

**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
SEPTEMBER 29, 2015 MINUTES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

V. Koivumaki called the meeting to order at 7:00 .pm. All present introduced themselves. MRPC members welcomed Brian Keating to the MRPC staff.

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

G. Corbosiero moved that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approve the August 29 2015 minutes as printed. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**3. TREASURER'S REPORT**

A. Pease read the August 2015 cash schedule. Balance after last warrant \$160,807.21; Total receipts this month \$69,488.46; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$230,295.67; Less: amount of this warrant \$141,484.38: Balance after this warrant \$77,367.06.

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

**4. TRAINING COMMISSIONERS IN USE OF TABLETS AT PUBLIC MEETINGS**

J. Stanton distributed tablets to Commissioners indicating that all handouts and exhibits for the meeting are now available on tablets. He trained those present on how to use the tablets and how to access the meeting documents.

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

Discussion took place regarding the vacant homes crisis in the Montachusett Region. Phil Duffy explained the situation in Clinton. Mark Goldstein also spoke about his experiences with foreclosed and vacant homes.

V. Koivumaki informed members that at the MEC Annual Dinner Meeting there were participants that were interested in establishing an Economic Development Council for North Quabbin towns. We spoke about possibly work with those communities through MEC on housing issues.

Phil Duffy spoke about the lack of public transportation in Clinton. The only service provided by WRTA is the lease of a Council on Aging Van. G. Corbosiero indicated Winchendon has the same issue. M. Goldstein advised that they should speak with Bruno Fisher of MART on this issue.

Discussion also took place regarding Broadband service in Royalston. V. Andreliunas informed that Royalston has a broadband pilot project occurring. There are 50 subscribers that are connected and so far the results are good.

V. Koivumaki informed Commissioners if they had any topics that we would like to discuss at future meetings to inform Linda Parmenter, Administrative Director.

## **6. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

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

Discussion on this matter was postponed.

## **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 migrating 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 Town of Westminster and recently updated the Town of Shirley's internal-only site as well as created a public site.

#### **DLTA**

We are currently working on mapping for two DLTA projects:

- Sterling Route 12 Corridor Economic Development Analysis
- West Fitchburg Corridor Overlay District
- Winchendon Master Plan Transportation Mapping

These projects, as well as others, will be ongoing for the next several months.

#### **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.

#### **Athol Potential Receiverships App**

We are currently in the process of creating an app for MEC to be used in tracking potential receivership properties in the Town of Athol. This project should be completed in very soon.

#### **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. This project is complete.

### **MART 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 soon.

### **Ayer Parcel Maintenance**

We are working with the Town of Ayer to update their GIS parcel data to MassGIS Level 3 compliance and update their tax maps. This project is expected to be completed very soon.

## **7.2 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT**

### **7.2.1 COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING SECTION**

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

**Program:** A Cooperative Agreement between EPA and MRPC will be in effect as of October 1, 2015. A Request for Qualifications for Qualified Environmental Professional Services for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and Remedial/Reuse Planning/Plans was made available by MRPC on July 27, 2015. Qualification Proposals were due August 21, 2015 at 1 p.m. Three Qualified Environmental Firms for Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and Remedial/ Reuse Planning/Plans were interviewed by the Montachusett Brownfields Group Steering Committee on September 17th. Firms interviewed were: Beta Group, Inc.; VHB; and TRC. The Montachusett Brownfields Group Steering Committee voted to recommend that MRPC award the contract to TRC.

In June, the federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) selected MRPC for a brownfields assessment grant in the amount of \$400,000 for hazardous substances and petroleum contaminated sites. On July 27th, 2015, MRPC issued a Request for Qualifications for qualified environmental professionals to conduct Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and Remedial/Reuse Planning/Plans.

Proposals were due on August 21, 2015 at 1 p.m. MRPC received five proposals:

1. Beta Group, Inc. – Norwood, MA
2. VHB – Providence, RI
3. Weston & Sampson Engineers Inc. – Worcester, MA
4. Sovereign Consulting – Foxborough, MA
5. TRC – Lowell, MA

MRPC's review committee reviewed and ranked the proposals. The highest ranking proposals were received from:

TRC – Lowell MA

Beta Group, Inc. – Norwood, MA

VHB – Providence, RI

The Montachusett Brownfields Group (MBG) held interviews on September 17th with the above mentioned consulting firms.

The MBG voted to recommend that MRPC award the contract to TRC.

G. Corboseiro moved that based on the recommendation of the MBG, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission award the contract for qualified environmental professionals to conduct Phase I

and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments and Remedial/Reuse Planning/Plans to TRC. A contract with TRC cannot be made until after a Cooperative Agreement between MRPC and the EPA begins on October 1, 2015. TRC will be paid \$332,000 through the Brownfields Site Assessment Grant. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

**Hazard Mitigation Plan Update Project**

MRPC Staff received comments from Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) that have been addressed. The plan was resubmitted in the spring to MEMA and now remains under review by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

**District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)**

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.

**Shirley Master Plan Update**

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.

**7.2.2 COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING SECTION**

In September MRPC hired a Community Development Manager to:

- Manage the Federal Fiscal Year 15 (FFY15) Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) awarded for Shirley and Lancaster in July 2015 and administer future CDBG awards on behalf of communities in the region and the MRPC.
- Oversee the construction of affordable housing projects conducted in cooperation with Monty Tech.
- In cooperation with the MRPC's Executive Director (and MEC's Director) implement the "receivership" program on behalf of one or more communities.
- Interviews for the Community Development Administrative Assistant will be held in the near future.
- The Executive Director's goal is to fill this position in October.

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

- **107 Stevens Street**

- o MEC returned the Athol HomeCorps Grant loan to the community for this case on August 31, 2015. MEC will seek termination of this receivership in Housing Court in September or October. When the recording of the legal document has been completed at the Registry of Deeds and after MEC repays the full loan amount, then MEC and MRPC will consider this case closed and no further reports will be necessary.
- o MEC's Director again contacted Deutsche Bank in order to encourage the bank to sell this property prior to the winter season.

- **112 Harvard Avenue**

- o MEC is under agreement with the new homeowner; a Purchase and Sale Agreement has been signed.
- o 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**

- o Financing has been approved to renovate this home.
- o A loan closing should take place in September and renovations would take place in the fall so that MEC could auction this property early winter.
- o 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**

- o Financing has been approved to renovate this home.
- o A loan closing should take place in September and renovations would take place in the fall so that MEC could auction this property early winter.
- o 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**

- o The bank of record has expressed an interest in paying off the receiver's lien. MEC is awaiting the bank's final decision if it will or will not pay off the receiver's lien. As of this date, MEC has been

waiting to hear from the bank for approximately two months. MEC's Attorney John B. Barrett, III will contact the bank's legal representative this week.

- o MEC is interested in selling this property back to the back to reduce MEC's caseload.

- **1158 Main Street**

- o MEC is holding a second auction at 11:00 AM on September 28th in an effort to sell this property.

- o A fall 2015 sale of this property, post-auction, will help to reduce MEC's caseload.

- **1768-70 Main Street**

- o 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.

- o 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 will receive a proposal soon. The hiring of the consultant and other matters will be the subjects of a MEC Board of Directors meeting to be held in September.

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

- Financing has been approved in September. The bank has not yet provided a loan closing date.

- MEC is lining up the completion of the site prep work, foundation pour and other matters before the Monty Tech students start on site this or next month.

**MEC – 30 Powers Mill Road**

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

**Community Development Block Grants**

Mr. Eaton met with the Shirley Board of Selectmen on September 14th at which time the Board unanimously voted to execute the grant agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the MRPC for grant management purposes. It is MRPC's intent to get the Heating Fuel Assistance Program up and running by December 2015 while the Housing Rehabilitation Program will be fully operation this winter. In other CDBG-related business:

- Mr. Hume and Mr. Eaton completed interviews and hired a Community Development Manager. He will be introduced to the Commissioners on September 29th.

- Mr. Eaton and the new Community Development Manager, at least, will interview at least a half a dozen candidates for the Community Development Administrative Assistant position in September and October. An October starting date is planned for this 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.

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

Staff continues it research and exchange of information with banks regarding REO Properties in the communities of Ashburnham, Fitchburg, Leominster, Winchendon and Athol. An additional staff person has been included on this team to ensure that MRPC completes this work no later than the contract end month of December 2015.

## **7.3 TRANSIT DEPARTMENT**

### **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 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 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.

### **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 for service 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, medical and educational facilities.

### **7.4 TRANSPORTATION DEPARTMENT**

#### **New “3C” Transportation Contract**

The MRPC will begin a new “3C” Transportation Planning contract on October 1, 2015. The contract is for four years and will run through to September 30, 2019 for a total of \$2,343,484. Tasks and projects for each year of the contract will be developed and budgeted through the annual development of the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). The UPWP for the first year of this contract, October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016, was approved and endorsed by the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization on July 30, 2015.

#### **Title VI Workshop**

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation’s (MassDOT’s) Office of Transportation Planning (OTP) and Office of Diversity and Civil Rights (ODCR) will be facilitating several Title VI Capacity Building Workshops in October. These workshops are mandatory for Transportation Managers and MPO/RPA staff who work on Title VI and/or engage with public outreach. RPA Executive Directors are also encouraged to attend. The MRPC will be attending the workshop scheduled for Monday October 19th to be held at the Lawrence Community Center. Workshops for other RPA’s are scheduled for October 23rd on the Cape and October 29th in Amherst. RPA’s are encouraged to invite JTC members, RTA staff, or others who you think may benefit from this session. Any members interested, please contact the MRPC.

#### **Montachusett Public Participation Plan (PPP) Amendment Endorsed**

The Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) at their meeting on Wednesday September 16th, voted to endorse an Amendment to the Public Participation Plan (PPP) for the Montachusett MPO. As a result of a recent review by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) of the Montachusett Regional Transit Authority (MART) it was determined that additional wording/revision/clarification was needed to the PPP. This PPP outlines the process for public involvement in the development of Regional Transportation Plans (RTP), Transportation Improvement Programs (TIP), Unified Planning Work Programs (UPWP) and long range plans. Based upon federal requirements, a Public Participation Plan was developed for and endorsed by the Montachusett MPO in June 2007 and Amended in April 2010. The MPO released the proposed Amendment to the PPP for a forty-five (45) day public review and comment period that ran from Saturday August 1, 2015 to the close of business on Monday September 14, 2015. No comments were received by the MRPC or MART on the Amendment during this period. A copy of the amended PPP is available.

#### **Local Road Safety Audits**

MRPC staff has and will participate in two separate Road Safety Audits (RSA) to be conducted in our region. 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.

The first was held September 16, MRPC staff participated in a road safety audit (RSA) initiated by MassDOT for the Route 12 (Central Street) roadway improvement project (2019 TIP) in Leominster. The project area is between the Sterling town line and extends to just south of Tocci Street (2.5 miles). The project is at 25% design which is when an RSA should be completed by so the safety improvement recommendations can be incorporated into the design. Other participants included Leominster Police, DPW, and other City officials. The Route 12 and Litchfield Street intersection is a high crash location in the MRPC region. Proposed improvements include constructing a roundabout, designating left turn lanes, improving signalization, improving signage and pavement markings, and several other safety improvements such as adding bike lanes and improving pedestrian facilities. A draft report will be prepared by a consultant that will be reviewed by the participants in the RSA and a final document will be completed within a few weeks.

The second RSA will be held in October as part of the 25% Design for the South Street Safe Routes to School Improvements project in Fitchburg. The RSA will document the traffic operations and safety at the intersection of South Street / Electric Avenue / Old South Street immediately south of the school grounds.

- Next MPO Meeting – October 14, 2015 at 1:00 PM
- Next MJTC Meeting – November 18, 2015 at 7:00 PM

## **8. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

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

August 25, 2015 MRPC Minutes  
September 29, 2015 MRPC Handout  
August 2015 Cash Schedule

## 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
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, B. Keating, J. Stanton

**GUESTS PRESENT:** Mark Goldstein, MRPC Legal Counsel; Vyto Andreliunas, Royalston; Melissa Hoyt.