



MINUTES

Thursday – October 15, 2015

- 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
Haverhill	April Derboghosian
Merrimac	John Thomas
Methuen	Kevin Hagerty
Newbury	John Weis
Newburyport	Ed Ramsdell
North Andover	Richard Byers, Chairman
Rowley	Robert Snow
Salisbury	Lou Masiello
West Newbury	Brian Murphey

Staff

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

3. Adoption of September Meeting Minutes

TheSeptember minutes were reviewed and recommended for adoption.

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

4. Warrants for September

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

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

5. Chairman's Report

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

- The Greater Haverhill Chamber of Commerce will be holding a summit on the benefits and potential of using the Merrimack River as a catalyst for the development of the region. As you recall this event will be a surrogate for our Regional Planning Day event. The event entitled "Rising with the Tides" will be held tomorrow on October 16th at the Roma in Haverhill. I have included the latest agenda in your packet. Because it is a Chamber sponsored event they will be charging for the breakfast and admission. If any Commissioners are interested in attending please let Nancy Lavallee know and she will sign you up as an attendee.
- At our last meeting we discussed the Community Compact Conference being organized by MARPA scheduled for November 12 at Holy Cross. I have registered for the conference and will report back to the Commission at our November meeting.

6. Director's Report

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

Meetings with Community Leaders

- On September 18th I attended the monthly MARPA meeting.
- On September 24th I attended the yearly Urbanized Zone Area (UZA) coordination meeting with the MPOs the make up the Boston UZA with staff.
- On September 30th Joe Cosgrove and I met with representative from Habitat for Humanity regarding our Brownfields RLF for a project in Lawrence.
- On October 6th and October 13th I attended the MMA Municipal and Regional Policy Committee meeting. The committee is actively reviewing the proposed public records legislation and zoning reform.
- On October 8th Tony Komornick and I met with Representative Campbell from Methuen to discuss advancing improvements along the Haverhill Street corridor.

Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition (MVMMC)

- At the October 7th DPW meeting we had 2 guest speakers to discuss efforts in Reading and Salem to advance complete street policies and programs.
- At the Merrimack Valley Mayors and Managers Coalition meeting on August 26th the Coalition focused on changes in the recycling industry that are increasing costs for municipalities and the filing of a Community Compact application that includes a regional project to promote MVMB.biz. The Coalition decided to update the trash/recycling cost matrix and we are still waiting for responses to set up the next meeting. We have repopulated the MVMB search capacity with Costar data and have over 160 listing.
- 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.
- Electric aggregation is moving forward with Newburyport, Haverhill and Methuen. Preliminary meeting have been held in Salisbury, Lawrence 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. A meeting was held with the State retirement Board and MARPA. Corrective legislation has

been drafted and I met with Representative Dempsey seeking his help. Representative Dempsey office is recommending that we use the Working Committee established in the budget to work through our issues. Still waiting for the committee to be organized by ANF as per the budget.

7. Contracts

- Amesbury Mobile Recycling Inspector - \$2,000 (mobile application to assist the City in inventorying recycling efforts).
- Methuen Public MIMAP - \$2,000 (The City has decided to implement an additional MIMAP application and make it accessible to the public).

Vote: Commissioner Lavoie made a motion to authorize and approve the above-mentioned contracts as presented. Commissioner Snow seconded the motion. The contracts were unanimously approved.

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

Valley Support Team

Merrimac: A draft of Merrimac's Housing Production Plan with all new census data and analysis of that data was completed last week and submitted to the Merrimack Affordable Housing Board of Trustees for their review. The Trustees will also providing feedback on the "opportunities and constraints" section which needs updates from the 2010 Plan.

Methuen: The Urban Land Institute - Technical Assistance panel final report is undergoing final edits and should be available soon. The report will address issues of marketing, planning and design, feasibility and financing, and management and implementation. The ULI Report will provide 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. We have also been asked to update the housing section of their 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 over the summer and submitted to the Town for their review. We await their comments and questions on the draft and plan to meet again on October 20th.

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative, 2015

On October 26 MVPC will host a CPTC workshop titled - "**Site Plan Review**". This course explains the difference between site plan approval and special permits; the review process; the types of conditions a board may impose; reasons for disapproval; the appeal process and the types of information a town can require to be shown on a site plan. On November 16 MVPC will host "**The Next Chapter of 40B - Targeted Training for Board Members**". Topics will include the following: reviewing the initial application for compliance with 40B eligibility and submission requirements; noticing and conducting the required public hearing; scheduling a site visit; retaining Peer Review consultants; securing sufficient project information to make an informed decision; holding deliberation sessions; drafting and issuing the Comprehensive Permit decision; and managing the Comprehensive Permit. The course will be taught by past and present Zoning Board members familiar with the 40B review process through their prior direct 40B experiences. The curriculum has been prepared by a team of 40B experts led by the Citizens Housing and Planning Association's 40B Training Committee in cooperation with CPTC.

Department of Public Health/MAPC Grant

Worked with Betsy Goodrich and Todd Fontanella to prepare a grant application for funds to incorporate "health initiatives" into a current project or study. We were successful in receiving \$8,000 to prepare a public health planning template for integrating healthy housing principles into Housing Production Plans. This project was completed by the end of June, and Mike Parquette presented the study at a public forum at CMRPC in Worcester on July 16th.

MVED

On July 15, MVED closed on a loan in the amount of \$115,000 to Janitech, Inc., a janitorial services business headquartered in Methuen with a satellite office in Nashua, NH. Janitech provides nightly service to 125 customers with over 8.5 million square feet of commercial space. The client base varies from corporate headquarters, high tech manufacturers, medical facilities, R&D facilities, and educational institutions. Operations include janitorial services, cleaning, floor stripping and refinishing, carpet cleaning, flood response, window cleaning, and window restoration. Janitech employs 234 people. This loan is subordinate debt to the primary lender, United Growth Capital. They provided \$650,000. This financing will provide a restructuring of debt that will increase cash flow and increase profitability, thus allowing the company to grow.

Merrimack Valley Means Business (MVMB)

We are now working with CoStar Group, a commercial real estate information and marketing company and Heidi is busy updating our MVMB website with their property listings for our region. We are also updating the "community profiles" and other aspects of the website. We also continue to seek funds to market the new MVMB website.

Economic Development Toolkit

Heidi 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. Heidi is not simply linking to other sites, but will have examples of approved applications and grants or regulations on our website.

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

On June 1st, MVPC submitted a CEDS update document to the U.S. Economic Development Administration. We are required to do this annually. The update highlights initiatives from the past year to support the Commission-approved five year CEDS, such as our industry cluster analysis, Valley Support Team, continued regional Brownfields assistance, reviving our Merrimack Valley Means Business marketing effort, and new Census data from the latest American Community Survey. The updated Strategy was approved by the EDA.

EDA Planning Grant (2015 Federal Assistance for a Partnership Planning Program Investment)

On June 12th we submitted our annual EDA Planning grant application. This year was the third year of a 3-year grant award. The new application was approved, and we executed a new contract in July.

9. Environmental Program Update

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

2015 Sea Level Rise Symposium:

MVPC is one of the coalition sponsors of the annual symposium to be held Thursday, Nov. 12th, 2015 at Woodman's Restaurant in Essex. Forum will feature presentations and updates on community adaptation initiatives to address sea level rise impacts in the Great Marsh. Early registration discount deadline is October 30th at www.greatmarsh.org.

Massachusetts Bays Program/Great Marsh Partnership:

- Field work spraying to control phragmites invasive species growth was completed this week for the season. Work has been ongoing with funding from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service and the Sandy Coastal Resiliency federal grant.
- Meeting of the Great Marsh Revitalization Task Force is scheduled for 11 A.M. Friday, October 30th at Parker River Wildlife Refuge Headquarters. Meeting is public and all interested parties are invited.

10. Transportation Report Update

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

Merrimack Valley MPO

The Merrimack Valley Transportation Committee (MVTC) met on October 7th to discuss the MVMPO's Public Participation Plan, its Congestion Management Process, and options for programming available MPO Target funds.

MVPC's Sr. Transportation Planner, Todd Fontanella completed preparation of the **Preliminary Draft MVMPO Public Participation Plan**, which was discussed at the MVTC meeting. This document details the methods that the MVMPO will employ to provide full public participation in the region's transportation planning process.

The MVMPO has received a request from the **City of Amesbury** to delay the advertising of the **Amesbury Riverwalk Project** from Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016 to FFY 2017. The City recently received funding that will allow it to complete the design of this project as well as the design of a project that will connect the Riverwalk to I-95.

MassDOT has scheduled a series of 'Community Capital Conversations', which are community listening sessions being held as part of the public outreach effort in developing its **FFY 2017-2021 Capital Investment Plan** (see flyer).

Mr. Fontanella was also successful in MVPC receiving Rockingham Planning Commission MPO approval for a new Memorandum of Understanding between that group and the MVMPO. It is anticipated that this matter will be taken up at the next MVMPO meeting.

Staff participated in the **Boston UZA Planning Meeting** that was held at the NMCOC Offices on September 24th.

Studies

MVPC's Transportation Engineer, Jim Terlizzi received crash reports from the Lawrence Police Department and is wrapping up the safety analyses needed to conduct a **Road Safety Audit at the intersection of Route 28 (Broadway) and Route 110 (Haverhill Street)**.

MVPC's Sr. Transportation Planner, Betsy Goodrich is updating the **MVRTA Strategic Plan** and is working with the MVRTA to update its **System Map** to reflect recent fixed bus route changes.

Other

Staff has been providing traffic and transit data to the consultant working with MassDevelopment and the City in creating the **Merrimack Street Transformative District** in Haverhill.

Mr. Komornick is working with the MVRTA and Newburyport officials in investigating the feasibility of using available MPO Target funds to construct roadway improvements identified in the preliminary design for the **Newburyport Intermodal Parking Facility** that will be located at the corner of Merrimac and Titcomb streets.

Mr. Komornick is assisting the **Town of Andover** developing a strategy for making improvements to the 2.0+ mile segment of the **Route 133 Corridor** between Lovejoy Road and Shawsheen Square.

Mr. Komornick, Ms. Goodrich and Mr. Terlizzi, attended the **Groundbreaking for the Bradford Rail Trail**, which took place on October 9th. In addition, Mr. Komornick, Ms. Goodrich and MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Jose Cosgrove have also been working with the City of Haverhill to address some lingering administrative issues related to contamination in the old rail corridor where the Bradford Rail Trail will be located.

Mr. Komornick attended the October 8th **Haverhill Traffic and Safety Committee Meeting** as well as the October 8th **Newburyport Traffic and Safety Committee Meeting**.

Mr. Komornick and Mr. Fontanella also attended a **Public Forum on Transit Services in the Greater Newburyport** area that was hosted by Senator Katie O'Connor-Ives and held at the Amesbury Transportation Center on September 22nd.

Technical Assistance

MVPC's Field Services Specialist, Danny Ovalle collected traffic volume, vehicle classification and vehicle speed data on **Whittier Road in Haverhill** as part of the effort to institute a **Heavy Vehicle Exclusion**.

MVPC received a request from the Town of North Andover to collect traffic data (i.e. volumes, speeds, vehicle classification) on Route 114 near Boston Road as part of an effort to provide a safe pedestrian crossing of the roadway for users of the **Bay Circuit Trail**.

Mr. Komornick and MVPC's GIS Program Manager, Jerrard Whitten are continuing discussions with the Town of Newbury's Planner, Martha Taylor in finalizing the scope of services that will allow MVPC to provide mapping services and complete the Transportation Element of the **Newbury Master Plan** that is now in development.

Through planning work completed as part of the **City of Haverhill Police Department Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Program** and based upon the recommendation of MVPC staff, the City of Haverhill requested the following infrastructure improvements:

- a. New ADA ramps at 12 locations on Main Street (24 ramps);
- b. Rectangular flashing pedestrian crossing beacon at Winter St./Locust St. plus new ADA ramps at this location;
- c. New pedestrian countdown signals at Winter St./White St. intersection, and
- d. Pedestrian crossing signage.

MassDOT seems hopeful that FHWA will approve these improvements.

Ms. Goodrich participated in a meeting regarding the **Shawsheen River Greenway in Andover**, which is gaining momentum.

Speakers from the City of Salem, MA and the Town of Reading spoke to the DPW Directors on October 7th about their experiences with implementing **Complete Streets Policies** in their communities. This gave municipal employees a chance to hear first-hand about the impacts that these policies have on the work of engineers in other communities.

Staff has been investigating obtaining **new technology to count bicycles and pedestrians**. This includes counters for roadways, trails and sidewalks. Some counters would be built into trails, while others would be mobile and used at various locations. This information is needed to implement performance measures contained in the recently approved Regional Transportation Plan.

The City of Haverhill has asked MVPC to look into the feasibility of installing a **crosswalk near the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Burnham Street**, near Rivers Edge Plaza.

Upcoming Meetings

- Title VI Workshop in Lawrence (October 19th);
- Community Health Network Area Meeting in Haverhill (October 21st);
- Coastal Trails Coalition Celebration in Newburyport (October 21st);
- Mayor's Health Task Force – Healthy Active Living Working Group Meeting in Lawrence (October 28th);
- DPW Directors Meeting (November 4th);
- Moving Together Conference in Boston (November 4th);
- MVRTA Advisory Board Meeting (November 5th (not yet confirmed));
- MVMPO Meeting (Early November - TBD);

11. Local and Regional Issues

- There was lengthy discussion among the Commissioners on identifying and defining congestion on the roadways in the region. Mr. Komornick explained that MVPC currently identifies congestion based on the output from its regional traffic model, the results of Speed and Delay runs and staff knowledge of traffic conditions on the roadway network. While these tools can identify where there is congestion, they are very poor in measuring the extent of that congestion. However, we now have a new tool for measuring congestion and that is travel speed data on our major roadways as measured in five-minute time periods throughout the year and let us estimate the magnitude of our congestion issues. Staff is now trying to develop a measure that can identify congested roadway segments and time periods using this new data. He said staff is struggling with questions such as 'should traveling 55 MPH on I-495 northbound in Lawrence during the PM peak period be considered congested travel?' It is very difficult to pinpoint the exact measurement of the term 'congestion'.
- Mr. Thomas asked why MassDOT didn't show more foresight in recognizing future growth when building roadways such as I-495 and I-93. Mr. Komornick noted that expanding these roadways is very expensive. Dennis DiZoglio added that there are no roadway expansion projects scheduled in Massachusetts at this time, only transit expansion projects. This is troubling in that there are locations such as the I-95/I-93 Interchange that are bottlenecks with safety issues that are not getting addressed.
- Commissioners noted that the commuter rail service in the region is limited and that is hindering MassDOT in achieving its goals of shifting travel from the automobile to transit. There was also a discussion of how the size of the MBTA's debt was a major factor in limiting efforts to improve transit in the state.
- MVPC's Executive Director, Dennis DiZoglio will follow up with the Towns of Andover and Boxford to request a representative for the open Commission seats.

- Commissioner Snow noted that with Electric Cars coming into the area where Electric Car Chargers are usually located. Commission Lavoie said that that there's an electric car charger in the Amesbury parking garage and it was obtained by the Commonwealth Electric Vehicle Incentive Program <http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/air/grants/massevip-municipal.html>. Mr. Komornick will follow up with Commissioner Snow's inquiry on Electric Car information.

12. Other - None

13. Adjourn

There was a motion and a second to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.

I hereby certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission meeting held on October 15, 2015.

Ed Ramsdell, Secretary