

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MINUTES
FEBRUARY 24, 2015 MINUTES**

1. INTRODUCTIONS

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

2. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 24, 2015 MEETING MINUTES

J. Telepciak moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the February 24, 2015 minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

There was no Treasurer's Report this month.

4. PRESENTATION BY DR. JOSH SPERO OF FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY ON COST OF LIVING INDEX (COLI) DATA COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION

Dr. Josh Spero indicated that over the years FSU and MRPC have been working together through the Regional Economic Development Institute (REDI) on data research and analysis for COLI. REDI is in the process of transitioning, however, the partnership still exists between FSU and MRPC. Many FSU students have interned at the MRPC.

He further explained that North Central Chamber of Commerce used to undertake cost of living index quarterly report. REDI then took over the tasks of collecting and organizing data sets for the cost of living index. With the demise of REDI, he was unsure as to who would undertake this task. He further explained details and benefits of the Cost of Living Index data through a website presentation.

L. Shifrin asked what Mr. Spero hoped would happen this with this project.

J. Spero indicated he hoped that MRPC would consider the possibly taking over this task with the assistance of FSU students.

G. Eaton responded that the MRPC will obtain an economics student each year from Fitchburg State University. The Federal funding received from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) will enable the MRPC staff to oversee the interns in the future. The collection of the cost of living index (COLI) data will augment the economic data and services provided by the MRPC.

More discussion followed.

5. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

5.1 FY15 BUDGET UPDATE AND DRAFT BUDGET PRESENTATION

G. Eaton distributed a memo on the FY15 budget update. He explained the budget process. For FY16, 75% of revenue needed is under contract. As we get closer to June we will firm up the budget. He also distributed a spreadsheet of the local assessments to communities. Local assessments total \$ 71,846 for FY16. Most local assessment money is used for matching funds.

L. Shifrin moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission acknowledges the receipt of the attached statement of revenue and expenses for FY16 provided to the Commission by the Executive Director and that it has determined that the total amount of funds due to the Commission by its 22 member communities is hereby set at \$71,845.66, as per the attached detailed spreadsheet of local assessments as prepared by the Fiscal Director. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5.2 EDA CASH MATCH RESOLUTION

J. Hume reported that MRPC will be submitting its EDA Capacity Building grant proposal to the EDA-Philadelphia Office. The Application is due no later than March 4, 2015. The purpose of this grant is to enable the MRPC to implement regional economic development strategies, provide economic development technical assistance to municipalities and implement the MRCEDS. An in-kind match will also be gained through in-kind services to be received from community and economic planning and development staff within municipalities in the Montachusett Region.

G. Corbosiero that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission will authorize up to \$17,500 in cash to match a \$70,000 Economic Development Administration Planning Assistance grant for the period beginning April 1, 2015 and ending March 31, 2016, enabling the MRPC to provide economic development and administrative support to:

1. Communities in the Montachusett Region
2. Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC)
3. Montachusett Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (MRCEDS) Committee
4. Montachusett Region Brownfields Reuse Initiative (MRBRI) Steering Committee
5. Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC)
6. Montachusett Economic Development District (MEDD) Board of Directors

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

5.3 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

G. Eaton distributed a list of upcoming staff meetings. Local community officials have been invited to attend MRPC staff meetings so that MRPC can inform communities about services available and communities can educate MRPC as to what type of assistance they may require.

G. Eaton informed members that the Town of Westminster will hold a Demolition Delay Bylaw Workshop will be held on April 18th, at 6:00 p.m. at the Forbush Memorial Library in Westminster.

6. REGIONAL REVIEWS

6.1 MA DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION AND RECREATION – ACQUISITION OF INTEREST OF LAND IN HUBBARDSTON

G. Eaton reported that the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), has under consideration the acquisition of an interest in land for the following properties in Hubbardston.

- 1) 151 +/- acres of land (off Kruse Road and Flagg Road) which abuts DCR owned land as well as the Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area. The proposed use for the property will be land managed under the Quabbin Land Management Guidelines for protection of open space including water supply protection.
- 2) 353 +/- acres of land (off George Howard Road) which abuts DCR owned land and is currently a mixture of managed woodland and farmland. The proposed use for the property will be landed managed for protection of open space including water supply and passive outdoor recreational purposes. The acreage will continue to be managed for forest products and natural resources amenities.
- 3) 80 +/- acres of land (off Worcester Road) which abuts DCR owned land will be land managed under the Quabbin Land Management Plan Guidelines.
- 4) 56 +/- acres of land (off Simond Hill Road) which abuts DCR owned land will be land managed under the Quabbin Land Management Plan Guidelines.

G. Eaton mentioned that the Town of Hubbardston informed him that Hubbardston is transferring two parcels of town owned land and a 12 acre parcel of DCR owned land which they intend to use for the construction of a new senior center and eventually a public safety building.

J. Telepciak moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission agree to waive the 120 day notice period and approve the acquisition by the Department of Conservation and Recreation in less than 120 days. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

7. STATUS REPORTS –PM

7.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING

7.1.1 Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc.

Mr. Eaton has absorbed the administration of the “receivership” program being delivered in Athol via the MRPC’s private, non-profit affiliate Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC)

- ✓ Three properties are planned to be auctioned in March; 112 Harvard Avenue, 1158 Main Street, and 1768-1770 Main Street.
- ✓ Also being managed are four other “receivership” properties which are; 41 Lewis Street, 107 Stevens Street, 119 Everett Avenue, and 207 Adams Drive.
- ✓ The Executive Director and Fiscal Director have expended a significant amount of time to manage this program to its successful completion for all of the above and future properties in Athol.
- ✓ The Executive Director met with Health and Community Development Officials in Fitchburg and the Town Administrator in Templeton concerning possibly delivering these services in these additional communities.

7.1.2 Community Development Block Grants

John Hume, Planning and Development Director led a team of co-workers to complete a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) proposal that was due and submitted on Friday the 13th of February. He was assisted by Chantell Fleck Regional Planner, Linda Parmenter Administrative and Human Resources Director, Bobbi Jo Johnson Fiscal Director, Jason Stanton GIS & IT Director and Glenn Eaton Executive Director.

7.2 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING

7.2.1 Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA)

As part of this contract, MRPC provides assistance to communities seeking grant funds to improve economic vitality. MRPC staff assisted Shirley and Lancaster to prepare a regional FY15 Community Development Block Grant application for Housing Rehabilitation and Home Heating Fuel Assistance. The application was submitted to Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development on Friday, February 13th. If funded, beneficiaries of these programs will be low and moderate income residents in Shirley and Lancaster.

7.2.2 Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project

MRPC Staff submitted a draft report to Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and has received comments that are being addressed to fulfill requirements of the plan.

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

MRPC has completed this project and is in the process of grant close-out.

7.2.4 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)

The following DLTA projects were approved at the February 10th Commission Meeting. MRPC is in the process of issuing award letters and draft contracts between MRPC and the communities that we will be working with.

1. **Fitchburg:** Continuation of investigating/researching appropriate zoning changes around Wachusett Station and the new Great Wolf Lodge resort.
2. **Winchendon:** Master Plan Transportation Element.
3. **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.

7.2.5 Shirley Master Plan

Work has been initiated on this project and MRPC staff will present information (Circulation/Transportation recommendations) to local officials on Wednesday, February 18th and discuss a community Charrette to be held sometime in late winter/early spring.

7.3 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)

7.3.1 MRMapper & Mobile Apps

We have migrated all web-based GIS services to the Amazon Cloud in order to significantly improve speed, reliability and efficiency. As part of the migration we have upgraded all of the applications and added additional functionality. We are consistently adding data and applications or enhancing tools in *MRMapper* so please check back frequently to see what's new.

Additionally, we have recently added Mobile Apps 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.

7.3.2 Central Mass Evacuation Plan – Phase 2

Phase 2 of the project will begin soon and 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. Additionally mobile and desktop application will be created to allow the communities to map real-time evacuation scenarios, edit Critical Infrastructure data and allow other authorized users and organizations to view these applications for monitoring purposes.

7.3.3 MassGIS Parcel Enhancements

We are currently working on a variety of tasks related to parcel enhancements for the communities of Ayer and Leominster. Work for Athol and Fitchburg have been completed. All tasks will be completed in FY15.

7.3.4 Fitchburg Working Cities

This project has been completed.

7.3.5 CDBG Mapping

Mobile applications were developed to collect Windshield Survey data for Lancaster and Shirley CDBG Applications. A large amount of data and attributes were collected using this app and then mapped accordingly. Additionally, a mail-merge document was established to automatically populate the "Building Evaluation Ratings" with the appropriate information and pictures. This was a new process for the MRPC in terms of CDBG applications and saved many hours of field work, mapping and manual data entry.

7.3.6 Shirley Master Plan – Transportation Element

A number of maps were created for the Transportation Element of the Shirley Master Plan. These maps included Bridge Classifications, Crash Data, Pavement Conditions, Roadway Classifications and Traffic Counts. These maps were delivered to the Town for their review. Additional work may be necessary based on feedback from the Town.

7.4 TRANSIT

7.4.1 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. There will be a delay for the substantial project completion to Mid-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 September 2016. 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 5th 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.

7.4.2 Parking Expansion at N. Leominster Station

The North Leominster Parking Garage has been completed. The facility is for three-hundred sixty (360) parking spaces. One third of the facility is occupied daily.

7.4.3 Ayer Parking Facility

FTA officials indicated that MART has to resolve the pedestrian access issues at the station before the project can move forward. On September 9, 2014 MBTA and the property owner reached an agreement to resolve the pedestrian access issues. After months of negotiations and meetings, both parties came to common ground. The property owner will transfer approximately 16,000 square feet to MART for \$1.00 and then it will permanently be transferred to the Town of Ayer for \$1.00. 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. MART initiated a Request for Proposal (RFP) process for property appraisal for the three properties (15 Park St., 13 Park St., and 7-11 Park St.) adjacent to the Rail Trail parking lot. As soon as the property transfer for the pedestrian access takes place the process of the appraisal will start.

7.4.4 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 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 with the double tracking along the corridor and South Acton Station. Major construction of the 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.

7.4.5 Lunenburg Bus Route

Staff is assisting MART on a proposed Bus Route to serve Lunenburg residents and seniors; to connect to Lunenburg Crossing/Shopping Center, the Commuter Rail Station and Lunenburg Town Center.

7.5 TRANSPORTATION

7.5.1 Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan Update

Staff has held six of seven scheduled public forums/workshops to discuss various elements of the 2016 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) Update. Two bike/ped

workshops were held on January 6th and 8th; highway systems forums were held as part of the January 21st MJTC meeting and at the Athol Public Library on February 10th. Two transit meetings were held on February 18th at Nu Café in Gardner and later that night as part of the MJTC meeting held at Great Wolf Lodge. The final public outreach forum is scheduled for 1:00 P.M. on Wednesday February 25th at MRPC Offices and will discuss Environmental issues. Attendance has been better than previous meetings held for prior RTPs.

Comments received at the public meetings are being used to develop the RTP Vision statement and its goals and objectives. In addition, Performance Measures are also being discussed. Once all meetings are completed a final version of the Vision statement and goals will be compiled for review.

The website focusing specifically on the RTP continues to be updated with pertinent data on meetings, documents, surveys and outreach throughout the RTP development process. It is accessible through the front page of the MRPC website at www.mrpc.org.

The survey for local officials and the general public regarding their opinions and thoughts on the Region will remain open until the end of the month. The survey can be accessed through the MRPC website as well as directly at www.surveymonkey.com/s/Mont2016RTP. A Spanish version of the survey is also online at www.surveymonkey.com/s/Mont2016RTPSpanish. We encourage all to take a few minutes to take the survey as well as pass it on to their towns and organizations. Paper copies of the survey are also available. To date we have had approximately 140 responses.

7.5.2 Purchase of New Pavement Management System Software

The MRPC has partnered with three other RPA's to purchase a new Pavement Management Systems (PMS) software package from Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB). The software package known as Road Manager will allow us to replace the prior software system that is no longer available or supported. For the purchase price of \$6,862.50 per RPA, we will receive training, software installation and 2-3 field training sessions. We anticipate having the program back up and running this coming summer.

7.5.3 New "3C" Transportation Planning Contract

MRPC staff continues the process to compile the necessary information and documents as part of our request for a new four year "3C" contract. Our current contract runs until September 30, 2015 and was for an estimated total of \$2,429,837. This figure was based on our "PL" amount on October 1, 2011 of \$563,751 plus a 5 percent increase for each successive year. Unfortunately, our "PL" allotments did not follow this estimate as our current "PL" amount was only \$544,557. We will confer with MassDOT throughout the process as we develop a new contract to be in place by October 1, 2015.

Next MPO Meeting – March 11, 2015 at 1:00 PM

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

8. ADJOURNMENT

V. Koivumaki indicated that MRPC needs to meet earlier in March because we are up against an audit deadline.

It was decided that the next MRPC Meeting will be on March 24, 2015 at 6:30 p.m. instead of the March 31, 2015 at 7:00 p.m.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

LIST OF DOCUMENTS DISTRIBUTED AT THE MEETING:

Historic Preservation Workshop notice

RTP Survey

MRPC Staff Meeting Agendas

February 24, 2015 Handout

Josh Spero Ph.D Bio

RTP Outreach Interested Parties Memo

Montachusett MPO 2016 RTP Vision Statement/Goals

Memo to Board RE: Estimate of Anticipated Revenue and Expenses for FY16 and Adoption of Local Assessments by the Commissioners

FY2016 Draft Budget

February 10, 2015 MRPC Minutes

MRPC Meeting Attendance List

Alphabetically by Community

Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	PRESENT	ABSENT
Davis, Nick	A	Ashburnham	7.2014		X
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011		X
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001	X	
Stacy, Wayne	A	Ashby	7.2005		X
Dodge, Alan	A	Athol	4.2014		X
Johnston, Peter	M	Ayer	12.2011		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
Manugian, David	M	Groton	7.2009		X
Hutchinson, Joe	M	Harvard	7.2012		X
Sheipers, Anita	A	Hubbardston	7.2013		X
Christoph, Eugene	A	Lancaster	7.1992		X
Koivumaki, Victor	M	Lancaster	7.2000	X	
Bilotta, Joanna	M	Lunenburg	2.201		X
Telepciak, John	M	Phillipston	10.201	X	
Andreluinas, Vyto	M	Royalston	2.1991		X
Hardie, John	A	Royalston	7.2007		X
Hadju, Charles	M	Sterling	7.2014		X
Kilcoyne, John	A	Sterling	7.2014		X
Carroll, Charles	M	Templeton	7.2011		X
Bozicas, Jerrilyn	M	Townsend	7.2014		X
Shifrin, Laura	A	Townsend	7.2010	X	
Shenk, Jay	M	Westminster	7.2014		X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	
Kreidler, James	A	Winchendon	7.2010		X

STAFF PRESENT: Glenn Eaton, John Hume, Jason Stanton Brian Doherty, George Kahale, Linda Parmenter

GUESTS PRESENT: Mark Goldstein, MRPC Legal Counsel; Victoria Eaton, Public, Josh Spero, Fitchburg State University.