



MINUTES

Thursday – December 17, 2015

- 1. **Call to Order** - Chairman Byers called the meeting to order at 7:30pm.
- 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, Vice Chairman
Lawrence	Theresa Park
Merrimac	John Thomas
Methuen	Kevin Hagerty
Newbury	John Weis
Newburyport	Ed Ramsdell, Secretary
North Andover	Richard Byers, Chairman
Rowley	Robert Snow, Treasurer
Salisbury	Lou Masiello
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-At-Large	Brad Buschur

Staff

Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director
 Anthony Komornick, Transportation Program Manager
 Joe Cosgrove, Environmental Program Manager
 Mike Parquette, Comprehensive Planning Program Manager
 Todd Fontanella, Sr. Transportation Planner
 Betsy Goodrich, Sr. Transportation Planner
 Jen Dunlap, Finance Administrator
 Nancy Lavallee, Office
 Jerrard Whitten, GIS Program Manager

3. Adoption of November Meeting Minutes

The November minutes were reviewed and recommended for adoption.

Vote: There was a motion by Commissioner Snow and second by Commissioner Weis. The Minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Warrant for November

Treasurer Robert Snow reported that the November warrant was reviewed favorably and recommended the Commission’s authorization for adoption.

Vote: There was a motion by Commissioner Weis and second by Commissioner Murphey. The November warrant was unanimously approved.

5. Chairman's Report

Chairman Richard Byers reported on the following activities since last meeting.

- In the past the Commission has tried to be sensitive to the winter weather and decide if a January meeting is warranted. Considering there are no critical issues facing the Commission I have decided not to hold our January meeting. The Commission will meet again in February and review and approve the FY 2017 budget.
- As you know I am researching the experiences other RPAs have had filling their vacant Executive Director's positions. I have heard back from Central Mass with contact information and am still waiting to hear back from Martha's Vineyard and Southeastern Mass. Once I have touched based with their respective chairman I will report back to the Commission.

6. Director's Report

Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio reported on the following MVPC activities since the last meeting.

Meetings with Community Leaders

- On November 20th Mr. DiZoglio attended the monthly MARPA meeting.
- On November 24th and December 14th MVPC staff and Mr. DiZoglio met with representatives of the Greater Haverhill Foundation to discuss their initiative to expand available sites in Haverhill for economic development purposes. MVPC hopes to help them in this effort and attempt to include the results on the MVMB website.
- On December 1st Mr. DiZoglio attended the MMA Local & Regional Policy Committee. The major focus of the meeting was on Zoning Reform and new public records legislation.
- On December 1st Mr. DiZoglio attended the MassDOT Performance Asset Management Advisory Committee.
- On December 3rd Mr. DiZoglio attended the CEDS meeting with Staff.
- On December 8th Mr. DiZoglio along with MVPC's Environmental Program Manager Joe Cosgrove and MVPC's underwriter met with Habitat for Humanity regarding a potential Brownfields Loan for their project in Lawrence.
- On December 9th Mr. DiZoglio met with Paul Salafia, Andover Board of Selectman to discuss the potential to provide permitting board members in Andover with our Citizen Planner Training Program.
- On December 15th Mr. DiZoglio attended the WIB planning meeting.

Annual Legislative Breakfast

- MVPC meets with legislators in the region on an annual basis and has scheduled the 2016 session for January 29th here at MVPC at 9:00am. As always if any Commissioner is interested in attended please do so. As always our agenda will focus on state funding and programs beneficial to the region and the regional transportation priorities.

Town Administrators & Finance Directors

- As previously reported Mr. DiZoglio met with the 7 smaller communities in the region that have either Town Administrators or Finance Directors. We discussed the Community Compact Cabinet (CCC) initiative being pursued by the Baker Administration. One of the Communities, Groveland, submitted their CCC application and included as a "best practice" regionalizing of municipal services. The Commonwealth has asked that we follow up with this request and we have scheduled a meeting with the 7 communities for January 13th.

Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition (MVMMC)

- The December DPW meeting was held and we continued our discussion regarding the Stormwater Collaborative 2016 work program.
- The Merrimack Valley Mayors and Managers Coalition meeting was held on December 2nd. The agenda for the meeting included a discussion on a possible regional opium response, trash and recycling contracts and the potential to collaborate, and the filing of Community Compact applications that includes a regional project to promote MVMB.biz.
- Ameresco, the region's ESCO provider has completed projects in Merrimac, North Andover and Lawrence. Salisbury is under construction. Methuen and Haverhill are adjusting their programs to deal with the net school spending issues. Methuen has expanded their program to include retrofitting their streetlights. Haverhill project is for the schools only, it will be a \$2.5M project and the City will save \$270K per year. Lawrence is considering a second phase and the Greater Lawrence Technical High School is negotiating an ESA.
- Haverhill has selected a firm for electric aggregation and is moving forward, Newburyport and Methuen had their DPU public hearing on November 17th, and North Andover will bring the concept to town meeting. Preliminary meetings have been held in Salisbury, Lawrence, Newbury and Andover.

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. Still waiting for the committee required in the 2016 budget to resolve this issue to be called by ANF.

7. Contracts

- Boxford - \$3,300 – parcel update and annual MIMAP operation

Vote: Commissioner Snow made a motion to authorize and approve the above-mentioned contract as presented. Commissioner Thomas seconded the motion. The contract was unanimously approved.

- Authorization by the Commission is requested for:
 - Application submitted to recapitalize the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund through a \$1 million grant.
 - Application submitted seeking \$400,000 in grand funding for the Brownfields Assessment Program for planning/testing regard petroleum and hazardous material contamination. Grant award decisions are expected Spring 2016.

Vote: Commissioner Weis made a motion to authorize and approve the above-mentioned contract as presented. Commissioner Snow seconded the motion. The contract was unanimously approved.

8. Comprehensive Planning Update

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

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee Meeting: On December 3, a CEDS committee meeting was held at NECC. Thirty (30) folks attended and a robust discussion was held. MVPC's Executive Director, Dennis DiZoglio discussed the major goals and objectives of the five-year CEDS completed in 2013 and MVPC staff followed with details of the Plans implementation. MVPC's Economic Development Coordinator, Heidi Murphy discussed the new MVMB website, and Mr. Parquette discussed the Valley Support Team initiative and the Economic Development Toolkit -

three of the CEDS most prominent initiatives. In addition, Andrew Herlihy, Haverhill's Community Development Coordinator, discussed workforce training for Haverhill's business clusters. Lastly, MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Joe Cosgrove gave an update on the Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan, and discussed the Brownfields grant application due on December 18.

Valley Support Team

Merrimac: A draft of Merrimac's Housing Production Plan (HPP) with all new census data and analysis of that data was completed in October and submitted to the Merrimack Affordable Housing Board of Trustees for their review. Mr. Parquette discussed the HPP at a public forum on Nov. 10th. MVPC awaits information from the Town's Public Works department regarding water/sewer constraints before the Plan can be completed. The HPP was submitted to DHCD in order to receive their comments prior to final adoption by the Town.

Methuen: The Urban Land Institute - Technical Assistance panel final report was made available on November 4th. The report addressed the important downtown redevelopment issues of marketing, planning and design, feasibility and financing, and management and implementation. The ULI Report has provided the city with solid information and advice on how best to move forward with their redevelopment/revitalization initiatives. Also, Methuen has decided to pursue a 40R District for the downtown, and MVPC assisted them with an application for funding through the PATH program to secure funds to complete the application and create the zoning for the district. The PATH grant was approved by DHCD. In the next few months, we will be updating the housing section of Methuen's Master Plan and analyze their housing needs and conditions - a requirement for the 40R application.

Groveland: The Town of Groveland contracted with MVPC to develop a "Permit Guide". A draft Guide was developed and submitted to the Town for their review. MVPC met with the Town in October to review their comments and questions on the draft and have made the necessary revisions based on their comments. The "final draft" was submitted to the Town a few weeks ago and is being reviewed by Town officials and board members.

MassHousing - MassHousing is starting a program that will offer planning resources (part time professional planner) to local communities. They intend to work with and involve RPA's in this effort. MVPC identified local communities with projects that could benefit from this resource. This initiative is still in the initial stages of development.

MassWorks Review and Awards: Five of MVPC's communities applied for MassWorks Street and Roadway improvement funds. As in the past few years, MVPC was asked to review the applications and comment on the proposed use of the MassWorks funds. An award ceremony was held on November 4 and four out of the five communities who applied from the MVPC region received funding. Those communities funded were: Newburyport - roadway improvements to support the new 40R District; Amesbury - region. We are also updating the "community profiles" and other aspects of the website. The MVMB website has a new "look" and "feel" to it and the changes are being well received. We also continue to seek funds to market the new MVMB website.

Economic Development Toolkit—Ms. Murphy continues to develop an "economic development toolkit" on the MVPC website. The goal is for it to be a resource for not only our member communities, but hopefully for municipalities throughout the commonwealth to utilize. Instead of having to wade through and research numerous state agencies, the goal is to find everything at the MVPC.org website. Ms. Murphy is not simply linking to other sites, but will have examples of approved applications and grants or regulations on our website. We urge the Commissioners to visit the website and offer comments and suggestions.

Meetings

- Met December 1st with Angela Carey from UMass-Amherst to discuss Mill redevelopment and reuse in the Merrimack Valley. A formal study is being prepared and a forum is slated to be held this spring to discuss success stories and "best practices" for mill redevelopment across the state.
- Attended the MVMMC held at Haverhill City Hall on December 2.
- CEDS Committee December 3rd
- Mr. DiZoglio, MVPC'S GIS IT Manager, Jerrard Whitten and I met with the Haverhill Foundation on December 14th to discuss a new initiative they would like to undertake with us.

9. Environmental Program Update

MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Joe Cosgrove, report on activities since the last meeting.

Massachusetts Bays Program/Great Marsh Partnership:

Invasive Species Management

- Final Green Crab survey in Plum Island sound and Essex Bay conducted past month. Crab #'s are back on the rise.

Habitat Restoration

- GPS plotting of Salisbury sites conducted for Marsh Edge erosion project and tide gate inventory conducted at Mill River and Town Creek.
- Installed second thin-layer sediment deposition experiment site at Parker River National Wildlife Refuge. Work is effort to determine ability of marsh to function and adapt to Sea Level Rise with marsh building via sediment addition.

Brownfields Programs:

- MVPC submitted applications to recapitalize the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund through a \$1 million grant as well as seeking \$400,000 in grant funding for the Brownfields Assessment Program for planning/testing regard petroleum and hazardous material contamination. Grant award decisions are expected Spring 2016.
- CEDS Advisory Committee held Dec. 3rd at Northern Essex CC.

Appointments/Events:

- MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Joe Cosgrove was appointed by Governor Baker to the MA Ocean Advisory Commission. The 17-member commission includes legislators, agency heads, representatives from a commercial fishing organization and an environmental organization, an expert in offshore renewable energy, as well as representatives from the coastal Regional Planning Agencies. The OAC provides guidance on ongoing implementation of the state's Ocean Management Plan, and on the plan review and update process.
- MVPC's Great Marsh Coordinator, Peter Phippen attended the Restore American Estuaries Living Shorelines conference in Hartford, CT earlier this month. Mr. Cosgrove gave a talk at the annual meeting of the Parker/River/Essex Rivers Partnership meeting on our region's stormwater management collaboration.
- MV Public Health Directors met November 20th at MVPC to discuss collaborative public health initiatives. MVPC is working with health officials to prepare grant proposal on healthy community design/health impact assessment.

10. Transportation Report Update

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

Merrimack Valley MPO

On December 4th, President Obama signed into law the Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act. Key components of the new Act include:

- Five-year, \$305 billion authorization (through December 4, 2020).
- Largely maintains current program structures and funding shares between highways and transit with funding increasing by 11 percent over five years.
- Significant proportion of funding to come from a variety of budget 'offsets'.
- Includes a number of proposals to speed the project permitting processes;
- Codifies the online system to track projects and interagency coordination processes.
- Establishes formula and discretionary grant programs to fund transportation projects that benefit freight movements.

MVPC's Sr Transportation Planner, Todd Fontanella, has prepared proposed changes to the **Memorandum of Understanding between the MVMPO and the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority** and to the **Draft MVMPO Public Participation Plan** that address new requirements for such agreements that have been issued by the Federal Transit Administration.

Studies

MVPC's Jim Terlizzi (Transportation Engineer), Betsy Goodrich (Sr. Transportation Planner) and Tony Komornick (Transportation Program Manager) participated in the MassDOT **Road Safety Audit for the Broadway at Haverhill Street and Tremont Street intersection** area of Lawrence that was held on December 15th.

Betsy and Tony continued to work on updating the **MVRTA Strategic Plan**.

Betsy is working with the MVRTA to update its **System Map** to reflect recent changes to the fixed bus route and include new FAQ section as well as information on how to use the system.

Todd and Betsy continue to assist the MVRTA in updating its **Title VI Program**, preparing its **FY 2015 ADA Transportation Review**, and preparing materials that the Authority must submit to FTA as part of its upcoming **Triennial Review**.

Tony has been reviewing Journey to Work and mode share information for the MVPC region as well as southern New Hampshire/southern Maine as part of the **Regional Park and Ride Lot Study**.

Other

Todd attended the final community presentation meeting for **Lawrence's Merrimack Street Land Use Planning Project - Part 2** that was held on December 9th. The Merrimack Street Land Use Planning Project has been examining possible traffic, land use and other changes for the area.

Tony attended the November 24th site visit for the **Salisbury Rail Trail – Phase II** project where the factors influencing the construction of a tunnel underneath Route 110 and a sidewalk along Gardner Street were discussed.

MVPC hosted the first meeting of the **Regional Health Directors** on November 20th. MVPC's Joe Cosgrove (Environmental Program Manager), Betsy and Tony attended the meeting.

Todd attended the **Merrimack Valley Regional Coordinating Council** meeting that was held in Lowell on December 15th.

MVPC's Danny Ovalle (Field Services Specialist) has wrapped up his **traffic data collection** activities for the season and is now uploading this information to MassDOT's MS2 transportation management system website.

Betsy wrote a letter to the Lawrence City Council in support of the **Complete Streets ordinance** that was subsequently passed.

She also participated in the December 10th training session for **Healthy Community Design mini-grants** that are funded through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health and the Massachusetts Association of Boards of Health.

Technical Assistance

The Transportation staff will be preparing an application for submittal by the Town of Georgetown to MassDOT for instituting **Heavy Commercial Vehicle Exclusions** along roadways in the Searle Street area. The application will be based on the findings and recommendations of the draft report prepared by MVPC for the Town earlier this fall.

Tony and MVPC's Jerrard Whitten (GIS Program Manager) met with Newbury Town Planner Martha Taylor on December 14th to discuss the delivery schedule for products/tasks to provide mapping services and complete the Transportation Element of the **NewburyMaster Plan** that is now in development.

Betsy attended the **Lawrence Mayor's Health Task Force, Healthy Active Living Working Group** meeting that was held on December 16th.

Upcoming Meetings

- Public Information Meeting on Proposed North Avenue Reconstruction Project (Haverhill City Hall - December 19th);
- MVMPO Meeting (mid January - TBD);
- MassDOT Community Transit Grant Program Session (MVPC Offices January 21st).

11. Local and Regional Issues

City of Lawrence Commissioner Parks reported that the Lawrence City Council passed the Complete Streets proposal and thanked MVPC for their efforts in helping the City of Lawrence on this project.

12. Other – None

13. Adjourn

There was a motion and a second to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:05 pm.

I hereby certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission meeting held on December 17, 2015.

Ed Ramsdell, Secretary