

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

**1. INTRODUCTIONS**

V. Koivumaki called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. All present introduced themselves.

**2. APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 24, 2015 MEETING MINUTES**

J. Telepciak moved that the minutes of February 24, 2015 be approved as printed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

A. Pease read the March 2015 cash schedule. Balance after last warrant \$96,119.82;  
Total receipts this month \$48,821.66; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$139,941.48; Less:  
amount of this warrant \$63,428.65: Balance after this warrant \$72,653.20.

J. Telepciak moved to accept the March 2015 cash schedules as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**4. NOMINATIONS TO THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE**

Roger Hoyt, John Telepciak and Alan Pease volunteered to serve on the Nominating Committee.

A. Pease moved that the Roger Hoyt, John Telepciak and Alan Pease be appointed to the Nominating Committee. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**5. FY14 AUDIT PRESENTATION BY ROLAND LAMBALOT, CPA**

R. Lambalot distributed the FY14 Audit to members.

R. Lambalot presented a Statement of Net Position worksheet for year ended June 30. He indicated that this is the first time that MRPC had a pre-paid expense under Current Assets. The expense was a result of MRPC's attempt to relocate. If the move occurs the cost will be amortized over the period of the improvements made on the property. If MRPC abandon's the move, this expense will be written off.

Other items of interest are in the current liabilities category under notes payable. The amount was due to having a large amount of receivables at the end of the year due to timing of receipts. MRPC's total net position has deteriorated over time due to GASB 45 post employment health benefits. Whether MRPC funds GASB or not, it requires a liability in the audit. The Statement of Revenues and Expenditures indicate that revenues are up a bit. There is a loss in the year of approximately \$54,000. The majority of the loss is driven by the OPEB liability. If the OPEB liability was removed, it would show MRPC made about \$6,000.

He indicated it came to his attention recently that the HUD Contract with MRPC does not allow indirect costs. In prior years, indirect costs were not factored into revenue recognition. Through the HUD contract MRPC cannot charge indirect costs but can charge Other Directs. Income was recovered

in the HUD section in the amount of approximately \$29,000 which was a positive adjustment. More and more federal contracts are limiting that capability.

Also noted that in the Expenditures Category, computer software is \$0 in 2014, but under Indirect Costs category, computer software is \$11,000. This occurred because MassDOT does not allow certain items to be charged to indirect costs anymore. There is an increase in the depreciation line item due to the fact that you are depreciating items that you were not allowed to purchase directly with state funds.

He also indicated that the State Board of Retirement issue could create problems for MRPC if it becomes a reality as it is something MRPC cannot afford on an annual basis. Considering, MRPC has not been able to fund its OPEB liability which is a voluntary contribution and compare that to the Retirement liability, which would be mandatory. The cost for one year was \$147,000. This also has the potential to create a significant overhead rate. The overhead rate would exceed the allowable rates contracts will let MRPC charge. Other RPAs have higher assessments, so they may have the capacity to potentially absorb. The retirement invoice is listed in the audit as a contingency. In this audit, the reimbursement request is without merit because MRPC is going to challenge it and no liability has been reflected in the audit.

He added that other RPAs have indicated possibly resolving this matter by contributing a percentage rate. For example, if MRPC had a rate between 3 and 5%, MRPC is looking at paying about \$30,000 to \$80,000 per year.

The historical perspective of the audit is fine for 2014. There were no issues or findings. The only difficulty he had was the software for accounts receivable did not work to well so it took him longer to prepare the audit. He added that he thought it was important to bring to the MRPC the prospective aspects of what the MRPC is facing.

After much discussion regarding the State Board of Retirement issue, A. Pease moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission authorize its Director to meet with legislators to pursue special legislation on behalf of MRPC to keep the status quo of 0% contribution from MRPC for retirees to the State Board of Retirement.

R. Hoyt indicated he would speak to Representative Zlotnik regarding this issue.

V. Koivumaki commented that he would speak to Representative Naughton.

A. Pease asked the auditor about GASB 45.

R. Lambalot responded that liability will continue to grow. It is segregated in the financial statements to make reader aware you have a negative net position and that is the sole reason. You have to record the liability but don't have to fund.

R. Hoyt moved to accept the FY2014 audit report as presented by Roland Lambalot. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**6. ECONOMIC REVIEW AND OUTLOOK PRESENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION WITH MR. MICHAEL GREENWOOD, PH.D., PROFESSOR OF MANAGEMENT & ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND MR. LUIS ROSERO, PH.D., ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ECONOMICS AT FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY -**

Professor Michael Greenwood gave a power point presentation regarding the results of the North Central Massachusetts Hiring and HR Trends Survey. The objective of the study was to gauge annual senior level business and non-profit perspectives on emerging hiring and HR trends in our region. The results will assist business and non-profit executives that are navigating the complex challenges of a connected economy, interconnected supply chain partners and customers. The results will assist businesses and organizations as they set compensation and benefits plans. Firms can compare and contrast their benefit and compensation plans with the results of the survey. The study was designed and administered by the North Central MA chamber of Commerce Leadership Council Member and Fitchburg State University School of Business and Technology.

Professor Greenwood explained in detail the results of the survey.

Assistant Professor Luis Rosero gave a detailed power point presentation on the Economic Recovery in the North Central MA Region. His presentation including information on unemployment rates, changing labor demands, employment structure, wage recovery and regional wages.

A question and answer session took place after each power point.

**7. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

**7.1 ANNOUNCEMENTS FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

There were no announcements from the Executive Director.

**8. STATUS REPORTS**

**8.1 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING**

**8.1.1 Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc.**

Mr. Eaton has been managing the daily tasks needed to keep this project moving forward. A status of each of the receivership projects in Athol follows.

**Receiverships Report**

Athol

112 Harvard Avenue - This property has been advertised to be auctioned at Noon, Tuesday, March 31st

1158 Main Street - This property has been advertised to be auctioned at 1:00 PM, Tuesday, March 31st

1768-70 Main Street - This property has been advertised to be auctioned at 2:00 PM, Tuesday, March 31st

107 Stevens Street - Duetsche Bank appraised the property and is considering paying off the superior lien held by MEC; if the bank does not pay MEC's lien then MEC will petition the Housing Court on April 8th to auction. MEC will seek approval on a motion to proceed to auction.

207 Adams Drive - MEC is pursuing the bank's insurance company to settle the claim for the \$17,500 in repairs to the portions of the house that were damaged by fire.

41 Lewis Street - This site has been "cleaned and secured," MEC received 50% of the project costs from Athol's HomeCorps grant and MEC needs to obtain the balance of the funding prior to initiating renovations.

119 Everett Avenue - This site has been "cleaned and secured," MEC received 50% of the project costs from Athol's HomeCorps grant, and MEC needs to obtain the balance of the funding prior to initiating renovations.

**MEC Ashburnham Affordable Housing Proposal.** The framing and roof have been completed to facilitate the completion of interior work. Electrical and plumbing tasks continue.

### **8.1.2 Community Development Block Grants**

Mr. Eaton has been fielding phone calls from: Prior clients concerning roof warranty issues; local officials concerning CDBG program income funds management; and, new projects for the 2016 funding round.

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

Meetings have been held with local officials from Athol and Fitchburg concerning this program. Future meetings have been planned to update municipal staff. This project will continue through December 2015. Linda Parmenter is the team leader on this project.

## **8.2 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING**

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

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee meeting will be held on Friday, March 20th at 9 am here at MRPC offices. All are welcome to attend where the topic will be "Planning and Zoning for Economic Development". Guest Speakers include:

- Lisa Marrone, City of Leominster, Economic Development
- Noreen Piazza, Town of Lancaster, Planning Director
- Trevor Beauregard, City of Gardner, Director of Community Development and Planning

Questions and answer sessions will take place after each presentation

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

MRPC Staff received comments from Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency that continue to be addressed.

### **8.2.3 Federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Community Challenge Grant**

MRPC has completed this project and is in the process of grant close-out prior to April 15th.

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

The following DLTA projects were approved at the February 10th Commission Meeting. MRPC has issued award letters to the following communities:

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.

A contract with Fitchburg has been executed and work is underway, a contract with Winchendon has been forwarded to the community, and MRPC is working to solidify a detailed scope of work with Sterling prior to a contract being signed. A second DLTA request for Service Delivery will be issued to all Montachusett communities on April 1st and proposal due dates is scheduled for Noon, May 22, 2015. Awards will be made at the May 26th Planning Commission meeting.

#### **8.2.5 Shirley Master Plan**

MRPC staff presented the draft Circulation/Transportation Element to local officials on Wednesday, February 18th and discussed a community Charrette to be held in May. The next meeting with local officials is scheduled for Wednesday, March 18th at 8:30 am in Shirley.

### **8.3 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)**

#### **8.3.1 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.

#### **8.3.2 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.

#### **8.3.3 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.

### **8.3.4 MART Title VI Mapping**

We recently worked on a number of maps and databases for MART's Title VI plan. These products depict Disables, Elderly, Linguistically Isolated and Minority populations with relation to fixed bus routes and facilities. This project has been completed.

### **8.3.5 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.

### **8.3.6 MART Fitchburg/Leominster Bus Route System**

We recently worked on updates to the MART Fitchburg/Leominster Bus Routes and Bus Stops map. This project has been completed.

## **8.4 TRANSIT**

### **8.4.1 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 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.

### **8.4.2 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.

### **8.4.3 Ayer Parking Facility**

FTA officials indicated that MART has to resolve the pedestrian access issues at the station before the project can move forward. 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 a parcel to MART and then it will permanently be transferred to the Town of Ayer. 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.

#### **8.4.4 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 along the Fitchburg Line 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 to full 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.

#### **8.4.5 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.

#### **8.4.5 MART Advisory Board**

The next meeting of the MART Advisory Board will be held at 10:30 AM on Tuesday, March 31, 2015 at MART Water Street offices.

#### **8.4.7 MBTA Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line**

The Montachusett Legislature held a meeting on March 2, 2015 at Fitchburg Intermodal Transportation Center to discuss the latest MBTA service operation during and after the snow storms and the impacts on the Fitchburg Commuter Rail Line users. The Lawmakers expressed their constituents' frustration with the railway service and criticized the way MBTA relayed information to riders, leaving them "literally out in the cold", waiting for a limited number of trains that either are delayed or never show up.

### **8.5 TRANSPORTATION**

#### **8.5.1 Montachusett Regional Transportation Plan Update**

MRPC has completed seven public outreach meetings at which various elements of the RTP were discussed. Those comments have been summarized in a handout. In general the feedback was very positive and informative. There were a lot of comments related to bicycle and pedestrian issues as well as transit services. Highway feedback focused on Route 2 in the Athol/Phillipston area, general safety concerns and funding for local projects and design. These comments are being reviewed and will be used to establish goals and objectives for the RTP. A handout on the results of the survey conducted for the RTP is available. In general, it provides us with some insight on issues that are important to the region.

The MRPC is also completing drafts of several chapters of the RTP including Bicycle/Pedestrian, Infrastructure and Safety. The drafts will be posted soon to website. In addition, the revised goals and objectives will be posted for review. We anticipate receiving financial data from MassDOT for the RTP shortly. In addition, population estimates will soon be provided by MassDOT. Once received the MRPC will be forwarding the information to member communities for their review and comment.

### **8.5.2 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) FFY 2015-2018 Amendment**

The MRPC was notified by MassDOT via email of an amendment to the FFY 2015-2018 TIP; the removal of project 607114 LANCASTER - FULL BRIDGE REPLACEMENT, L-02-018, JACKSON ROAD OVER ROUTE 2 which is currently listed under Section 1B Federal Aid Bridge Projects in the FFY 2015 Highway Element. MassDOT indicated that the funding for this project was already obligated and therefore it is no longer necessary to be programmed on the TIP.

The MPO voted to release the Amendment for a 30 day public review and comment period. An Amendment is required based upon procedures outlined in the TIP that states that a deletion of a federal aid project from a previously endorsed TIP is subject to an amendment. The comment period began on Monday March 16<sup>th</sup> and will close on Tuesday April 14<sup>th</sup>. Because this is after the next scheduled MPO meeting on April 8<sup>th</sup>, final action will occur at the May 13<sup>th</sup> MPO meeting. A summary of the Amendment as well as the announcement memo are available.

### **8.5.3 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) FFY 2016-2019**

MRPC staff has initiated work on the development of the next TIP that will cover FFY 2016-2019. The overall goal will be to seek endorsement by the MPO in June. As such, a schedule to guide upcoming actions has been prepared. Currently, a master list of projects has been compiled and is available as a handout. Possible funding scenarios will be discussed at the April MPO meeting as well as presentations on a four projects in order to provide more information to the MPO.

Target figures are not available as of yet but we anticipate receiving something shortly. In addition, a copy of a memo soliciting involvement in the TIP development process is also available.

### **8.5.4 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) 2015-2016**

The MRPC has also initiated work on the development of the next UPWP that will cover October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016. The UPWP is a budget and programming tool that outlines our work activities for the year. Some tasks remain constant from year to year such as the development of the TIP and UPWP as well as our Data Collection efforts. A schedule for development of the UPWP has also been prepared that indicates that we will look to have a preliminary outline of tasks as well as a budget for discussion by the MPO in April. We have not received our PL allocation figure from MassDOT yet but we anticipate having something in the near future.

One task under review and development is the result of a formal request from the town of Shirley regarding a safety issue at the Groton Road (Rt 225)/Townsend Road intersection. This area is the site of a crash cluster that was highlighted in their recent Master Plan. As such, town selectmen have raised concerns and have approached us to initiate a study of the situation. A second potential task under discussion has come from a discussion with the city of Gardner regarding a parking issue within the city center. The city discussed issues related to recent developments, on street parking duration, and the general traffic flow. We have discussed what might be possible for us to accomplish and have encouraged them to formalize their interest/request.



**Next MPO Meeting – April 8, 2015 at 1:00 PM**

**Next MJTC Meeting – April 15, 2015 at 7:00 PM**

## **9. ADJOURNMENT**

V. Koivumaki indicated that we need to work on better attendance at the MRPC Meetings.

G. Eaton stated that he has done everything he can think of to increase attendance except change the day and time of the meetings. This is a matter we can discuss further at the April Meeting.

After further discussion, it was decided that MRPC would survey the members to determine how to increase attendance.

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

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

March 24, 2015 Handout

February 24, 2015 Minutes

Draft Amendment #1 to the FFY 2015-2018 TIP

RTP Comments from Public Outreach Meetings

Development of Draft Montachusett FY2016-2019 TIP Memo

Audit Year Ended June 30, 2014

Economic Review And Outlook Presentation From FSU

## 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	A	Phillipston	10.201	X	
Andreluinas, Vyto	M	Royalston	2.1991		X
Hardie, John	A	Royalston	7.2007		X
Greeno, Jonathan	M	Shirley	7.2014		X
Hadju, Charles	M	Sterling	7.2014		X
Kilcoyne, John	A	Sterling	7.2014		X
Carroll, Charles	A	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, Brad Harris, George Snow, Bobbi Jo Johnson

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Mark Goldstein, MRPC Legal Counsel; Victoria Eaton, Public; Michael Pineo, Sterling; Michael Greenwood, FSU Ph.D., Professor Of Management & Entrepreneurship, Mr. Luis Rosero, Ph.D., FSU Assistant Professor Of Economics; Roland Lambalot, Auditor; Jim Meehan, Athol