

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION**  
**October 27, 2015 MINUTES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

V. Koivumaki called the meeting to order at 7:00 .pm. All present introduced themselves.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 29, 2015 MEETING MINUTES**

G. Corbosiero moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the September 29, 2015 minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and passed with one abstention.

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

A. Pease read the September 2015 cash schedule. Balance after last warrant \$77,367.06 \$; Total receipts this month \$\$120,198.86; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$\$197,565.92; Less: amount of this warrant \$113,683.74: Balance after this warrant \$96,994.79.

G. Corbosiero moved to accept the September 2015 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**4. PEER-TO-PEER TRAINING FOR PLANNING BOARD MEMBERS AND CHIEF ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE REGION**

Discussion took place regarding the EPA Brownfields Site Assessment Bus Tour held on October 23, 2015 sponsored by the MRPC and the availability of Site Assessment Nomination Forms to communities.

Discussion also occurred regarding the process of community representation on the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

**5. REGIONAL REVIEW**

**DCR - ACQUISITION OF AN INTEREST IN APPROXIMATELY 654 ACRES OF LAND-PETERSHAM**

V. Koivumaki indicated that the Department of Conservation and Recreation has under consideration the acquisition of an interest in approximately 654.5 +/- acres of land in the Town of Petersham. The property is forested, forested wetland, and open water and has been managed for research and education, forestry, and passive recreation purposes. The proposed use for the property will be land managed for protection of open space including water supply protection, research and education and public access for passive outdoor recreational uses.

G. Corbosiero moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission authorizes its Director to sign a waiver form agreeing to waive the 120 day notice period to approve the acquisition by the Department of Conservation and Recreation of approximately 654.5+/- acres of land in Petersham. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

## 6. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

- **MA State Board of Retirement**

G. Eaton notified the Board that the MRPC received a letter from the Office of the Comptroller and a report from the MA State Board of Retirement regarding net pension liability reporting requirements in MRPC's financial statements. This is something new as MRPC has never been responsible for retiree's pension's reimbursement. This information has been sent to MRPC's auditor.

- **EPA Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Workout, 184 Stone Street, Clinton**

G. Eaton gave a brief overview of the above matter. After advice from the legal counsel it was determined that this issue would be posted as an Executive Session matter on the next MRPC agenda.

## 7. STATUS REPORTS

### 7.1 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS) DEPARTMENT

#### MRMapper & Mobile Apps

Significant upgrades were just completed to the *MRMapper* site in order to increase the speed of the services.

We are consistently adding data, applications and/or enhancing tools in *MRMapper* as the need arises so please check back frequently to see what's new. We are currently working on the migration of all applications to JavaScript. This is a core change that will allow users to consume *MRMapper* content on most browsers and, most importantly, without plugins that currently restrict usage on mobile devices. This process will be ongoing for several months.

Mobile Apps are becoming increasingly popular. They are designed for two main purposes- (1) informing the public and (2) improving efficiency in data collection and field work. Public apps are created to allow the public to view data online in any browser and on any device. Data collection apps are custom designed by the MRPC to the users' field of work or area of interest.

Currently the MRPC is working on creating internal-only and public sites for the Towns of Westminster and Townsend. In addition we recently updated the Town of Shirley's internal-only site as well as created a public site.

#### Community Development

- DPIR Status Map Updates - We recently completed an update to the DPIR project maps with data current to October.

### **Comprehensive Planning**

- DLTA - We are currently working on mapping for several DLTA projects. These projects, as well as others, will be ongoing for the next several months:
  - Sterling Rt 12 Corridor Economic Development Analysis
  - West Fitchburg Corridor Overlay District
  - Winchendon Master Plan Transportation Mapping
  - Winchendon Village District Mapping

### **Transportation**

- Lancaster Complete Streets - We are currently in the beginning stages of mapping for a Complete Streets project for the Town of Lancaster and in cooperation with the Transportation Department.

### **MEC**

- Athol Potential Receiverships App - We have completed the process of creating an app for MEC to be used in tracking potential receivership properties in the Town of Athol.

### **MART**

- Bus Shelter Maps - We recently completed a series of maps that will be placed at each MART shelter. These maps are specific to the routes covered by each shelter and indicate areas of route interchanges with detailed insets. One additional shelter map remains to be completed. This project is expected to be complete in November.
- Athol/Orange Proposed Bus Routes - We have been working with MART to complete a series of draft maps regarding proposed bus routes for the Athol/Orange area. This project is expected to be completed in November.
- Inter-city Bus Route Updates – We have been working with MART to update their Inter-city Bus Route. This project is expected to be completed in November.
- Gardner & G-Link TDP Update\_- We have been working with MART to update their Gardner & G-Link TDP. This project is expected to be completed in November.

### **Miscellaneous**

- Ayer Parcel Maintenance - We have completed working with the Town of Ayer to update their GIS parcel data to MassGIS Level 3 compliance and update their tax maps.

## **7.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

### **Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)**

MRPC is organizing a Montachusett Region Brownfields Reuse Bus Tour leaving MRPC offices at 8:15 am on Friday, October 23rd. Sites in Gardner (Rear Main Street and Mill Street Corridors) and Fitchburg (Putnam Place and Riverfront Park) will be visited as they relate to the successful reuse of brownfields. A qualified environmental professional firm (TRC) hired by MRPC will be joining us to answer questions and opportunities for all Montachusett communities in regards to MRPC's recent \$400,000 EPA Brownfields Site Assessment Grant. RSVP John Hume at [jhume@mrpc.org](mailto:jhume@mrpc.org) or (978) 345-7376 x302 no later than Tuesday, October 20th – seating is limited.

### **Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Montachusett Region Brownfields Assessment Program**

A Cooperative Agreement between EPA and MRPC is in effect as of October 1, 2015. A contract was signed between MRPC and TRC for Qualified Environmental Professional Services for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and Remedial/Reuse Planning/Plans.

### **Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project**

MRPC Staff received comments from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that are being addressed by MRPC and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA).

### **District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)**

MRPC staff is working on the following DLTA projects:

Fitchburg: Continuation of investigating/researching appropriate zoning changes around Wachusett Station and the new Great Wolf Lodge resort.

Winchendon: Master Plan Transportation Element.

Sterling: Review and update zoning bylaws to encourage the development and redevelopment of commercial property in a manner that reflects the interests and needs of the community.

Lancaster: Continuing to examine the creation of village zoning district(s).

Ashby: Update Housing Chapter of the 2004 Ashby Community Development Plan (E.O. 418 plan) and creation of a new Transportation Chapter as an update to the 2004 Ashby Community Development Plan.

Shirley: Update the 2010 Economic Development Element of the Master Plan and assist with the development and tabulation of a town wide survey for the Master Plan.

Royalston: Identification of potential areas that can support housing and economic development.

Lancaster: Assistance with creation of a Lancaster Trail & Bike Way Vision Plan.  
Ashby: Preparing a Land Use Chapter, Future Land Use Plan and Consolidation of Economic Development Plan into the update of Ashby's 2004 Community Development Plan.

Winchendon: Research the potential of establishing a zoning district for the Central Street corridor.

Townsend: Assistance in reviewing housing opportunities for a broad range of income groups.

Lunenburg: The Community Development Manager completed a Feasibility Study for the Town of Lunenburg that will assist the town in pursuing a Community Innovations Challenge (CIC) Grant to regionalize animal control services.

### **Shirley Master Plan Update**

MRPC staff is working on Historic and Cultural Resources and Services and Facilities Chapters. A Town – Wide Master Plan Survey was also formulated and reviewed by local officials and distributed throughout the community. MRPC is now in the process of tabulating the results. A report on survey results will be presented to the community in November.

MRPC staff completed a draft Housing Chapter and is now working on Historic and Cultural Resources and Services and Facilities Chapters. A Town – Wide Master Plan Survey was also formulated and reviewed by local officials and distributed throughout the community. MRPC will tabulate and report on the results this fall.

### **MEC, Inc. - Receivership Projects**

- 112 Harvard Avenue
  - MEC is under agreement with the new homeowner; a Purchase and Sale Agreement has been signed.
    - The buyer is pursuing financing.
    - MEC believes that this property will sell by October in order for MEC to recover its investment, pay off the Athol HomeCorps Grant loan, and reduce our receiverships caseload.
- 41 Lewis Street
  - Financing has been approved to renovate this home.
  - A loan closing date has not been set by the bank or its attorney.
    - Now that MEC has received bank approval we can move forward to the point of auctioning this property and reduce MEC's caseload.
- 207 Adams Drive
  - Financing has been approved to renovate this home.
  - A loan closing date has not been set by the bank or its attorney.
    - Now that MEC has received bank approval we can move forward to the point of auctioning this property and reduce MEC's caseload.

- 119 Everett Avenue
  - The bank of record that had expressed an interest in paying off the receiver's lien has been non-responsive since their original initiation of this conversation. On advice received from the Worcester Attorney General's Office, MEC's Director will now reach out to MRPC/MEC's bank to reinstate the construction loan proposal previously submitted; this loan proposal was approved by the MEC Board of Directors in May 2015.
    - MEC is interested in obtaining financing, rehabilitating the property, and auctioning the house to reduce MEC's caseload.
- 1158 Main Street
  - MEC held a second auction at 11:00 AM on September 28<sup>th</sup> in an effort to sell this property. The bank of record submitted a bid on the property at auction. We will probably close on this property within three to four months from the closing date.
    - A winter 2015-2016 sale of this property will help to reduce MEC's caseload.
    -
- 1768-70 Main Street
  - This property is the subject of an ongoing discussion to work with the Town of Athol to ensure that MEC, Inc. receives its funds that it has invested in cleaning and securing this house at the request of the Town of Athol. Athol has initiated the tax title process. The town appears to be willing to work with MEC in order to preserve its priority lien and dollars invested into the property.
    - An expeditious resolution of this matter will help to reduce MEC's caseload.

**MEC - Ashburnham Affordable Housing Project – 32 Whitney Drive**

MEC is in the process of hiring a consultant to market and sell the property to a buyer meeting the 40B statute and accompanying regulations.

**MEC - Ashburnham Affordable Housing Project – 10 Monroe Drive**

The foundation has been poured and Monty Tech students are now able to work on-site.

**MEC – 30 Powers Mill Road**

Financing will be pursued this fall to renovate and sell property this winter.

**Community Development Block Grants**

- Mr. Eaton and the new Community Development Manager will interview candidates for the Community Development Administrative Assistant position.

- MRPC is in the process of reaching out to communities to offer grant writing assistance to them for FFY16 proposals that are due in February 2016. At this time MRPC is in discussions with the Town of Winchendon and is exploring the possibility of assisting 2-3 other towns.
- DHCD executed the contract with the Town of Shirley for the Housing Rehabilitation/Home Heating Assistance Program. The Town received this contract on October 13. The Community Development Manager is preparing the Environmental Review Record in order to post the Notice Of Intent To Request The Release Of Funds (NOIRROF) as well as the RFP to procure the services of a Housing Rehab Specialist.
- Mr. Eaton and the Community Development Manager met with the Town of Shirley's Board of Selectmen on Monday evening, October 19 to discuss the objectives and scope of work for the Housing Rehab and Home Heating Fuel Assistance program.

**Distressed Property Identification and Revitalization (DPIR) Grant Program**

MRPC received an offer from the State Attorney General's Office in order to extend its existing grant and to apply for more funding. We will pursue both options. The additional funding may result in the need to hire a new employee. The Commissioners will hear more on this matter from the Administrative and Human Resources Director and the Executive Director at this meeting and in the near future.

**7.3 TRANSIT DEPARTMENT**

**Wachusett Commuter Rail Station and Layover Facility**

Construction on the Wachusett Commuter Rail Station in Fitchburg and the MBTA's Commuter Rail Layover Facility at the Westminster Business Park is ongoing. There will be a delay for the substantial project completion to December of 2016 due to Pan Am's schedule. Pan Am will not be able to complete work on the tracks and signalization until 2016, with full completion scheduled for Early 2017. The Development Road Extension is approximately 98% complete. Staff is working with the City of Fitchburg and Westminster to transfer the ownership of the property. Staff continues to work with Pan Am Railways and the City of Fitchburg to transfer 5<sup>th</sup> Mass Turnpike property to MART. Staff is also assisting MART and the Consultant in obtaining a temporary construction easement from the adjacent properties owners to construct the sidewalk on Authority Drive and continues to attend and assist at the monthly project coordination meeting with FTA, MBTA and the Engineers.

**Ayer Parking Facility**

FTA officials indicated that MART has to resolve the pedestrian access issues at the station before the project can move forward. MBTA and the property owner are negotiating to resolve the pedestrian access issues. The property transfer will enable access to the train station with a pedestrian walkway and

a proposed driveway with a vehicular drop-off and turnaround. Mr. Kahale continues to assist MART, FTA, MBTA and the Town of Ayer to move forward with the construction of the proposed project of Ayer commuter rail surface parking lot for 200 parking spaces at the Ayer Rail Trail parking lot location at Park Street. As soon as the property transfer for the pedestrian access takes place the process of the appraisal will start.

#### **Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Improvements**

The project is currently funded at \$169 million with State and Federal Funds for the Small Starts Project and replacement of the Route 62 Bridge in Concord. In addition, MBTA allocated another \$42 million in ARRA Stimulus and EOHED Funding to accomplish the double tracking and the improvements to Littleton Station, as well as another \$10 million for replacing CPF 43 interlocking in Lunenburg (*CPF is Control Point for Freight that enable trains to move from one track to another*). Work on the project is continuing along the Fitchburg Line corridor and South Acton Station. The construction of Littleton Station was completed ahead of schedule; and the MBTA's commuter parking of 200 parking spaces is full to capacity daily. MAPC is conducting a parking needs assessment for the Littleton commuter rail station to determine its future parking needs. Also the double tracking work along the corridor has been completed.

#### **MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Suspension of Weekend Train Service**

Beginning Saturday, April 25, through Sunday, November 22, 2015 Fitchburg Line weekend service will be suspended along the entire line due to the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Improvement Project to allow work to be performed between North Station and Fitchburg. Busing will not be provided during weekend service interruptions. Customers are advised to seek alternate modes of transportation. Weekday service is not affected by the ongoing improvement work. Regular weekend service will be provided on Memorial Day weekend (May 23-24), Fourth of July weekend (July 4-5), Labor Day weekend (September 5-6), and Thanksgiving weekend (November 28-29).

#### **Westminster Bus Route**

Staff is assisting MART on a proposed Bus Route to serve Westminster residents to connect to Mount Wachusett Community College (MWCC), the Commuter Rail Station, Gardner and Fitchburg Center.

#### **Athol / Orange Fixed Bus Route**

Staff is assisting MART to develop a new Bus Route in the Towns of Athol and Orange to shift riders from para-transit to fixed route service. The proposed Bus Route in Athol and Orange will serve residents and seniors of the two communities to be connected to shopping centers and medical and educational facilities.



## **7.4 TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

### **Harvard Town Center Study**

MRPC staff attended a meeting of the Harvard Town Center Task Force on October 20<sup>th</sup>. The study has been looking at the pedestrian, bicycle, parking and traffic conditions and issues around the Town Hall and Route 110 and Route 111 intersection. Various traffic counts have been conducted and alternatives related to improved parking areas, pedestrian accessibility, bicycle routing and overall traffic flow and safety have been discussed. A final report should be completed by the end of the year depending on town feedback.

### **Title VI Workshop**

MRPC staff attended a Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT's) Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) and Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR) Title VI Capacity Building Workshop on October 19<sup>th</sup> in Lawrence, MA. The workshops focused on various topics related to Title VI and the efforts needed for Regional Planning Agencies (RPAs) and Metropolitan planning Organizations (MPOs) to meet federal and state requirements. Topics included updates/revisions to the Public Participation Plans (PPP) for MPOs, outreach methods and accessibility. The Montachusett MPO will be working to develop a new draft PPP that will then be submitted to MassDOT for review.

### **MassDOT Capitol Conversations**

MassDOT recently announced Community Capital Conversations that have been and will be held across the Commonwealth in October and November. The input received from MassDOT customers will help inform the FY 2017-2021 Capital Improvement Plan now under development. The CIP determines how the state prioritizes their largest investments, covering all MassDOT projects – from highway and municipal projects to regional airports and rail and transit, including MBTA and Regional Transit Authorities.

MRPC staff attended the Capital Conversation held on October 21<sup>st</sup> at the Leominster City Hall. Additional Capital Conversations will be held at the following locations:

- Wednesday, October 28, 6:00 p.m. Peabody City Hall, Wiggin Auditorium, 24 Lowell Street, Peabody
- Wednesday, October 28, 6:00 p.m. Natick Town Hall, 13 East Central Street, Natick
- Thursday, October 29, 6:00 p.m. Pittsfield City Hall, City Council Chamber, 70 Allen Street, Pittsfield
- Thursday, October 29, 6:00 p.m. Plymouth Town Hall, 11 Lincoln Street – Harbor Room, Plymouth
- Monday, November 2, 6:30 p.m. Mansfield Town Hall, 6 Park Row, Mansfield
- Thursday, November 5, 6:00 p.m. Springfield City Hall, 36 Court Street, Springfield

- Thursday, November 5, 6:30 p.m. Cape Cod Community College, Tilden Arts Theater, 2240 Iyannough Road, West Barnstable

For those unable to attend but who still wish to participate in the conversation, MassDOT has established a new tool to gather input that will be active until November 5<sup>th</sup> and can be reached via this web link: [mass.gov/massdot/capitalconversations](http://mass.gov/massdot/capitalconversations). Comments may also be emailed to MassDOT at: [masscip@state.ma.us](mailto:masscip@state.ma.us)

#### **Local Road Safety Audit - Fitchburg**

MRPC staff participated in a Road Safety Audits (RSA) conducted in Fitchburg as part of the 25% Design for the South Street Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Infrastructure project. A RSA is a formal safety performance examination of an existing or future road or intersection by an independent, multidisciplinary team. It qualitatively estimates and reports on potential safety issues and identifies opportunities for improvements in safety for all road users as it is important to obtain different perspectives of road conditions. On October 5, the firm TEC conducted the RSA for the South Street Elementary School SRTS project (MassDOT Project #607242). TEC conducted the RSA that will document the traffic operations and safety at the intersection of South Street / Electric Avenue / Old South Street immediately south of the school grounds. Other participants included Fitchburg Police & Fire Departments, DPW, Planning Board & Planning Department members, MART, school officials, and MassDOT. Major areas of concern included high crashes occurring on left turns, rear end crashes along South Street, lack of signage and lane markings, and poor sight distance. A draft report has been prepared and sent out to participants for review. A final report is expected within the next few weeks.

**Next MPO Meeting – November 18, 2015 at 1:00 PM**

**Next MJTC Meeting – November 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM**

It was the consensus of the Commission to combine both the November and December MRPC Meetings. The combined meeting will be held on December 8, 2015.

#### **8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

#### **LIST OF DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED AT THE MEETING:**

September 29, 2015 MRPC Minutes

October 27, 2015 MRPC Handout

September 2015 Warrant

Capital Conversations Flyer

## MRPC Meeting Attendance List

*Alphabetically by Community*

Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	PRESENT	ABSENT
Johnson, Kyle	A	Ashburnham	7.2015		X
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	X	
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001	X	
Stacy, Wayne	A	Ashby	7.2005		X
Knapik, Garrett	M	Athol	7.2015	X	
Grosky, Mitch	A	Athol	5.2015		X
Callahan, Jeremy	M	Ayer	7.2015		X
Maher, David	A	Ayer	7.2014		X
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011	X	
Lowitt, Peter	N/V	DREZ	7.2001		X
Caron, Paula	M	Fitchburg	7.2002		X
Gross, Allen	M	Gardner	2.2005		X
Cormier, Joshua	A	Gardner	7.2015		X
Collette, Michelle	M	Groton	7.2015		X
Graham, Don	M	Harvard	7.2015		X
Wallace, Lucy	A	Harvard	7.2015		X
DiPinto, Mary Ann	M	Hubbardston	7.2015		X
Sheipers, Anita	A	Hubbardston	7.2013		X
Christoph, Eugene	A	Lancaster	7.1992		X
Koivumaki, Victor	M	Lancaster	7.2000	X	
Prokowitz, David	M	Lunenburg	7.2015		X
Allen, Nancy	A	Petersham	7.2015		X
Telepciak, John	A	Phillipston	10.201	X	
Natrowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2015		X
Hardie, John	A	Royalston	7.2007		X
Widing, Sarah	M	Shirley	7.2015		X
Pineo, Michael	M	Sterling	7.2014		X
Kilcoyne, John	A	Sterling	7.2014	X	X
Carroll, Charles	A	Templeton	7.2011		X
Shifrin, Laura	A	Townsend	7.2010		X
Fortin, Mike	M	Westminster	7.2015		X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	
Cyganiewicz, Austin	A	Winchendon	7.2015		X

**STAFF PRESENT:** Bobbi Jo Johnson, L. Parmenter, J. Stanton, B. Harris, G. Eaton

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Mark Goldstein, MRPC Legal Counsel; Ashley Arseneau, Athol