

MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)



Thursday, December 3, 2020

7:00 PM

REMOTE: GoToMeeting App

MEETING MINUTES

1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements

G. Corbosiero called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. G. Corbosiero stated in accordance with Governor Baker's Covid-19 Executive Order regarding the Open Meeting Law and remote participation, votes will be taken through Roll Call.

2. Approval of October 1, 2020 MRPC Minutes

M. Smith moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the November 5, 2020 minutes as distributed. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed.

Laura Shifrin– yes
Mark Archambault- yes
Matthew Brenner– yes
Mike Smith- yes
Phil Duffy- yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Roger Hoyt– yes
Russ Williston- yes
Stacey Donahue– yes
Veronica Kell– yes

3. Cash Schedule – November 2020

L. Shifrin read the November 2020 cash schedule.

Opening Balance \$436,041.61; Total receipts this month \$134,796.92; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$570,838.53; Less: amount of this warrant \$118,590.32; Balance after this warrant \$452,248.21.

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

Roll call vote followed.

Laura Shifrin– yes
Mark Archambault- yes

Matthew Brenner– yes
Mike Smith- yes
Phil Duffy- yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Roger Hoyt– yes
Russ Williston- yes
Stacey Donahue– yes
Veronica Kell– yes
Rick Ward- yes

4. Administrative Matters

4.1 COVID-19 Office Space Management Update

G. Corboseiro stated that the Executive Director is absent from tonight’s meeting due to a medical matter.

The Executive Director is monitoring the daily COVID-19 statewide case reports issued each evening by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA). This data, and other relevant information, will guide MRPC’s management in determining when to reopen the MRPC’s office to the general public and clients under “pre-pandemic” conditions.

Cases are increasing across Massachusetts and into the Montachusett Region. Three months ago, the spikes in cases were in the urban centers. Now case increases are being seen in the suburban and rural areas. The Montachusett region has no longer been spared from the most recent surge. According to data released by the Commonwealth, Worcester County is now becoming a hot zone. Management is ready to issue a work-from-home directive to all employees at a moment’s notice.

J. Hume advised, as of today, G. Eaton has closed the building and instructed all staff to work remotely. Staff may only enter the building if approved by the Executive Director.

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

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

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

This program will be managed through December 31st.

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

Advertising for the Microenterprise Assistance Program (MAP) will be initiated during the week of December 7th. MAP business grant applications may be submitted to the MRPC as early as December 7th.

This program will be managed through December 31, 2021.

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

The Executive Director respectfully requests the deferment of a discussion concerning strategic planning to January 7, 2021 (due to a medical issue).

4.6 Budget Updates for Commissioners' and Related Policy Matters

MRPC has a significant number of contracts with non-profit, local, state, and federal organizations. The agency receives requests for services on almost a weekly basis. These requests are being converted into contracts for services on at least a monthly basis. Below, please find a summary of some new projects on which the MRPC is working:

- New Planning Assistance Grant (PAG) awarded to the MRPC by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs ("EEA") to assist Athol and Hubbardston in FY21 and FY22.
- A new contract with Heywood Healthcare for the completion of the 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) (we completed the 2018 CHNA for Heywood – this is repeat business for the organization).
 - We're negotiating with another hospital system to also complete its CHNA by September 2021.
- The delivery of a strategic plan to the CHNA9 organization (lead consultant, STAR Consulting while MRPC provides data research and analysis to STAR and CHNA9); and,
- One of our three cities has requested a quote for the completion of an Open Space and Recreation Plan by June 2021.

J. Hume mentioned MRPC has never had this many contracts at one time. We would be unable to complete all related tasks without additional staff.

COVID-19 mapping that the agency completed for Fitchburg will now be provided as a service to communities, school districts, and others (marketing will begin in December).

We also anticipate providing *Local Rapid Recovery Planning Assistance to Revitalize Downtowns* planning services to our communities. This program is being provided through the Department of Housing and Community Development's (DHCD), Massachusetts Downtown Initiative (MDI) <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-downtown-initiative-mdi>.

A full-time Economic Development Manager and part-time Economic Development Intern were hired. They are being funded by the Economic Development Administrations, COVID Response Program.

Two, new, part-time and temporary (six months) Senior Planners have been hired. Advertising for "an additional 2.0 full-time equivalent employees" will be in the public domain by December 9th. We need to onboard a combination of Senior Planner(s), Principal Planner(s), and at least an additional Interns by December or January 2021 to increase the staff to a level that we can properly deliver planning services that will be funded by the projected FY21 surplus of \$167,000+/- . Additional employees will also be part-time (or full-time) and temporary (six months). There is no guarantee that we will be able to sustain all these positions after FY21. This is why they are being hired as temporary employees.

5. CONTRACT STATUS REPORTS

5.1 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

MRMapper & Mobile Apps (General):

1. Data & Applications: Continuous project to update and maintain data and applications throughout the year;
Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton

Community-Related:

1. **Athol Groundwater Protection Overlay District Map:** Project to create maps depicting the DEP's Zone IIs in Athol for inclusion in the Town's Groundwater Protection Bylaw; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - MRPC staff received feedback from the Town and updated the maps accordingly.
 - This project has been completed.
2. **Crocker Pond Recreation Area Trail Mapping:** Project to create a trail map of the Crocker Pond Rec. Area in Westminster with points of interest; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - Once the Trail Data Collection App and instruction materials have been finalized and are available to the public, they will be sent to the Committee so they can use it to GPS the trails that were not GPS'd by MRPC staff. The new trail data from the committee will be incorporated into the Trail Map of the Crocker Pond Recreation Area and sent to the Committee for review
3. **Lunenburg Conservation Lands Mapping:** Project to create a series of "You Are Here" trail maps that will be installed at the kiosks and intersections of multiple conservation lands owned by the town; Project Lead/Staff – Kayla Kress
 - MRPC staff added all the new trail updates into to the trail inventory.
 - GIS staff discussed the timeline and finalized some map specifics with the Town contact during a phone conversation.
 - Staff updated the previously created conservation lands maps and created four new trail maps of Northwest Town Forest, Table Rock Conservation Area, Proctor Park, and Clark's Hill. These maps were sent to the Town contact for review.
4. **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.
5. **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 data collectors to use to complete these digital surveys and we will continue to provide any technical assistance as needed until the project is complete. Planning staff recently began the data collection process. This project remains ongoing.
2. **Athol Exchange St Abutters Mapping:** A project to identify priority sites and property owners as the MRPC works to enable to the area's rejuvenation.; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress
 - GIS staff updated the map to reflect changed desired by planning staff.
3. **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 continue to update the data dashboard and graphics whenever new data is received
4. **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 have updated a scenario-modeling spreadsheet template and series of maps detailing current areas of developed, absolute and partial development constraints and developable lands in Town. The goal is to assess what current zoning will result in regarding full development in terms of residential and commercial development. This part of the project is complete.
- 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. This part of the project is expected to be completed by the end of the month.

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

- GIS staff identified the number of buildings on each parcel and finalized the spreadsheet of parcels within the potential Center-Village Overlay District which was sent to MRPC planning staff

5. 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 received feedback regarding the list and map of town-owned properties with the potential for affordable housing production and removed five parcels from both the list and map as requested.
- Staff also aided in gathering demographic and housing data that will be utilized in the report

6. 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

- Committee members of the Housing Initiatives Committee provided conflicting criteria for identifying a non-complying lot. The Committee and MRPC planning staff are meeting to finalize the criteria. Once the criteria are finalized, GIS staff will identify the undeveloped, non-environmental constrained, non-complying lots.

7. 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 received feedback from the Sterling Open Space Committee regarding the updated trail map. No changes to the updated trail map were needed, so it was sent to planning staff to be incorporated into the Master Plan Chapter.

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

- GIS staff worked with Town staff to investigate the sewage and water capacity of the three most promising properties
- GIS staff also analyzed the inclusion potential of a fourth property
- While meeting with Town staff, staff aided in the decision to include all four properties in the application
- GIS staff created a town-wide map that highlights the locations of the four Priority Development Sites. Individual site maps were also created. All five maps were created so that they can be included in the application
- GIS staff reached out to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs to inquire about the exact data that is needed for inclusion in the application and the best methodology for sending the data

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

- GIS staff received the decided upon Unique Features and Scenic Resources from the Town Planner. Staff digitized them and updated the map accordingly.
- GIS staff is waiting to receive the items that the Town want shown on the Action Plan map.

Transportation-Related:

1. **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.

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

- We have completed mapping and data analysis work to wrap up the Pavement Management project for the year. This project is complete.

3. **Popular Bike Routes Comment App:** Program to develop data related to popular bike routes in the Montachusett Region; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Sheri Bean

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/Jason Stanton

- GIS staff gathered statistics relating to the percentage of people from each Montachusett community that bike or walk to work.
- We have completed the development of an app to collect popular bike route data in the region. Users are currently adding data and comments to the app.
- Additionally, we will be collecting and analyzing data from a couple of popular bike data apps.

5. **Sterling Walkability:** Program to develop and monitor regional performance measure; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris, Sheri Bean/Kayla Kress

- GIS staff created two maps that will be used for data collection

6. **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

- Development of the app is complete, and we are currently in the process of rolling this out to interested communities and organizations.
- GIS staff has completed training manuals and is currently working on developing video tutorials that explain the app and how to use it.

Transit-Related:

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

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

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

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

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

5.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Comprehensive Planning Division

FEDERAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATION (EDA)

A full review of the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) continues. The CEDS was published in July 2019 and therefore needs to be updated to account for COVID-19 and the ensuing economic downturn it precipitated. This review is focused upon identifying any information which needs to be compiled and any priorities that need to be removed, revised, or added. Work to locate and access any necessary data sources and draft potential revisions will likewise proceed. MRPC also hired an intern to assist with EDA related projects.

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

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

This 3-year grant award, beginning October 1, 2019, is for \$300,000. A virtual Montachusett Brownfields Group meeting was held on November 4, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. and agenda items included Overview of Recent Activities and Review of Site Assessment Requests from Groton, Athol, and Winchendon.

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

MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS (EOEEA)

MRPC was awarded an FY20 Planning Assistance grant for \$48,000 last winter to fund Master Plan Chapters for the Town of Hubbardston. MRPC continues to work on a Housing Element and an Open Space Element. MRPC was also awarded funds in November 2020 to complete the Implementation Element of the Master Plan.

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

DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA)

MRPC staff is working on the following projects:

1. **Ashburnham:** Housing Master Plan Chapter and Wetlands Bylaw Update; Project Manager, Karen Chapman
 - Karen has continued to work on this project. Karen also continues to revise Ashburnham's zoning bylaws with recommendations for wetlands and water protection district bylaw revisions.
2. **Ashby:** Natural Resource Protection Bylaw; Project Managers, John Hume and Karen Chapman
 - John Hume and Karen Chapman continue communication with the Ashby Land Use Planner to work on the project as a team. A draft bylaw has been put together that will be presented to the Planning Board in December.
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.

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

- Work on this project continues and the final report is being drafted.

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

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

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

- Jason Stanton, has been working with the Harvard Town Planner to develop buildout maps and narrative report of results.

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

- MRPC has nearly completed this Element that will be presented to the Planning Board in December and completed in December.

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

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

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

- Phase 1 was completed using the last round of DLTA. Jonathan Vos and John Hume are working to write a 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 Nichewaug Inn & Academy building; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

- Karen Chapman has been meeting virtually with local officials The survey was mailed to all households and was also available online via Survey Monkey and is now being tabulated. Karen is researching all the funding possibilities for redevelopment of the property as part of the project.

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

- Work on this project continues and Karen Chapman met on October 28th with the Planning Board and discussed potential town-owned properties available for affordable housing as well as goals and objectives for affordable housing development.

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

- MRPC is in the process of addressing additional comments made by the Sterling Master Plan Committee. John Hume and Jonathan Vos attended a virtual Public Forum meeting with the Master Plan Committee on November 12th.

13. **Sterling:** Implementation of Housing Production Plan Action Items: A. Amend accessory apartment bylaw and incorporate accessory apartments into the Subsidized Housing Inventory, and B. Explore adoption of affordable housing on non-complying lots; Project Manager, Karen Chapman

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

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

- MRPC staff has been meeting/communicating with the Land Use Department staff on a regular basis as refinement of the bylaw continues. A Public Hearing has been scheduled for December 21st.

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

- John Hume and Kayla Kress have been meeting/communicating with the Townsend Land Use Department to discuss and determine potential Priority Development Sites that can be mapped. Sites have been chosen and mapping is nearly completed.

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

- GIS staff received the decided upon Unique Features and Scenic Resources from the Town Planner. Staff digitized them and updated the map accordingly. GIS staff is waiting to receive the items that the Town want shown on the Action Plan map.

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

MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY RESOURCES (DOER)

Karen Chapman continues to assist the Towns of Royalston, Ashby, Templeton, Lunenburg, and Hubbardston with their Green Communities Grant Awards. Tasks associated with managing the grant awards include reporting, procurement, and data management, as well as project initiation and management.

Karen prepared and submitted Annual Reports for the towns of Ashby, Athol, Fitchburg, Harvard, Lancaster, Shirley, and Westminster that were due November 6th. John Hume did the same for the Annual Report for Townsend.

Karen continues working with the Town of Clinton to submit a Green Communities Designation application due by December 31st.

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

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

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

HEALTHY AGING TUFTS MOMENTUM FUND

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

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

HEALTHY AGING TUFTS FUND

MRPC was awarded a \$75,000 grant to help all the non-Age Friendly communities in the Montachusett Region become certified as Age Friendly. MRPC received the executed contract on July 24, 2020. MRPC staff are currently finalizing a virtual public forum for all non-Age Friendly communities and several other participating organizations, including Fitchburg State University, to review the Age Friendly process, answer questions, and establish working groups with each participating community. Work continues on this project.

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

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

The Montachusett Enterprise Center (MEC) was awarded \$48,000 by Mass DOT. The executed contract was received July 23, 2020 with an end date of December 31, 2020 and MRPC is negotiating a contract extension due to delays from the pandemic. Seniors and disabled residents within the Montachusett Region have expressed persistent gaps in transportation access for many needs – primarily medical, employment, education, and other health/social services. MRPC staff will work to identify the resources and partners needed to create a Transportation Connections program to help address these gaps.

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

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

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

The Montachusett Enterprise Center (MEC) was awarded \$24,000 by MassDOT. The executed contract received July 23, 2020 with an end date of December 31, 2020. Seniors and disabled residents within the Montachusett Region have expressed persistent gaps in transportation access for many needs – primarily medical, employment, education, and other health/social services. Staff are continuing analysis of data to support the further development of various strategies that can be used to meet and mitigate these persistent gaps in local area transportation. Staff is currently seeking a grant deadline extension to guarantee project completion by the end of the grant and help ameliorate difficulties created by the Covid-19 pandemic.

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

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

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

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

Community Development Division

MONTACHUSETT ENTERPRISE CENTER, INC.

The MEC Board of Directors will attempt to hold a strategic planning meeting this month.

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
 - **Devens:** Staff discussed with Mass Development representative the issues of Devens Shuttle.
 - **Shirley:** Staff discussed the Parking issues at Shirley MBTA Station with MBTA Engineer and HNTB Consultant.
 - **Ayer:** Staff attended a virtual meeting with Ayer Elected Town officials regarding the construction issues of Depot Square improvements and Bike Racks locations. Also, discussed with National Grid representatives the issues regarding the temporary lighting at Depot Square.

- **Public Meetings:** Staff met with the RPA Transportation Managers Group – November 3rd; the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) – November 10th; the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) – November 18th; Staff attended webinar on (How to Achieve True Diversity and Equity in Community Engagement) – October 27; Staff attended the Legislative affairs Forum regarding (Policy to improve the local Public Health System in Mass) – November 6th; Staff attended webinar regarding COVID-19 pandemic impact on Highway Traffic – November 10th; Staff attended MBTA (Forging Ahead Public Hearing) – November 10th and 19th; Staff attended webinar regarding (The Art & Science of Effective Online Surveys for Planning) – November 12th; Staff attended MassDOT (Moving Together Conference) virtually due to COVID-19 – November 17-19; Staff attended Freedom’s way webinar (Bringing the Guided Tour Experience Home) – November 19th;
2. **Technical Assistance to MART:** Provide technical planning services and assistance to the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) which included the coordination of short-range special transit planning projects, technical assistance at RTA advisory board meetings. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale
- **Ayer Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza:** During the past month MRPC staff continues to assist MART and the Town of Ayer; and working with the Engineer (Summit Engineering) to move forward the construction of Depot Square Pedestrian Plaza located at the MBTA Station. the project includes Transit Vehicles turn around, Pedestrian Plaza, Restroom Facility, Pedestrian Access to the Station and Commuters Shelter. Depot Square Improvement Phase I and II has been completed. Phase III of the project is under design Staff reviewed design drawings of the Restroom Facility submitted by the Consultant and provided MART with recommendations. Also, working with National Grid to provide the Depot Square with temporary lighting. On October 23, 2020 Staff met in Ayer with State Delegations Sen. Jamie Eldridge, Rep. Danillo Sena, Rep. Sheila Harrington and Town Officials and presented the project outlines and improvements. MART anticipates completion of the project by Spring 2021.
 - **Shirley Station Commuter Parking:** MRPC Staff continues working with MBTA and the consultants HNTB and Fuss & O’Neill Engineering on redevelopment of the Shirley MBTA Station Commuter Parking Lot Improvement.
 - **Athol-Orange Shuttle:** Staff continues working on monitoring the performance of the bus route and schedule for the Athol-Orange Shuttle and providing recommendations.
 - **Fitchburg/Leominster Bus Route Schedule:** Staff met with MART Staff regarding MBTA Commuter Rail New Schedule and its impact on MART Bus Services.
 - **MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020:** Staff continues to attend the bi-weekly virtual online meetings with AECOM Consultant regarding MART Comprehensive Regional Transit Plan Update 2020 and reviewed updates.
 - **MART Operation Managers Meetings:** Staff attended MART Operation Managers monthly meeting Virtually online to discuss the operation strategies and update on the impact of COVID-19 on the Transit operation.
 - **MART Advisory Board:** Staff attended MART Advisory Board virtual meeting online due to the State Emergency for COVID-19.
3. **Bus Stop ADA Accessibility Evaluation:** The Path to Accessible Transit Infrastructure (PATI) is assessing the accessibility of the bus stops in the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) Region. the purpose of

the study is to determine the level of accessibility of each stop in MART system by collecting field information and determines its ranking for capital improvement (critical, high, medium, low). The higher the “score” the less a bus stop complies with accessibility requirements and the more it is in need of capital improvement. This will be a multiyear project to cover all the stops in the MART system. Project Lead/Staff – George Kahale

Contact George Kahale, Transit Projects Director for further information.

5.4 TRANSPORTATION

Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC)

The MJTC met in November and reviewed information related to the MART Public Transportation Agency Safety Plan (PTASP) and the Nashua NH-MA Urbanized Area Transportation Planning MOU. The members reached consensus to recommend that the MPO adopt the PTASP safety targets and sign onto the MOU as presented. The next MJTC meeting will be held on Wednesday December 9th at 2:30 PM.

Just before the MJTC meeting we received notice from MassDOT of a new funding opportunity for municipalities titled “Shared Winter Streets and Spaces”. This is similar to and a continuation of the “Shared Streets and Spaces” program from the summer. There is a handout that discusses the program and the application process. It is also posted to the MRPC website with appropriate links to the program on the MassDOT website. There are multiple submittal dates for project applications.

There is also a handout for the opening of the 2021 MassTrails Grants Round. Applicants can apply for grants to fund design, project development, engineering, permitting, construction and maintenance of recreational trails, shared -use pathways and amenities that support trails. Deadline is February 1, 2021. This announcement is also on our website.

B. Harris reviewed the information and encouraged all to read about new funding opportunities to communities through the “Shared Winter Streets and Spaces” program. These are low-cost grants to make improvements in the communities.

B. Harris also spoke about the opening of the 2021 MassTrails Grant Round and again encouraged all to review the information for possible grant opportunities available.

Handouts are available on the MRPC website and J. Stanton sent the link to all who attended.

Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

B. Harris reported that the Montachusett MPO met on Wednesday November 18th. At that meeting the MPO voted to endorse the safety targets presented as part of the MART PTASP as well as the Nashua UZA MOU.

In addition, the MPO voted to release for a 21-day public review and comment period FFY 2021-2025 TIP Amendment #1. The Amendment reflects the addition of nine (9) projects to the FFY 2021 Transit Element as well as cost changes to three (3) projects and the removal of six (6) projects within this TIP Element. TIP. A summary of the announcement memo and the Amendment are available online and as a handout.

The public comment period began on Monday November 23, 2020 and will run until the close of business on Monday December 14, 2020.

B. Harris stated there are a number of changes to the FFY 2021 Transit Element. They released this information for comment. B. Harris also reviewed in detail the spreadsheet showing all changes to be made and new items added.

P. Duffy moved that the MRPC has reviewed the FFY 2021-2025 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment #1 and based upon this review as well as the review of any comments received, authorizes its Chairman to endorse the FFY 2021-2025 TIP Amendment #1 at a MPO meeting scheduled for Wednesday December 16, 2020 at 1:00 PM.

The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed:

Laura Shifrin– yes
Mark Archambault- yes
Matthew Brenner– yes
Mike Smith- yes
Phil Duffy- yes
Bob Swartz – yes
Roger Hoyt– yes
Russ Williston- yes
Stacey Donahue– yes
Veronica Kell– yes
Rick Ward- yes

Unified Planning Work Program FFY 2021

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

- 1. Support of 3C:** Program to provide assistance with Various meetings and activities with Communities, Regional Groups, Federal and State Officials; Project Lead/Staff – Brad Harris/George Snow, Sheri Bean, Brian Doherty
 - Regular meetings of the Transportation Managers, the MJTC and the MPO were held.

- 2. Development of TIP:** Program to develop the annual TIP; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty/Brad Harris
TIP Development memo has been posted to the MRPC website as well as emailed to members on the MJTC mailing list.

Staff has also established a schedule in order to ensure MPO endorsement by May 2021.

A FFY 2021-2025 TIP Amendment #1 has been released for a 21-day public review and comment period.

B. Harris stressed the importance of the TIP Amendment #1, how to get involved and encouraged anyone to reach out to him if there were any questions or for more information on participating.

- 3. GIS Mapping & Analysis:** Program to conduct GIS work & support; Project Lead/Staff – Jason Stanton/Kayla Kress
 - Please refer to GIS status report.
- 4. Pavement Management Systems:** Program to collect, analyze and support pavement conditions on regional roadways; Project Lead/Staff – Brian Doherty
 - Database and survey schedule preparation is being conducted for the 2021 program year.

5. **Intersection Analysis:** Program to conduct studies at intersections to identify issues or deficiencies and provide improvement alternatives. The study is to be completed by WPI students; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/Brian Doherty/George Snow
 - Staff provided safety information and guidance to the WPI students for the Fitchburg Route 12 at Route 31 Intersection traffic study. The students contacted Fitchburg to obtain crash reports for all the crashes that occurred at the intersection between 2017-2019.
6. **Walkability Study(s):** Program to conduct walkability studies in the communities of Sterling and Townsend; Project Lead/Staff – Sheri Bean/ Brian Doherty, Brad Harris
 - Data collection has begun in the town of Sterling.
7. **ADA Prow Database:** Program developed to provide technical assistance to member communities with issues related to the Public Right of Way (PROW) elements of their ADA Plans: Project Lead/Staff – George Snow/Jason Stanton
 - Staff developed a field data collection guide for the ADA PROW Data Collection App for Curb Ramps, Sidewalks, Crosswalks and Accessible Pedestrian Signals (Ped facilities) for the purpose of providing guidance to surveyors when conducting field data collection efforts. Staff also developed an ADA PROW Data Collection Manual that provides instructions on how to operate ArcGIS Survey123 (formally called ArcCollector). The collected data will be used for assessing the ADA compliance of Ped facilities and in other studies. The app will need to be reviewed and corrections made as needed. As part of the review process, the app will need to be field tested.
8. **Roundabouts and The MRPC Region:** A compressive program to examine the status of roundabouts, rotaries and traffic circles in the region: Project Lead/Staff – George Snow
 - Staff conducted online research to identify studies that have similar objectives that can be used as models for this study. Staff identified and compiled a list of the regions existing roundabouts, rotaries, traffic circles and planned roundabouts.

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 – December 9, 2020 – 2:30pm to 4:00pm

Next MPO Meeting – December 16, 2020 - 1:00pm to 2:00pm ([Remote GoToMeeting](#))

6. Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

Meeting Attendance					
Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	PRESENT	ABSENT
Ashburnham BOS	A	Ashburnham	7.2020		X
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	X	
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001		X

Vacant	A	Ashby			X
Doherty, Jacqueline	M	Athol	7.2020		X
Rebecca Bialecki	A	Athol	7.2017		X
Vacant	M	Ayer			X
Copeland, Shaun/ Archambault, Mark	A	Ayer	7.2020	X	
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011	X	
Vacant	A	Clinton			X
Lowitt, Peter	N/V	DREZ	7.2001		X
Butland, Alyne	M	Fitchburg	7.2020		X
Skwierawksi, Tom	A	Fitchburg	7.2020		X
Swartz, Robert	M	Gardner	7.2019	X	
Cruz, Maribel	A	Gardner	8.2017		X
Burke, Russ	M	Groton	7.2016		X
Cunningham, Peter	A	Groton	9.2020		X
Donahue, Stacia	M	Harvard	7.2018	X	
Vacant	A	Harvard			X
Vacant	M	Hubbardston	7.2016		X
Stauder, Michael	A	Hubbardston			X
Christopher, Thomas	A	Lancaster	7.2016		X
Williston, Russell	M	Lancaster	11.2018	X	
Carignan, Thomas	M	Leominster	7.2019		X
Vacant	A	Leominster			X
Brenner, Matthew	M	Lunenburg	7.2020	X	
Marino, James	A	Lunenburg	7.2020		X
Vacant	M	Petersham			X
Allen, Nancy	A	Petersham	7.2015		X
Vacant	M	Phillipston			X
Telepciak, John	A	Phillipston	10.201		X
Natrowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2015		X
Barclay, James	A	Royalston	7.2017		X

Oelfke, Bill	A	Shirley	7.2020		X
Yocum, Barbara	M	Shirley	8.2017		X
Page, Patty	M	Sterling	7.2019		X
Maki, Dick	A	Sterling	7.2014		X
Rich, Dennis	M	Templeton	7.2017		X
Bennett, Jeff	A	Templeton	7.2020		X
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2018	X	
Kell, Veronica	A	Townsend		X	
Smith, Mike	M	Westminster	7.2019	X	
Vacant	A	Westminster			X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	
Ward, Rick	A	Winchendon	7.2019	X	

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

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:

November 5, 2020 MRPC Minutes

December 3, 2020 Meeting Handout