



MINUTES

Thursday – October 16, 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
Haverhill	April Derboghosian
Lawrence	Theresa Park
Merrimac	John Thomas
Methuen	Kevin Hagerty
Newbury	John Weis
Newburyport	Ed Ramsdell
North Andover	Richard Byers, Chairman
Rowley	Robert Snow
Salisbury	Jerry Klima
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
Todd Fontanella, Sr. Transportation Planner
Jen Dunlap, Finance Administrator
Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator/Executive Assistant

3. Adoption of September Meeting Minutes

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

Vote: Commissioner Hagerty made a motion to accept and second by Commissioner Snow. The September minutes were unanimously approved.

4. Warrant for September

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

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

5. Chairman's Report

- The City of Haverhill has appointed a new Commissioner, April DeBoghosian from the planning board and I would like to welcome April to the Commission. In the category of you gain one you lose one, we also received the resignation of Andover Planning Board member Joan Duff as a Commissioner. In her resignation letter Joan sighted lack of time to fully participate at a reasonable level. We have reached out to Andover for her replacement.
- As I mentioned last month I am seeking candidates for Assistant Treasurer to the Commission. I realize with your busy schedules that some may not be in a position to offer more time. Recognizing this limitation I am now seeking candidates to be a member of the finance committee. The commitment is much less since the committee meets usually only once during the development of the Commission budget. Any Commissioner interested in serving in this capacity please let me know. If there are no volunteers I will select members for appointment (2 members) to the committee.
- The personnel committee will meet in early November before the next Commission meeting to conduct it annual review of staff. Current members of the committee are myself, Bob Lavoie and Kevin Hagerty.
- We have included a number of articles referencing MVPC in the local news media in your packets. Articles ranging from Title flooding, to impact of sea level rise, to the updated Merrimack Valley Means Business website.

6. Executive Director's Report

Meetings with Community Leaders

- On September 22nd I discussed with Mark Sanborn, Director of Governmental Relations and Corporate Development from Concord Coach Lines, and the advancement of the Bus on Shoulder (BOS) study. I updated him on our meeting with Secretary Davey to consider a Pilot BOS program for I 93.
- On September 23rd Joe and I met with Storm Surge the Merrimack Valley Coastal Adaptation Work Group and discussed potential collaboration efforts to address climate change. We also discussed the potential of developing a Health Impact Assessments (HIA) on the impact of Climate Change on the region. This tool has been used a number of times in the State to consider the health impacts on various policy and project initiatives.
- On September 24th I attended the MPO meeting and represented MVPC. After the meeting I stayed for the Project Selection Advisory Council meeting/public hearing. I provided testimony to the Council
- On September 26th I attended the Haverhill Chamber of Commerce "State of the Economy" session featuring Representative Dempsey and the Mayors of Lawrence, Haverhill and Methuen.
- On September 26th I attended the monthly MARPA meeting.
- On October 7th I attended the MMA Local and Regional Public Policy Committee meeting.
- On October 7th Joe, Mike and I met with Merrimac Town Officials, TRC and MassDevelopment to discuss possible next steps to address the Coastal Metals Brownfield site.
- On October 10th I attended the newly formed Downtown Methuen Task Force. As you may recall Methuen is participating in our Valley Support Team Program and we will be providing technical assistance in their downtown revitalization efforts.

Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy

- As we have discussed in the past we are currently updating 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 PPA and PDA. We hope to bring the plan for your consideration in November if it is ready for distribution.

Merrimack Valley work Force Investment Board (WIB)

- As Mayor of Lawrence and Chief Elected Official of the WIB Mayor Rivera has appointed me to the WIB for a three-year term ending October 14, 2017. My first meeting will be on October 28th.

Merrimack Valley Mayors & Managers Coalition (MVMMC)

- The October 1st DPW meetings focused on the computerized salt spreading controls regional RFP and the new EPA stormwater draft regulations and our regional stormwater collaborative effort.

- On October 10th we submitted a CIC grant for \$115,000 to fund the marketing and implementing of the recently updated MVMB website. As you may recall the Merrimack Valley Means Business Website revisions included:
 - Resetting the existing Search Property function tab to direct users to a loop net web search page similar to the City of Somerville's portal
 - Converting the Merrimack Valley tab to a Community Profile dropdown function tab. Participating communities provided community marketing, resources, incentives and primary contact information.
 - Updating MVMB news and links
 - Adding community Twitter and Face book feeds
 The updated website went on line on October 6th.
- The next MVMM Coalition meeting is scheduled for October 23rd and will focus on new revenue opportunities with wireless technologies.
- 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 (Berrego 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. 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), Methuen (NTP to be issued), Haverhill, North Andover (estimated completion November), Merrimac (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.
- 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 solar development of their 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

- As reported before the summer break 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. This change would have a significant impact on our overhead rate. We had a meeting with the State retirement Board Executive Director, Nick Favorito on August 12th. MARPA has decided to collectively hire a lawyer to help us make our case against the change and I have arranged for former Senator Steve Baddour to represent MARPA. Corrective legislation is currently being drafted to hopefully correct the problem. The attorney met with MARPA at their September 26th meeting.

7. Contracts

- Working with the Mayors & Managers Coalition we have begun to update the Merrimack Valley Means Business Website. To market the site and help with the implementation MVPC will be applying for \$115,000 in CIC funds.
- A contract with West Newbury to update parcel mapping and provide MIMAP operations. The total contract is for \$4,000.
- A contract with Horsley Whitten Group in the amount of \$43,000 to provide consulting services to support the newly created Merrimack Valley Stormwater collaborative.
- We have been asked by Greenscapes to prepare up to 18 maps as an education tool for grammar school students. The contract would be \$4,500 for 18 maps.

Vote: Commissioner Hagerty made a motion authorize the above mentioned contracts and second by Commissioner Weis. 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. The latest quarterly report was submitted to you last month.

PLANNING AHEAD FOR GROWTH/PRIORITY GROWTH STRATEGY - We continue to work on the update/revisions to the Priority Growth Strategy in order to reflect changes (such as new development, new zoning, new focus, or completed infrastructure projects) that have taken place in the five years since the PGS was written 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 needs to be reflected in the update. In addition, MVPC is working with state officials and local Planning Directors to upgrade local zoning to better develop the PDA's and PPA's.

MASSWORKS - Funding through MassWorks for infrastructure projects supporting housing and economic development were due to EOHEd in late August. MVPC had the opportunity to present comments on the applications from this region. Five applications were submitted from four MVPC communities: Lawrence - Merrimack Street Corridor (\$3,925,000); Salisbury - Salisbury Square Water Line Replacement (\$1,708,769); Salisbury - Salisbury Beach Boardwalk (1,500,000); Newburyport - Infrastructure improvements to support new mixed-use TOD development in the proposed 40R District and new growth in the Newburyport Business Park (1,722,229); Merrimac - Bear Hill Road Culvert Replacement (400,000).

VALLEY SUPPORT TEAM – The first meeting of Methuen's Downtown Revitalization committee was held on October 10th. Dennis and Mike will be part of the committee and offer MVPC's varied expertise. The city 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. I have conversed with EOHEd folks about these programs and have invited them to come and discuss the merits of each tool to the Downtown Redevelopment Committee.

Also, we have offered our assistance to the City of Newburyport in their efforts to create a TOD 40R District at the Route 1 Rotary and MBTA Commuter Train Station. If approved, the new "smart growth" district could be in place this fall/winter.

MVMCC – Ted has been working closely with the MVMCC the past several months on efforts to update the MVMB website and to submit a CIC grant application to help expand the website further and to better market the region for new business. A review of the new website will be presented to the commissioners this evening.

BROWNFIELDS - Dennis, Joe and Mike attended a meeting on October 7th to discuss the coastal metals site in Merrimac with town officials, MassDevelopment, and TRC. MVPC has been working for several years to obtain the necessary resources to assist Merrimac in getting this site cleaned, demolished, and redeveloped.

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 will be hosting two workshops. The first on October 27 titled "Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards Part 1." The second will be on November 17 titled "Special Permits and Variances."

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST WORKSHOP - A workshop on the "Municipal Affordable Housing Trust Fund" will be held on October 16, 7:30 p.m. at West Newbury Town Offices. Sue Connolly from the Massachusetts Housing Partnership will conduct the workshop.

9. Environmental Program Update

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

Brownfields Program:

Work began end of September on hazardous material removal at 29 Elm Street, Salisbury. Cleanup activities are financed in part through the Merrimack Valley Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund. EPA is expected to announce availability of the next funding round for Brownfields Assessment grants in the next week and MVPC intends to submit regional application. Deadline to submit application will be December 19th.

Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative:

EPA on Sept. 30th issued long-awaited draft of the MS4 permit for Massachusetts. The 90-day comment period ends December 29th. EPA is holding a series of public information meetings throughout the state. MVPC is hosting the Northeast region meeting from 8 A.M. to 1 P.M., Tuesday, October 28th at Northern Essex Community College.

MassBays National Estuary Program:

- **Eelgrass Restoration** – Several new locations were attempted in the lower Plum Island Sound area and Essex Bay. Various techniques were attempted to improve the establishment of the grass. At several sites multiple genetic strains of eelgrass from around the region were planted to identify best suitability for eelgrass in both Plum Island Sound and Essex Bay. Eelgrass populations were acquired from Manchester-by-the-Sea, Nahant, Scituate, Wellfleet, Orleans, and Great Bay NH. Currently the Essex River site (towards the mouth) appears to be the most viable restoration site.
- **Geographic Response Plan, Merrimack River** – The draft Merrimack River Oil Spill Response Plans have been finalized with EPA and Mass DEP. Sensitive resource areas are targeted for planning and future funding to protect sensitive environmental resources along the river between the MA-NH boarder and the Amesbury town line.
- **Phragmites Management** – Electromagnetic Induction mapping of the marsh platform was conducted in the southeast Salisbury marsh. This effort funded through a US Fish and Wildlife Service, North American Wetlands Conservation Act (NAWCA) award used conductivity as a surrogate for salinity values to help us identify key areas for targeting our limited Phragmites control funds. To that end, treatment of the invasive plant on the marsh platform was accomplished in September using two different contractors funded by different funding sources (NAWCA and DCR Partnership Grant) to treat approximately 75 acres in the southeast Salisbury marsh (west of Salisbury Beach State Reservation) and 5 acres in the Joppa Flats/Plum Bush area of Newbury.

10. Transportation Report Update

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

Merrimack Valley MPO

The MVMPO met on September 24th. At the meeting, Mayor Gray of Amesbury indicated that the City was reviewing the status/scope of the Powow Riverwalk project, which appears in the FFY 2015 element of the current TIP. He will be reporting back to the MPO in the near future with additional information about the project.

The MVMPO meeting was followed by a meeting of MassDOT's Project Selection Advisory Council. MassDOT staff supporting the Council presented the results of the application of the draft project evaluation criteria to an assortment of proposed projects from around the state. This analysis included two MVPC projects: 1) the Route 114 Corridor Improvements Project in Lawrence and North Andover, and 2) the I-93 Bus on Shoulder project. Each project scored well relative to the other projects considered.

Studies/Analyses

The MVPC Transportation staff continued to provide assistance to the Newburyport Planning Department in evaluating the transportation impacts of a proposed pharmacy and gas station/mini-mart on Storey Avenue.

The MVPC Transportation staff provided comments on the developer's latest traffic study and MVPC's Transportation Program Manager Tony Komornick attended the October 1st meeting of the Newburyport Planning Board where the proponent presented the findings of the latest traffic study as well as the associated traffic mitigation plan. The Planning Board voted to approve the project.

The MVPC Transportation staff submitted the draft of the MVPC's HOV Lane/I-93 Bus on Shoulder Study to MassDOT's Secretary Davey and Deputy Secretary for Policy David Mohler for review and requested that a meeting be held where MVPC staff could answer any questions and to identify the steps that need to be taken in considering this proposal for implementation.

On October 8th, Mr. Komornick met with the City of Lawrence Planning Director Theresa Park, DPW Director John Isensee, City Engineer Theo Rosario and Wendy Luzon to further define the scope of MVPC's upcoming Downtown Lawrence Circulation Study.

MVPC hosted three Listening Sessions that will support the development of the region's Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan as well as the FFY 2016 Regional Transportation Plan and the MVRTA's Regional Transit Plan. These sessions were held at the following dates/locations:

- Tuesday, September 30, 2014: Lawrence Public Library,
- Thursday, October 2, 2014: Phoenix Row Apartments, and
- Tuesday, October 7, 2014: Amesbury Senior Community Center

MVPC's Sr. Transportation Planner Todd Fontanella presented a PowerPoint presentation at each meeting and entertained questions from the public regarding public transit services in the region. Many of the attendees commenting at each of these sessions cited the need for the City of Haverhill to participate in the MVRTA's new Sunday transit service. Mr. Fontanella will be preparing a draft Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan for submittal to MassDOT in December 2014.

On September 23rd, MVPC conducted a Road Safety Audit for the Intersection of Park Street and Lawrence Street in Lawrence. This work was undertaken as part of MVPC's assistance to the City in developing a MassDOT-approved project to make improvements to the intersection. MVPC's Transportation Engineer Jim Terlizzi presented information on crashes, roadway/sidewalk conditions, Level of Service to City officials and MassDOT staff. Mr. Terlizzi then prepared and distributed both a Draft and Final Draft version of the Road Safety Audit report. The Final Draft version of the report was submitted by the City to MassDOT yesterday and will be part of the package of information considered by the Project Review Committee in determining whether to approve the project for federal and state construction funding.

Other

MVPC's Transportation Program Manager Tony Komornick attended the October 9th meeting of the Newburyport Traffic and Safety Committee. At the meeting, the Committee gave final approval for MVPC's recommendations for improving bicycle and pedestrian accommodations in and around the intersection of Green Street and Merrimac Street, discussed the approved improvement plan for the Storey Avenue corridor, and reiterated the need for a comprehensive policy for the siting of crosswalks in the City;

MVPC's Sr. Transportation Planner Betsy attended the October 9th Public Input Meeting for the City of Haverhill's proposed bicycle/pedestrian improvements to Water Street/the Buttonwoods Trail as well as the extension of the Bradford Rail Trail.

Mr. Fontanella attended the October 9th Public Information Meeting for the Plaistow Commuter Rail Extension Study where NHDOT presented information on the preferred locations for both the station and the train layover facility. Related to this study, Mr. Komornick and MVPC's Sr. Transportation Planner Mary Kay Beninati have been working to provide information from our Regional Traffic Model that can be used by NHDOT's consultants to develop ridership estimates for the proposed service.

Mr. Komornick attended the October 16th Road Safety Audit for Route 28 from the intersection of Rosewood Road to the New Hampshire Line in Methuen. MVPC had studied this location as part of its Route 28 Study.

Also in Methuen, we received news that the City had been awarded a \$42,612 grant from the Department of Conservation and Recreation under the Recreational Trails Program to make improvements to the Methuen Rail Trail. Ms. Goodrich had provided assistance to the City in preparing the grant application.

Ms. Goodrich and Mr. Komornick have been working with the City of Lawrence to identify options for expanding upon the roadway and sidewalk improvements identified in the Butler School Safe Routes to School Project.

A Walkability Audit for three locations in Haverhill was held on October 8th at the MVPC Offices. The locations considered in the Audit were:

- Winter Street between Main Street and Locust Street;
- Locust Street between Winter Street and Washington Square, and
- Washington Square

Staff from Walk Boston performed the Audit, which was attended by MVPC staff, Haverhill Police, a representative from the Haverhill Post Office, a representative from Holy Family Hospital and staff from the MassDOT Boston office and District 4.

MVPC's Transportation Engineer Jim Terlizzi and Field Services Technician Danny Ovale have been collecting information on roadway pavement surface conditions and on the location and condition of sidewalks in Haverhill as part of MVPC's contract to update the City's Asset Management Program.

Mr. Komornick and MVPC's GIS Program Manager Jerrard Whitten have been working with officials from the Town of North Andover to discuss MVPC involvement in conducting a Downtown Parking Study along a section of Main Street and in the Municipal Lot behind Town Hall.

11. Local and Regional Issues – None

Mr. Komornick replied to Amesbury's Commissioner Lavoie inquiry on availability of Traffic Count Studies - available in April 2015, current data is available on the MVPC website.

Lawrence's Commissioner Park asked if there might be a delay with Bus On Shoulder with Secretary Davey leaving. Mr. Komornick noted that Mr. Davey is a big supporter of the service; he doesn't think his leaving will make a difference. MVPC's Todd Fontanella added that Bus On Shoulder networks have proven to be very successful throughout the country specifically on I-95 in Chicago, despite the fear of collisions and safety issues.

12. Adjourn

There was a motion to adjourn by Commissioner Snow and second by Rep-at-Large Buschur. Meeting adjourned at 8:35pm.

I hereby certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission meeting held on October 16, 2014.

Ed Ramsdell, Secretary