



Region Matters

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Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
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Spring



SAVE THE DATE

Thursday, June 23, 2016

MVPC's Annual Regional Planning Day

"The State of the Region"

Highlights

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This year's Regional Planning Day will focus on the State of our Region and how we can work together to address the challenges we face. It has been ten years since we experienced the "Great Recession". What impact did it have on our Region? Has the Region rebounded? Are we creating enough jobs for our citizens? Are housing prices stifling our comeback? Is the Region's infrastructure up to the Challenge? Can Municipalities afford the services needed from their citizens. On June 23, 2016 the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission will hold its annual Regional Planning Day event at Northern Essex Community College, Hartleb Technology Center, Haverhill, Massachusetts at 8:00am and we will try to answer these questions and look to the future.

The morning will start off with comments from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development Secretary, Jay Ash our keynote speaker. The Secretary will discuss the administration's recently filed Economic Development Bill and their efforts to help regions like ours respond to the recession. Dennis DiZoglio, the Commission's Executive Director will follow and highlight the demographics and economics of the Region and some of the challenges we face. Subsequent to his comments, the Program Managers at MVPC will discuss the opportunities we have to address these challenges.

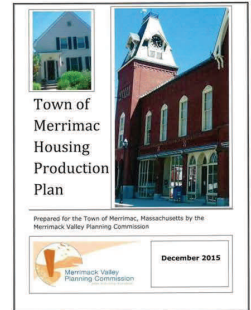
Please set aside time to attend this timely event. To attend Regional Planning Day contact Nancy Lavallee at nlavallee@MVPC.org to confirm your reservation.

Written by [Dennis A. DiZoglio](#)
MVPC Executive Director

"Valley Support Team" Completes Projects in Merrimac and Groveland

The **Merrimack Valley Support Team** recently completed projects for the towns of **Merrimac** and **Groveland**. **Merrimac** asked MVPC to assist them with development of a Housing Production Plan (HPP) and **Groveland** asked for assistance with completion of a Development Permitting Guide.

Working with Merrimac's Affordable Housing Board of Trustees, Board of Selectmen, and Planning Board, the HPP was completed over the course of several months and adopted by the Planning Board and Board of Selectmen in January, 2016. The Plan was then submitted to the Department of Housing and Community Development and formally approved in February, 2016. The HPP has a five-year term and will expire on February 2, 2021.



A HPP is a proactive strategy for planning and developing affordable housing. By taking a proactive approach in the adoption of a HPP, cities and towns are much more likely to achieve both their affordable housing, and most importantly, community planning goals. By identifying areas that the town feels are most suitable and appropriate for affordable housing, they will have more control over comprehensive permit applications. MVPC applauds **Merrimac** for continuing to update their HPP every five years.

For the **Town of Groveland**, MVPC completed a Development Permitting Guide in February, 2016. Like many small towns in Massachusetts with few full time staff, Groveland relies on volunteer boards and commissions to do much of the development approval process. The town identified the need to have a "permitting guide" available to developers, homeowners, builders, businesses, as well as staff, so that all projects took the same route from initial proposal to completion. The need to have all board and commission members along with town staff "on the same page" and following the same identified process is crucial and vital to projects being completed successfully. Building in Massachusetts can be cumbersome and difficult at times. The Permitting Guide will help to identify exactly how the process works and flows, and what town staff and which boards are necessary to visit to obtain a building permit.

The **Merrimack Valley Support Team** idea came to light as MVPC was developing the 2013 Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). A common theme was heard in the strategy sessions held with municipal officials and business leaders. Due to ever tightening municipal budgets and resources, local capacity necessary to conduct normal municipal activities such as planning and economic development has diminished. Many municipalities are working with fewer staff, forcing municipalities to just undertake the "day to day" issues and putting off the bigger projects for later. The CEDS committee therefore incorporated into the new Plan the goal of creating a **Merrimack Valley Support Team** to assist communities in their planning and development efforts.

The idea is to help increase local planning capacity to deal with the myriad of issues that local planners and economic development officials face. MVPC has expertise in transportation, environmental, land-use, and community and economic development planning. We also offer exceptional GIS services to our communities. The **Merrimack Valley Support Team** is comprised of appropriate MVPC staff to provide assistance on a project by project basis. Whether it is assistance needed to develop a neighborhood revitalization plan, or obtain state incentive designations like 40R, MVPC can help. Assistance can also be in the form of traffic studies, preparing a housing production plan or an open space and recreation plan, completing a corridor plan, or just sponsoring timely workshops on key issues.

For more information, please contact Mike Parquette at: MParquette@mvpc.org

Written by [Mike Parquette](#)
Comprehensive Planning Manager

New Generation MS4 Stormwater Permit issued by EPA

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on April 13th issued the long-delayed Final Permit for Massachusetts communities in administering Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (referred to as MS4) under the federal Clean Air Act National Pollution Discharge Elimination System.

The new permit, designed to protect the Commonwealth's water resources, requires communities to develop and enforce local Stormwater Management Programs to control discharge of pollutants into area rivers, streams and waterbodies to the maximum extent practicable. The permit prescribes minimum control measures in areas of:

- Public education & outreach;
- Public involvement & participation;
- Detection and elimination of illicit discharges;
- Management of construction site runoff;
- Stormwater management controls for new development & site redevelopment; and
- Pollution prevention/good housekeeping practices in municipal public works operations and facilities.



According to the EPA, most of the pollution occurring today in the Commonwealth's waterways is attributable to runoff collected through municipal stormwater infrastructure of catch basins, pipes and outfall structures.

The first generation MS4 permit for Massachusetts cities and towns was issued in 2003 as a five-year permit but has been extended since the original intended expiration date. Draft permits were issued for public review in 2010 and again in 2014. The most recent draft permit review generated hundreds of public comments, many from municipal officials concerned with the cost impact to local budgets and administrative burdens of more rigorous stormwater management efforts.

To give communities more time to plan and prepare budgets for the new requirements, EPA has delayed effective date of the new MS4 permit to **July 1st, 2017.**

MVPC will continue to work with member communities through the Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative, established in 2014, to prepare communities for permit compliance through development of regional training, education, public education programs as well as financing options review, planning and model bylaw templates and shared services and equipment.

MVPC is co-hosting EPA's northeast region information meeting on the MS4 permit scheduled for **Thursday, May 19th from 8-10 a.m.** at the Hartleb Technology Center (Rooms A-B) on the Haverhill campus of Northern Essex Community College. For more information [click here.](#)

More information on the new MS4 requirements can be found on the MVPC Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative website at www.merrimackvalleystormwater.org

FEMA Approves Merrimack Valley Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan



The Federal Emergency Management Agency has issued its approval pending local adoption notice of the Merrimack Valley Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan Update.

MVPC and the 14 participating communities received the federal approval in mid-April. Upon formal adoption of the five-year plan by local Board of Selectmen, Councils and Mayors, each of the cities and towns will be eligible for federal hazard mitigation assistance.

The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency recently announced funding availability for Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant and Flood Mitigation Assistance Program. Deadline for communities to apply is **May 25th, 2016.** For more information, please contact MVPC Environmental Program Manager Joseph Cosgrove at jcosgrove@mvpc.org.

*Written by [Joe Cosgrove](#)
Environmental Program Manager*

MVMPO Springs into Action for 2016

While spring is a busy season for the MVMPO staff every year, Spring 2016 (FFY 2016) is particularly so. Here's why:

- federal officials have released new highway and transit funding estimates for FFYs 2017-2021;
- federal transportation agencies are in the process of adopting new nationwide performance measures as authorized over five years ago in MAP-21. States and MPO regions have been preparing for this federal action for several years, and in accordance with MAP-21 will also be adopting additional complimentary transportation performance measures, and
- several studies are underway, including: transit service feasibility in segments of the MA-114 and MA-133 corridors; potential for increasing I-95 corridor park-and-ride facility capacity, walkability in downtown Methuen, and options for improving US-1 in Newburyport.

The MVMPO met on Wednesday, March 30 to:

- adopt its new, multi-year Public Participation Plan;
- review best available estimates of Federal transportation funding under The FAST Act;
- obtain MassDOT and community updates on projects in development, and
- consider transportation project requests from the Cities of Haverhill and Lawrence.

In the meantime, several transportation projects are advancing through the construction phase:

- [I-95 Whittier Bridge over the Merrimack River: 80% constructed, Late Summer 2017 completion;](#)
- [MBTA Merrimack River Railroad Bridge: Spring 2017 completion;](#)
- [I-93 / MA-110 / MA-113 Methuen Rotary: 54% constructed, 2018 completion,](#) and
- MA-150, MA-110 to Main Street, Amesbury: 65% complete, Fall 2016 completion.

Construction will begin this Spring on the following projects:

- MA-97 Reconstruction, Parker St. to Georgetown Town Line – Groveland
- Bradford Rail Trail Phase I between Comeau and Basiliere Bridges – Haverhill
- MA-28 Resurfacing from MA-213 to NH Boundary, Methuen



And, designs are advancing for projects such as the:

- Border-to-Boston (Georgetown Southern, Salisbury) and Groveland Community Trails
- MA-97 Reconstruction, Silver Birch Lane to Research Drive (Haverhill).

Contact Tony Komornick at MVPC with any questions about these and other transportation projects at (978) 374-0519, extension 15 or by email at akomornick@mvpc.org

Written by [Todd Fontanella](#)
Sr. Transportation Planner

MVPC Monthly Commission Meetings

Third Thursday of the month @ 7pm
April 21, May 19, June 23 (RPD)
(No Meetings in July and August)

MVPC Offices
160 Main Street Haverhill, MA 01830

Check our website for Commission Meetings Agenda and Details on Upcoming Meetings & Workshops mvpc.org

MVPC Invitation for Bid

MVPC 2017 Road Services—Road Maintenance Services and Related Materials

For details go to: [MVPC 2017 Road Services](#)

Thursday, May 19

EPA Regional Informational Meeting

Location: Northern Essex Community College
Hartleb Tech Center—Classrooms A/B
100 Elliott Street, Haverhill MA

Time: 8:00am

For more information [click here](#)

MVPC Commission Office 160 Main Street Haverhill, MA

Contact: Nancy Lavalley nlavalley@mvpc.org

Tel: 978-374-0519 ext. 10



Serving the communities of:
Amesbury Andover Boxford Georgetown Groveland Haverhill Lawrence Merrimac Methuen
Newbury Newburyport North Andover Rowley Salisbury West Newbury