

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 25, 2014**

1. INTRODUCTIONS

V. Koivumaki called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A list of those members present and absent can be found on the last page of this document.

2. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 28, 2014 MEETING MINUTES

G. Corbosiero made a motion to approve the minutes of January 28, 2014 as printed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

The February 2014 Treasurer's Report will be presented at the March 25th meeting.

4. REGIONAL REVIEWS

4.1 Town of Westminster, 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Town of Westminster has submitted to the MRPC for review and comment their 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan as per state requirements. The plan contains all the required sections according to the Open Space Guidebook published by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). A comment letter has been prepared and will be submitted to the town for their use as needed.

4.2 Town of Phillipston, 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan

The Town of Phillipston has submitted to the MRPC for review and comment their 2014 Open Space and Recreation Plan as per state requirements. The plan contains all the required sections according to the Open Space Guidebook published by the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA). A comment letter has been prepared and will be submitted to the town for their use as needed.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

5.1 Salary Scale

G. Eaton indicated that he and MRPC staff have compiled a group of options regarding the revisions to the salary scale and step increases for the employees of the Planning Commission based on the discussion held at the last meeting.

The Planning Commissioner's discussed the various options presented by Mr. Eaton, regarding the salary scale and whether or not to remove and/or add steps in order to accommodate the current employees and their step increases.

C. Jones asked if the Commission would be going to an outside consultant in the future to rework the payscale, based on market data and the recommendation by HRS, Inc when they completed the salary study in 2011.

G. Eaton indicated that it was the intention of the MRPC to seek outside assistance when creating an updated pay range and salary scale for the coming years.

P. Caron made a motion to adopt the revised salary scale option one, which would add a tenth step to the scale to accommodate all current employees' paygrades. In regards to the employee at top step, they will be eligible to receive annual compensation up to the most recent CPI increase for most recent year, five, or ten year span that data is available, funding available.

C. Jones noted that this would not be a salary increase but a one-time annual merit bonus.

J. Telepciak seconded this motion, with C. Jones modification and it was passed unanimously.

G. Eaton then asked for a motion to approve up to \$24,100 for staff salary increments, not to exceed one step per employee beginning April 1, 2014, pending MassDOT approval. C. Jones made the above motion, adding that these raises are not retroactive. G. Corbosiero seconded and it was passed unanimously.

G. Eaton presented a proposal for minimum and maximum pay grades for each position at the MRPC.

P. Duffy stated that at this meeting the Commission has allowed for the Executive Director to compensate his staff for the coming fiscal year and that the Executive Director has also indicated that for FY2015 he will seek outside consulting to revisit the issue of the payscale, that being said Mr. Duffy recommended that the Commissioner's table this discussion for the evening since the payscale will most likely be altered before the Commission needs to revisit this issue, therefore making any motion made this evening irrelevant.

C. Jones requested that the Executive Director should come back to the Planning Commission with a different option for compensation for the employees at a future meeting and also to take into consideration the option of using pay bands per position.

G. Eaton indicated that at the last meeting he requested permission to advertise for the position of a Grant Writer for the MRPC. Mr. Eaton indicated that staff advertised the position in house, and interviewed Mr. Tom Roufos, current MRPC intern and have offered him the position at an annual salary of \$34,338.

P Duffy moved that MRPC hire Tom Roufos as the new Grant Writer to the MRPC at an annual salary not to exceed \$34,338. C. Jones seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Email bid information prior to meeting to executive committee

5.2 MRPC Overhead Rates

G. Eaton indicated that the MRPC is tracking its overhead rate monthly through the GMS Financial System. Several administrative staff are charging their time to contracts rather than just administration and also, supply orders are going to be more specifically charged to the contract they're for if it is allowed by the funding agency.

The MRPC will keep its Commission members up to speed on its overhead rate at the monthly meetings.

5.3 Proposed New Logo Design for MRPC, By FSU Intern Taylor Duffy

G. Eaton presented a new MRPC logo and letterhead to the board.

The Commission members discussed the logo, at which point they decided it would be improved upon if the wording “est. 1968” and “Commonwealth of Massachusetts” were made slightly larger.

6.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

6.1.1 FY11 CDBG Programs

Phillipston (lead community) with Royalston

All grant activities are completed. This grant is in closeout.

Townsend

One project is complete. A second project started. Work was suspended because the homeowner has asked for additional changes in the approved scope of work.

Clinton

All housing rehab projects are completed. This grant is ready to be closed.

6.1.2 FY12 CDBG Program

Phillipston (lead community) with Royalston

We submitted an amendment to DHCD to use surplus grant funds to underwrite acquisition and rehab of one or more homes for affordable housing. This project will implement recommendations of the towns’ recently completed affordable housing plans.

Housing Rehabilitation Program. Three rehab projects are complete. An additional project is going out to bid. We are placing new applicants on the waiting list. We advertised for additional contractors for this and related programs.

Infrastructure projects.

Blossom and Park Streets, Royalston. All work is complete.

Brooks Village Road, Phillipston. All work is complete.

6.1.3 FY14 CDBG Program

We submitted two applications for five communities: Phillipston with Royalston (road reclamation and repaving, regional housing rehab); and Ashby, Ashburnham and Lancaster (regional housing rehab, road reclamation and repaving, ADA compliance). Awards are usually announced in late summer.

6.1.4 Distressed Property Identification and Revitalization (DPIR) Grant Program

The Attorney General’s Office has revised the purpose of the grant. Grantees will now focus on bank REO residential properties only. The revised purpose of the program is to get REO properties re-occupied quickly. Department staff and interns have begun implementing the revised scope of work.

6.1.5 Receivership Projects

The Housing Court has granted MEC preliminary receivership status for 107 Stevens Street, Athol, so that MEC staff and consultant inspectors can inspect the property, determine the

repair work necessary to rehabilitate the property, develop a project budget, and report back to the Court for permission to proceed with repairs. The next court date is early March.

6.2 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

6.2.1 Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)

MRPC has also been working to update the Montachusett Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document to be presented a CEDS meeting on February 20th at 5 pm at MRPC offices and at the February MRPC Commission Meeting. Also at the CEDS meeting, Alex Lombardo Sr. Vice President of Development for Great Wolf Resorts will present and answer any questions about Great Wolf Lodge Development Plans for the Fitchburg site located at Route 31 on Royal Plaza Drive

6.2.2 Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), promoting Low Impact Development (LID) in the Millers River Watershed

MRPC staff continues to work with Hubbardston on draft low impact development regulations. Work with Athol has been concluded and subdivision rules and regulations concerning low impact development were amended.

6.2.3 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project

MRPC Staff continues our work towards updating the Local Hazard Mitigation Plans for our 22 communities. MRPC Staff continues to initiate work on draft plans to be presented to communities for input/adoption in the spring and into early summer.

6.2.4 Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Challenge Grant

Wachusett Corridor Smart Growth Analysis project (Fitchburg, Leominster, and Westminster). A steering committee meeting will be held on Thursday, February 27th where the open space and recreation element and transportation element will be discussed along with housing goals, objectives, and recommendations along with some thoughts on land use and zoning issues. The meeting will be held at CanAm Machinery, 44 Old Princeton Road, Fitchburg.

6.2.5 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)

DLTA award letters were forwarded to communities whose projects were approved at the January Commission Meeting and meetings are being scheduled with these communities to define a scope of work. The next deadline for DLTA applications is noon, March 14, 2014.

6.3 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

6.3.1 MRMapper & Mobile Apps

We have recently added Mobile Apps designed to improve efficiency in data collection and field work, allowing users to view, create and edit data on-the fly. All apps are custom designed to the users' field of work or area of interest and work on most Apple (iOS) and Android devices.

We have also recently upgraded our internet connection significantly to improve speed and efficiency.

We are continuously working on updates to these systems and adding additional applications and functionality to the site.

6.3.2 Central Mass Evacuation Plan – Phase 1B

This project has been completed. Phase 2 of the project will aid jurisdictions in practical use of the 'Tool Kit' developed in Phase 1B. This will be accomplished through the development and delivery of training workshops and exercises to assure that jurisdictions have the knowledge and capabilities to utilize this data during an actual event.

6.3.3 Hazard Mitigation Plan Five-Year Update Project

The MRPC has been working on Hazard Mitigation Plan Five-Year updates for all of the MRPC Communities, including Devens. The GIS Department will be working directly with the planners and local officials to update all relevant data for the project. All 23 Local Hazards meetings have been completed to date. In conjunction with the Central Mass Evacuation Plan, we are also currently working on updating Critical Facility data for the region. 18 of the 23 Critical Facility Data meetings have been completed (all Worcester County Communities) to date and the remainder (Middlesex County Communities) will be completed in the next few months. This project will be ongoing for the next several months.

6.3.4 Westminster Master Plan Update Mapping

The MRPC has been working on assisting the Town of Westminster with a series of maps that will be included in their Master Plan update. The mapping will be completed over the course of FY13 and FY14 and will include a total of 10 maps as well as GIS Technical Assistance & Set-Up for the Town Planners' office to be able to utilize the maps and data. Currently the Cell Tower Overlay, Infrastructure and Economic Development, Protected Lands, Road Status, Fisheries & Wildlife, Regional Context, Soils & Geologic Features, Water Resources, Existing Land Use and Historic & Cultural Resources maps have been completed. The remaining three maps will be completed in the next few months.

6.3.5 MART System Comprehensive Update

This project is approximately 90% complete.

6.3.6 Wachusett Corridor Planning Study

The HUD Challenge Grant project has been completed.

The Open Space/Recreation, build-out study and Services & Facilities elements of the Wachusett Smart Growth Corridor Analysis has been completed in draft format and will be finalized by the end of the month. This project will be on going over the next year and a half.

6.3.7 MRPC Regional Trail Inventory Update

The MRPC has finalized the formal trail inventory along with all community maps. The next phase is to create a region-wide brochure with the finalized trail data for 2014. This phase project will continue through September 2014.

6.3.8 Clinton Open Space Update

The MRPC is currently working on mapping updates to the Clinton Open Space Plan. Currently the Environmental Justice Populations, Zoning, Open Space, Unique Features and Plant & Wildlife Habitat maps have been completed. The Action Plan map will be completed upon receipt of data from the town. It is anticipated that this project will be completed in March.

6.3.9 Leominster Open Space Update

The MRPC is currently working on mapping updates to the Leominster Open Space Plan. Currently the Regional Context, Justice Populations, Soils & Geologic Features, Unique Features Map and Water Resources maps have been completed. Open Space and Action Plan maps are in draft format and are being reviewed by the City of Leominster. It is anticipated that this project will be completed next month.

6.4 TRANSIT

6.4.1 Wachusett Commuter Rail Station and Layover Facility

The construction work on the Wachusett Commuter Rail Station in Fitchburg and on the MBTA's Commuter Rail Layover Facility at the Westminster Business Park is underway. The construction phase has been awarded to S&R Construction Enterprises for \$22.9 million. HNTB consultant has completed the track and signal design to the 60% level which is the level to which the plans are turned over to Pan Am for construction. Substantial project completion is expected by December, 2014 with full completion in spring of 2015. Staff continues to work with Pan Am Railways and the City of Fitchburg to transfer 5th Mass Turnpike property to MART.

6.4.2 Parking Expansion at N. Leominster Station

Mr. Kahale continues to assist MART and provide technical assistance on this construction project of N. Leominster parking garage structure facility for Three-hundred Sixty (360) parking spaces; Staff continues to attend the weekly construction progress and coordination meetings with Consultant, Engineers and Contractor. The construction schedule has been revised by the General Contractor for Project completion to be achieved by March, 2014; reason for the delay is some legal issues between TLT General Contractor and Subcontractors.

6.4.3 Ayer Parking Facility

At the present time MART has to procure an access between Main Street and the current Train Station in Ayer through private property. FTA officials indicated that MART has to resolve this access issues as soon as possible before the rest of the project can move forward. MART is discussing this matter with Ayer officials for a procurement of an access path, without any easement or any other condition. MART, MBTA and Town Officials had a visit to the proposed project site at the Station; and MBTA indicated their ADA accessibility and Safety concerns on the proposed pathway and requested a meeting with FTA Civil Right Officer to discuss these issues. Mr. Kahale continues to assist MART, FTA and Town of Ayer to move forward the construction of the proposed project of Ayer Commuter Rail Surface Parking Lot for 200 parking spaces at Ayer Rail Trail parking lot Location at Park Street; the State has awarded Ayer the Mass Works Infrastructure Program Grant in the Amount of \$266,667 to be used as matching funds to be combined with Town and MART funds to utilize the \$3.2 million federal grant.

6.4.4 Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line Improvements

The project is currently funded at \$169 million with in State and Federal Funds for the Small Starts Project and replacement of the Route 62 Bridge. 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 in Lunenburg. Work on the project is continuing with the double tracking along the corridor

getting underway this construction season and scheduled for completion in the summer of 2014. Major construction of Littleton Station was completed ahead of schedule.

6.4.5 MART Advisory Board

The next meeting of the MART Advisory Board will be held at 10:30 AM on Wednesday, February 19, 2014 at MART Water Street offices.

6.5 TRANSPORTATION

6.5.1 Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MMPO) Meeting

The MPO met on Wednesday February 12, 2014. At that meeting, the MPO voted to release for a shortened public review and comment period, an Amendment to the FFY 2014 Transit Element of the FFY 2014-2017 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The amendment adds a Section 5317 project based upon an awarded to the Montachusett Area Regional Transit Authority (MART). Due to the need to endorse the Amendment as soon as possible, the MPO voted to reduce the regular 30 day comment period to 22 days in order to allow for endorsement at the March 12, 2014 MPO meeting. Therefore, the comment period for this Amendment runs from Tuesday February 18, 2014 until the close of business on Tuesday March 11, 2014. The Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) reviewed all comments received to date at their regularly scheduled meeting on February 19, 2014. After a brief discussion, the MJTC recommended that the MRPC and the MPO endorse the Amendment to the FFY 2014 TIP as presented.

It is therefore requested that the MRPC authorize its Chairman and the MPO to endorse the Draft Amendment to FFY 2014 TIP at the March 12, 2014 MPO meeting.

G. Corbosiero moved that the MRPC has reviewed the Amendment to the FFY 2014-2017 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and based upon this review of comments received and the recommendation of the MJTC, authorizes it Chairman to endorse the Amendment to the FFY 2014 TIP at a MPO meeting scheduled for Wednesday March 12, 2014 at 1:00 PM at the MRPC offices. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

6.5.2 FFY 2015-2018 Montachusett Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Development

The Montachusett MPO and the Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) continued the development of the FFY 2015-2018 Montachusett TIP. At both meetings, presentations and discussions were held related to the list of potential TIP projects. The preliminary Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) scores of the new potential target eligible TIP were also reviewed. Additional information will be sought on all of the projects from MassDOT Districts 2 and 3 in order to finalize the TEC scores. At the next MPO and MJTC meetings, the TIP project and TEC lists will be reviewed and will hopefully include information on the target estimates for the Region.

6.5.3 Route 117 Corridor Profile

MRPC staff presented the Route 117 Corridor Profile to the Lancaster Planning Board and the general public at a meeting held on Monday February 24, 2014. The study examines the road from the Leominster City Line/I-190 to the Bolton Town Line. Data collected included vehicle volumes, classifications, and speeds, crash reports, pavement and sign conditions and environmental constraints. Intersections of concern were analyzed and potential

improvements identified. Staff highlighted the issues and the alternatives to address the problems identified.

V. Koivumaki indicated that the Route 117 Corridor Profile was very well done and applauded staff on their presentation at the Lancaster Planning Board meeting.

6.5.4 Planned Weekend Service Stoppage on the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line

The Montachusett Joint Transportation Committee (MJTC) again began discussions related to the planned stoppage of service of the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line on weekends from May to November by the MBTA. The following is from the MBTA fact sheet regarding the Fitchburg Line Improvement project:

The Fitchburg Line Improvement Project will improve reliability of service and reduce trip times for commuters.

This \$200 million investment in the line's infrastructure is scheduled for completion by the end of 2015.

The Project includes:

Construction of a second track between Acton and Ayer;

A new Littleton Station with additional parking (opening in May 2013);

A new South Acton Station;

Upgraded signal system and track improvements to allow maximum train speed to be increased from 60 mph to 80 mph; and Improvements to 7 bridges.

In order to support this level of construction and complete the improvements in a timely manner, it is required that weekend service be suspended on all or a portion of the line for extended periods through 2015.

Interruption of service is inherent in this project given its size and scope. The objective is to limit disruptions to weekends to minimize the impact of construction on weekday service.

Alternate bus service will not be provided during these shutdowns. Given the number of weekends required, busing during these shutdowns would be unpredictable and impractical to provide given the limited busing resources available and the needs of other construction projects on the MBTA system.

Similar weekend service suspensions have been employed on other major projects and will allow for consistent service suspensions rather than unpredictable weekend-by-weekend busing.

MBTA recognizes the inconvenience that these weekend service suspensions will cause, but they are the only practical way to ensure that project is completed on time so our customers will be able to realize the Project benefits by December 2015.

The MJTC has again raised concerns regarding the impacts to commuters who rely on the weekend service as well as the attempts by the MBTA to notify those affected. Additionally,

the MJTC has asked that a letter be sent to the MBTA expressing concerns over the lack of service.

6.5.5 Next MPO Meeting – March 12, 2014 at 1:00 PM
Next MJTC Meeting – March 19, 2014 at 7:00 PM

7. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Commission, V. Koivumaki adjourned the meeting at 8:55 p.m.

LIST OF EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT THIS MEETING:

January 28, 2014 Meetings Minutes
February 25, 2014 Handout
Executive Director Announcements
Executive Director Reports and Resolutions
Salary Scale Proposals
WeMove Massachusetts 2014 Meeting notice
MRPC TIP Calendar/Schedule
FTA Assurances
Draft CIP Announcement
PED Bike Program Comment Memo
Public Input Memo FFY2015-2018 TIP
Draft TIP Project Elements

February 25, 2014 – MRPC MEETING ATTENDANCE

NAME	MUNICIPALITY	DELEGATION	APPOINTMENT DATE	PRESENT	ABSENT
R. Hoyt	Ashburnham	Member	7.2011		X
D. Phyfe	Ashburnham	Alternate	7.2013		X
A. Pease	Ashby	Member	7.2001	X	
W. Stacy	Ashby	Alternate	7.2005		X
	Athol	Member			
	Athol	Alternate			
P. Johnston	Ayer	Member	12.2011		X
	Ayer	Alternate			
P. Duffy	Clinton	Member	12.2011	X	
	Clinton	Alternate			
P. Lowitt	Devens	Non-Voting	7.2001		X
P. Caron	Fitchburg	Member	7.2002	X	
	Fitchburg	Alternate			
A. Gross	Gardner	Member	2.2005		X
	Gardner	Alternate			
D. Manugian	Groton	Member	7.2009		X
A. Eliot	Groton	Alternate	7.2008		X
J. Hutchinson	Harvard	Member	7.2012		X
T. Clark	Harvard	Alternate	7.2011		X
A. Sheipers	Hubbardston	Member	7.2013	X	
	Hubbardston	Alternate			
V. Koivumaki	Lancaster	Member	7.2000	X	
E. Christoph	Lancaster	Alternate	7.1992		X
	Leominster	Member			
	Leominster	Alternate			
J. Bilotta	Lunenburg	Member	2.2010		X
R. Bowen	Lunenburg	Alternate	7.2003		X
R. Rocheleau	Petersham	Member	7.2011		X
E. Anderson	Petersham	Alternate	7.2004		X
J. Telepciak	Phillipston	Member	10.2010	X	
	Phillipston	Alternate			
V. Andreliunas	Royalston	Member	2.1991	X	
J. Hardie	Royalston	Alternate	7.2007		X
J. Greeno	Shirley	Member	7.2011		X
	Shirley	Alternate			
M. Radzicki	Sterling	Member	7.2011		X
B. Pattachiola	Sterling	Alternate	9.2012		X
C. Carroll	Templeton	Member	7.2011		X
	Templeton	Alternate			
C. Jones	Townsend	Member	2.2011	X	
L. Shifrin	Townsend	Alternate	12.2010		X
M. Fortin	Westminster	Member	7.2011		X
	Westminster	Alternate			
G. Corbosiero	Winchendon	Member	7.2011	X	
J. Kreidler	Winchendon	Alternate	7.2010		X

STAFF PRESENT: George Snow, George Kahale, Brad Harris, Bobbi Jo Johnson, Linda Parmenter, Kevin Flynn, Stephanie Brow, Brian Doherty, Sheri Bean, Glenn Eaton

GUESTS: Mark Goldstein, MRPC Legal Counsel, Susannah Lee, Athol