



MINUTES

Thursday – December 18, 2014

1. **Call to Order** - Chairman Byers called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.
2. **Roll Call** – Secretary Ramsdell called the roll and declared a quorum present. The following Commissioners and Staff were in attendance:

Commissioners

Amesbury	Robert Lavoie
Merrimac	John Thomas
Methuen	Kevin Hagerty
Newbury	John Weis
Newburyport	Ed Ramsdell
North Andover	Richard Byers, Chairman
Rowley	Joe Perry
Salisbury	Lou Masiello
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-at-Large	Brad Buschur

Staff

Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director
Anthony Komornick, Transportation Program Manager
Mike Parquette, Comprehensive Planning Program Manager
Joe Cosgrove, Environmental Program Manager
Jerrard Whitten, GIS Program Manager
Todd Fontanella, Sr. Transportation Planner
Jen Dunlap, Finance Administrator
Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator/Executive Assistant
Steve Lopez, GIS Specialist
Dan Ovalle, Field Services Specialist
Betsy Goodrich, Sr. Transportation Planner
Mary Kay Beninati, Sr. Transportation Planner
Ted Semesnyei, Economic Development Coordinator

3. Adoption of November Meeting Minutes

Secretary Ramsdell reviewed the November minutes and declared them in order and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

Vote: Commissioner Lavoie made a motion to accept the November minutes and second by Commissioner Perry. The November minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Warrant for November

MVPC's Finance Administrator, Jen Dunlap, reported that the November warrant was reviewed favorably and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

Vote: Commissioner Hagerty made a motion to approve the November warrant and second by Commissioner Murphey. The November warrant was unanimously approved.

5. Chairman's Report

Chairman Byers welcomed and recognized the Commission's previous Commissioner and Assistant Treasurer, Dave Powell and presented him with a commendation for his eight years of dedicated service to the Commission.

- As mentioned last month MVPC will be conducting its Citizen Planner Training Program next year. We have included the notice in your packets as a reminder. Please let your communities know of this useful training and encourage them to participate.
- As discussed in the past the Commission is seeking candidates to be members of the finance committee. The commitment is for one meeting in early February to review the audit and the FY 2015 and FY 2016 budgets with Staff and act a sounding board and help prepare for the full Commission discussion on those matters at the February 19th meeting. Are there any volunteers interested in serving in this capacity?

Commissioners Weis and Perry volunteered to serve on the Finance Committee.

6. Executive Director's Report

Meetings with Community Leaders

- On November 25th I attended the MPO meeting and represented MVPC.
- On November 25th Joe Cosgrove and I met with Salisbury Town Officials, TRC and MassDevelopment to discuss possible next steps to address the 28 Elm Street Brownfield site cost overruns.
- On November 26th I met with Mayor Rivera to discuss the use of our Regional Energy Manager as the owners' agent for the City in their consideration of advancing their ESCO project.
- On December 2nd I attended the Downtown Methuen Task Force. Methuen is participating in our Valley Support Team Program and we will be providing technical assistance in their downtown revitalization efforts. We discussed the prioritization of strategic projects in Downtown.
- On December 3rd Mike and I met with Andrew Herlihy from the City of Haverhill along with Joe Hart from the Haverhill Housing Authority about conducting a Haverhill housing need/production plan.
- On December 12th I attended the monthly MARPA meeting.
- On December 17th I attended the Merrimack Valley WIB Planning Committee meeting.
- On December 18th I attended the Transportation Performance and Asset Management Advisory Committee. You may recall I was appointed to the committee by Governor Patrick to represent MARPA on this legislatively created Council

Massachusetts Gaming Policy Advisory Committee (GPAC)

- Section 68 of the Gaming Act requires that the Gaming Commission establish a Gaming Policy Advisory Committee to develop recommendations to be considered by the Commission to address issues of community mitigation as a result of the development and operation of gaming establishments in the Commonwealth. This month the Governor appointed me to chair this committee. With my appointment the Governor recognized the role regional planning agencies have and can play in the development of gaming in the Commonwealth. I will have an opportunity to promote sound planning principles to the Gaming Commission and raise the importance of regional planning and MVPC. The time commitment should be minimal in that the Committee will most likely meet only 4 times over the year.

Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy

- We have completed the draft update of the Priority Growth Strategy which was approved by the Commission in 2009. It is five years old and it was decided that the plan should be consistent with the 2014 State Merrimack Valley Plan, which identifies State PPAs and PDAs. We have scheduled a meeting with the regional planners on January 8th to receive final comments and plan on bringing the plan for your consideration to the January Commission meeting for your review. We will forward a link to the plan to you for your review prior to the January meeting.

Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition (MVMCC)

- The December 3rd DPW meetings focused on the new EPA stormwater draft regulations and our regional stormwater collaborative effort. Discussion included: comments on the draft regulations from the collaborative and a MS4 checklist and timeline.
- ACE the selected Solar developer is on the wait list for the SREC II solar managed growth category of projects. We have also begun discussions with other solar developers (Borrego and Nexamp) while we wait for the green light for their project. Communities currently participating are: Amesbury, Newburyport, North Andover, Lawrence and Haverhill.
- Electric aggregation is moving forward with Newburyport, Haverhill and Methuen. Newburyport City Council has passed the language, entered into a contract with Colonial and is reviewing the aggregation plan for adoption. Haverhill and Methuen are working collectively with their new energy manager Orlando Pacheco and has requested an aggregation plan.
- Ameresco, the region's ESCO provider, is still working with six communities: Lawrence (first phase completed exploring a second phase), Methuen (NTP to be issued plus exploring installing LED fixtures on light poles recently purchased by the City), North Andover (estimated completion by end of the year), Merrimack (completed) and Salisbury (draft ESA under review). Five of the communities have approved projects totaling over \$10M, which will save the communities almost a \$1M a year. Haverhill has yet to finalize their project as they resolve net school spending requirements. Currently plans call for the city and the school department to split the costs.
- To date the regional renewable energy manager, Meister Consulting Group (MCG) has met with: Newburyport, Newbury, North Andover, Boxford, Andover and Amesbury to review potential site. Boxford has issued a RFP for the development of solar panels on their closed landfill. The RFPs were due April 17th for a 500KW solar facility and 3 proposals were received. Boxford has selected Borrego to develop their project.

Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System

- MVPC, along with 6 other RPAs received a letter from the Retirement systems stating that after 42 years of being members of the State retirement system MVPC is now required to contribute to the system. A meeting was held with the State retirement Board and MARPA has collectively hired a lawyer to help us make our case against the change. Corrective legislation has been drafted and I met with Representative Dempsey seeking his help on October 28th. Representative Dempsey will be coordinating a meeting with the Pension Board to discuss options.

7. Contracts

- A contract with the Town of Boxford to update parcel mapping and provide MIMAP operations. The total contract is for \$3,300.

Vote: Commissioner Weis made a motion authorize the above mentioned contracts and second by Commissioner Murphey. The contract was unanimously approved.

8. Comprehensive Planning Update

MVPC's Comprehensive Planning Manager, Mike Parquette, reported the following regional activities.

DLTA Program – We continue to implement the “Planning Ahead for Growth/Planning Ahead for Housing” and “Regional Services” activities programmed with DLTA funds. We executed a new contract in October and executed a revised contract in December which recognizes a 1.5% reduction in funds. An outreach and solicitation for projects is enclosed in your packet.

Planning Ahead for Growth/Priority Growth Strategy - We have completed the five-year update/revisions to the Priority Growth Strategy in order to reflect changes (such as new development, new zoning, revised PDA's or PPA's, or completed infrastructure projects) that have taken place since the PGS was completed in 2009 and also to reflect its introduction into the statewide Planning Ahead for Growth initiative. In spite of the economic recession, this region has accomplished some great things in the last 5 years and communities have advanced new initiatives and adopted new smart growth zoning which has been reflected in the update. Also, many road and bridge projects planned 5 years ago are now completed and new projects are planned or under construction. These changes are included.

MASSWORKS - As previously reported, there were 5 MassWorks applications submitted from the MVPC region. Awards were made to Lawrence (\$3.9 million) for Merrimack Street and to Salisbury (\$1.7 million) for Salisbury Square water lines.

VALLEY Support Team – Dennis DiZoglio and Mike Parquette are members of the Methuen Downtown Redevelopment committee and we can offer MVPC's expertise in economic development and transportation planning to assist in their efforts. Meetings have been held on October 10, October 24, October 31, and December 2. The Committee submitted an application to MassDevelopment for the Transformative Development Initiative. Unfortunately, Methuen was not one of the 10 cities chosen, although Haverhill's application was successful and they were chosen for this new initiative. Methuen may be able to utilize one of many programs aimed for "Gateway Cities" such as: 40R District, Cultural District, Housing Development Incentive Program, 43D for Housing, Tax Increment Financing, and Compact Neighborhood District. Mike has had conversations with EOHED folks about assisting Methuen with these programs and they are excited to come and discuss the merits of each tool to the Downtown Redevelopment Committee.

DHCD Regional Economic Development Study - We completed a questionnaire titled: "Around the Gateways"- Regional Economic Development Study. It is a survey for RPA's with Gateway Cities. The survey centers around the economic development needs of the Gateway Cities compared to the economic development needs of surrounding communities. The survey asked for educational, demographic, and economic data as well as employment data and regionalization initiatives.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative - Information was made available to all Commissioners, Planning Board members, ZBA members, and other town officials regarding the Fall 2014 Workshops. MVPC hosted two workshops. The first was held on October 27 titled "Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards Part 1." The second was held on November 17 titled "Special Permits and Variances." The sessions were extremely well attended with folks coming from as far away as Milton, Mashpee, and Harwich.

American Planning Association Webinar - On December 3, MVPC sponsored a webinar titled "The Pro Forma". The lecture examined the key elements of development pro formas and discussed how to review the analysis and check the assumptions being made. Despite the heavy rain, several people attended from a broad area of eastern Massachusetts.

9. Environmental Program Update

MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Joe Cosgrove, report on the following Environmental Program activity:

Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative - We have received word that EPA is extending the public comment period on the draft MS4 permit for Massachusetts. Original comment deadline was Dec. 29th. EPA has indicated there will be at least a 45-day extension for public comment.

Brownfields Program - Staff today submitted application for the FY15 funding round of Brownfields Assessment grants to EPA. We applied for \$400,000 in funding to be used in planning and property assessments targeted to the Gateway cities but available to all 15 MVPC communities.

Tennessee Gas (Kinder Morgan) Pipeline - Kinder Morgan last month announced it will be pursuing alternate route for proposed main line redirecting ROW through southern New Hampshire to Dracut. Also announced were alternate plans for Lynnfield lateral adjusting route through Andover.

MassBays National Estuary Program

- Green Crab contract with MA Division of Marine Fisheries was terminated by DMF as a result of the \$250M state budget shortfall. However, most of the billable work (\$20k) was completed and an invoice for the full amount was submitted.
- Efforts on marsh bank erosion in the tidal rivers of the Great Marsh ramped up in order to get baseline data in advance of winter storm season. Boston University has donated labor and a GPS unit to help us very specifically define current marsh bank conditions at 14+ selected sites throughout the Great Marsh and Salem Sound
- Peter Phippen has been chairing the Hurricane Sandy Model Oversight Committee which has met with the five finalist for both data collection and modeling activities; the committee has pared the proposals down to three. Interviews will be held the first week of January to determine the entities to hire.

10. Transportation Report Update

MVPC's Transportation Program Manager, Tony Komornick, reported on the following transportation activities.

Merrimack Valley MPO - The MVMPO met on November 25th and agreed to release the *Draft Human Service Transportation – Public Transportation Plan* and the *Draft Active Transportation for the Merrimack Valley* for public review and comment. Public Hearings on these documents were held at the MVPC Offices yesterday. Comments on both documents will be received by MVPC through January 6th, 2015. Action on these documents will be taken by the MVMPO at its meeting on January 7th. The documents are posted on MVPC's website and fact sheets are included in your packets.

Tony and Todd Fontanella participated in the Federal Certification Review of the Boston MPO that was conducted by USDOT in Boston on December 10th and 11th. A key item of discussion at this meeting (and an unanticipated one!) was the suggestion by FHWA and FTA officials that alternative arrangements between the MPOs in the Boston region be considered. Tony mentioned that the consolidation of MPOs in the Boston UZA would not be a good idea nor be well received by our local officials. MVPC's Executive Director, Dennis DiZoglio, noted the impact that a consolidation between the two Southern New Hampshire RPA's had in serving one MPO and how difficult it was for that organization to come to a consensus. MVPC's Commissioner Lavoie suggested that Congressman Moulton and legislators be informed of this issue and he would be look into providing the contact information for Congressman Moulton. Dennis DiZoglio said he would reach out to Congressman Moulton.

Studies, Analyses & Plans - Betsy Goodrich attended a recent meeting of the Greater Haverhill Community Health Network Area where she presented the key findings of both the *Draft Human Service Transportation – Public Transportation Plan* and the *Draft Active Transportation for the Merrimack Valley*.

Related to the Regional Transportation Plan, Betsy has continued to develop proposed *Goals and Objectives* for use in the document and staff has also begun to identify a variety of *Performance Measures* that will be evaluated by MVMPO members for use in the Plan as is mandated under MAP-21. Danny Ovalie is wrapping up work on recoding the location of selected crashes from the 2012 MassDOT/Registry of Motor Vehicle crash database for the region.

Other – Tony attended the December 11th meeting of the Newburyport Traffic and Safety Committee. At the meeting, the City Engineer noted that he would be preparing a concept plan for the improvements recommended in MVPC's Low Street/Bashaw Way Intersection Study. The Committee also asked that MVPC prepare a scope of services for a study of the traffic impacts that would result from making Green Street a two-way thoroughfare.

Todd attended the December 16th meeting of New Hampshire DOT's Plaistow Commuter Rail Study Advisory Committee that was held in Plaistow. NHDOT's consultant team presented the preliminary ridership projections for the service and identified the preferred location for both the station and the layover facility. This study is scheduled to be completed early next year.

Using the new GIS-based tool developed by Jerrard Whitten, Steve Lopez and Kelsey Quinian, transportation staff has been editing project data contained in our GIS transportation data layers.

Dennis DiZoglio and the transportation staff finalized the list of roadway and bridge projects that were included in the draft version of the updated Priority Growth Strategy.

Betsy attended the December 11th meeting of the Strategic Highway Safety Plan Bicycle and Pedestrian Emphasis Area Team. This group is working on developing a grant program that would promote the implementation of MassDOT's Complete Streets Certification program.

Jim Terlizzi and Danny continued to collect information on the location and condition of all sidewalks in the City as part of MVPC's contract to update Haverhill's Asset Management Program.

Tony and Jerrard continued to work with officials from the Town of North Andover in support of their effort to conduct a Downtown Parking Study along a section of Main Street and in the Municipal Lot behind Town Hall. Tony has analyzed the parking utilization in the study area and is beginning the process of analyzing what the likely impacts on parking will be when the Town's Community Development office moves from 1600 Osgood Landing into Town Hall in the coming months.

Danny and Jim are collecting turning movement counts to go along with the traffic volume data that was collected for the roadway approaches to the Moulton Street/ Main Street/ South Street intersection in West

Newbury. Jim met with West Newbury DPW Director Gary Bill yesterday to discuss various improvement options at this location. The Town has also asked for MVPC assistance in evaluating operations at the intersection of Ash Street and Spring Hill Road.

Danny also collected turning movement traffic volume data on Church Street, Bridge Street and Hoyt's Lane in West Newbury near the Rocks Village Bridge. This data will be used by staff to evaluate options for modifying traffic flow in and around the area to accommodate potential traffic changes that would accommodate providing greater access to the river.

Tony met with Lawrence Business Development Director Abel Vargas and a representative of TEC Engineering to discuss the status of the Park Street/Lawrence Street intersection project. The City and TEC are proposing expanding the footprint of the project slightly to include the intersections of Lawrence Street / Lexington Street and Lawrence Street / Bunker Hill Street.

Betsy met with Andrea Leary of the Merrimack Valley Transportation Management Association and staff from the MVRTA and a representative of Phillips North America to discuss options for improving transit service to the River Road area (both from the Merrimack Valley and from New Hampshire). She also provided an update on efforts to improve bicycle travel for River Road workers that must travel through Lawrence.

11. Local and Regional Issues - None

12. Other - None

13. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Commissioner Lavoie and second by Commissioner Weis. Meeting adjourned at 7:45pm.

I hereby certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission meeting held on December 18, 2014.

Ed Ramsdell, Secretary