment of the current state of the participating towns and the best practices that they should prioritize for Healthy Aging while remaining suitable for the individual needs for each community.

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 staff are currently in the process of creating a virtual public forum for all non-Age Friendly communities using materials provided by Healthy Resources in Action 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.

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.

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 begun gathering data to support the further development of various strategies that can be used to meet and mitigate these persistent gaps in local area transportation.

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.** See 4.5, above.

## **5.4 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 continues working with MassDOT and with the consultant Tighe & Bond regarding Transit Bus Stop Shelter installation on Central Street as part of the Central Street reconstruction project in Winchendon.
- **Littleton:** Staff reviewed a request to add a bus stop location at new Amazon distribution center location at Taylor Street in Littleton; Also, attended a virtual meeting with Littleton Town Officials regarding the Amazon distribution center Project.
- **Devens:** Staff discussed with Mass Development representative the issues of Shirley Meadows Bus Stop and Shelter at Hospital Road in Devens; and the proposed Bus Stop and Shelter at Devens plaza on West Main Street in Ayer.
- **Shirley:** Staff discussed the Parking issues at Shirley MBTA Station with MBTA Director of Rail & Water Transportation.
- **Ayer:** Staff discussed the issues of the Ayer Project with Ayer Director of Community & Economic Development and Town Officials regarding the Pedestrian Plaza at Depot Square.
- **Public Meetings:** Staff met with the RPA Transportation Managers Group – September 1<sup>st</sup>; the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – September 9<sup>th</sup>; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization

(MPO) – September 16<sup>th</sup>; Also, Staff attended The Eastern Transportation Coalition (TETC) webinar meeting regarding the Transportation System Management & Operation (TSMO) Performance Measures and the Regional Integrated Transportation Information System (RITIS) Performance Reporting Measures; Also attended MassDOT Transportation Innovation Series regarding the Resilient Infrastructure & Ecosystems conference; and MassDOT eSTIP training virtual meeting regarding Amendment/Adjustment Procedures.

**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 been completed. The construction of Phase II and Phase III are underway; MART anticipates completion of the project by December 31, 2020.
  - 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 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.
- **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 reviewed proposals submitted by consultants.
- **Athol-Orange Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and schedule for the Athol-Orange Shuttle and providing recommendations.
- **Gardner/Wachusett Shuttle:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding Gardner/Wachusett Shuttle and the new schedule between Gardner and Fitchburg.
- **Worcester Commuter Shuttle:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding the new service of Worcester Commuter Shuttle between Fitchburg/Leominster and Worcester via Clinton and Sterling to service work force in the region.
- **MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020:** Staff continues to attend the bi-weekly virtual online meeting with AECOM Consultant regarding MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020; Also, Staff attended stakeholder outreach virtual online meeting with AECOM Consultant regarding MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020.
- **MART Advisory Board:** Staff attended MART Advisory Board virtual meeting online due to the State Emergency for COVID-19.
- **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.

**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.

## **5.5 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) on September 1<sup>st</sup> at Barrett Park in Leominster. Sub-Committees were re-established and a 3-year action plan is in the works;
- Staff participated in MART's 5-Year Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan on August 14<sup>th</sup> via Zoom as part of their public participation component of the document.
- Staff attended the Twin Cities Rail Trail meeting on August 27<sup>th</sup> at Barrett Park in Leominster where construction updates were explained.
- Staff met with the RPA Transportation Managers Group on September 1<sup>st</sup>; the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) on September 9<sup>th</sup>; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) on September 16<sup>th</sup>;
- Staff also participated in a MassDOT ESTIP Amendment Webinar on September 11<sup>th</sup>; the CMRPC Federal Certification Review on September 15<sup>th</sup>; and a MassDOT Public Information Meeting on the Water Street Bridge in Fitchburg on September 22<sup>nd</sup>.

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

- This task is completed.

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

- No TIP activities undertaken.

**5. 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

- Staff continued to review options and methods to improve virtual public involvement by all sectors of the regional population.

**5. Regional Demographics & Model:** Program to monitor, project & analyze regional demographics & develop regional model; Project Lead/Staff - Brad Harris/Kayla Kress

- ACS Data reviewed and downloaded as needed.

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

- MRMapper maintenance continued. Data and applications are continuously updated each month. Refer to <https://mrmapper.mrpc.org> periodically for updates.
- GIS Data Warehouse maintenance continued. Data is continuously updated as needed.
- Staff coordinated with the GIS Department to develop a regional heavy truck crash GIS shapefile and database to be used for the Freight Corridor Analysis task. The shapefile and database can also be used for other studies as well.

**7. 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

- Data Collection for Traffic counts started in September. Traffic data is being collected for MassDOT as well as transportation related studies currently under development.

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

- Staff is continuing data collection for the season.
- The Regional annual report will be available in early October.

**9. 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 Highway at Ashby State Rd in Fitchburg and Route 70 at Old Union Turnpike in Lancaster roundabouts have been developed and are under internal review.

**10. 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/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff assigned corridor names to the freight crashes and summarized the number of crashes, injuries, and crashes by severity for each freight crash corridor.
- Staff conducted traffic counts at six locations as part of the study. The locations included Nashua Street in Leominster; Barnum Road in Devens and Willow Road in Ayer. Counts were taken on each side of the freight terminal at each location.
- Data collection and analysis has been completed.
- Staff completed working on the safety analysis for the identified Freight Corridors. This safety analysis focuses on heavy truck crashes in the region with a focus on three freight corridors in the communities of Ayer (2 corridors) and Leominster (1 corridor).
- Final Report is expected by the end of September.

**11. Performance Measures:** Program to develop and monitor regional performance measures; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty

- Performance measures related to statewide targets for PM 2 and PM 3 received from MassDOT. Draft revised targets for PM 3 to be presented to the MPO for future adoption.

**12. Travel Options & Rideshare Program(s):** Program to identify travel options available in the region for students and others; Project Lead/Staff - Sheri Bean/Brad Harris

- Listings of other travel options in the region identified.
- Outreach to local college students to be examined.

**13. Travel by Tourism:** Program to review and identify access to various local tourist destinations/sites: Program Manager – Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/Kayla Kress

- Staff finalized the Travel for Tourism Report;

**14. 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/Kayla Kress

- Mapping and data updates provided by GIS staff.
- Data Collection and analysis has been completed.
- The Regional annual report update is expected to be completed by the end of September.

**15. Regional Bike & Ped Plan:** Program to develop a regional bike plan based upon the statewide bike plan: Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/George Snow/Kayla Kress

- Data collection has continued and database reorganization and updates have been completed.
- Data collection has continued.
- A draft report is approximately 50% complete.
- Outreach to the Montachusett Regional Trails Coalition, local cyclists and cycle organizations continues as best as possible under COVID restrictions.
- Staff continued working on the regional bike crash analysis for this plan.

**16. 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/Jason Stanton

- Data collection surveys have been created by GIS staff.
- Staff continued the development of draft ADA public right of way data collection checklist for sidewalks, crosswalks, accessible pedestrian signals and curb ramps (Ped facilities) in order to conduct field data collection efforts. The collected data will be used for assessing the ADA compliance of the Ped facilities and other studies. The four (4) checklists are being inputted into ArcCollector software to create four (4) mobile apps. The data in the apps can be downloaded directly into GIS and other software which eliminates the extensive effort of data entry from paper documents.

**17. 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

- Data collection applications have been created and will be available to communities and organizations soon.

**18. Bus Routes Performance Evaluation:** Program to develop and monitor bus performance measures; Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale/Brad Harris



- Draft document under development.

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 has been canceled and the following MJTC Meeting will be held on November 10, 2020 due to the holiday**

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

## 6. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:41 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	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
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, Brad Harris, Chris McDermott

**DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:**

September 3, 2020 MRPC Minutes  
October 1, 2020 Meeting Handout