



Region Matters

mvpc.org

Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
plan • develop • promote

Winter 2012

Highlights:

*MVPC Seeks Grants for
Petroleum Sites*

Sea Level Rise Symposium

*Merrimack Valley Bridges
Upcoming Events*



Clean Energy Action Plan Wins "Leading by Example" Award

On October 25, 2012 at a ceremony in the State House, MVPC was presented with a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Leading by Example Award for the recently completed "Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan."

The Leading by Example Awards recognize outstanding efforts among Commonwealth agencies, public higher education institutions, municipalities, and individuals that have "established and implemented policies and programs resulting in significant and demonstrable energy and environmental benefits."

The recently adopted Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan is a very innovative, action oriented document detailing specific recommendations for each city and town in the region to help them advance their energy goals. To becoming a designated "Green Community" through the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources, to putting energy efficient infrastructure modernization plans in place, to building solar farms on closed landfills or other town-owned property, the Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan has ideas for our largest city as well as our smallest town. Performance measures to assess the impact of the Plan on our 15 municipalities are an important element of the Plan, and will be crucial to tracking the Plans' success in the months and years ahead. No success will be deemed too small or insignificant. Some communities have full time manage-

ment staff or energy committees, some do not. This greatly affects the level and degree to which communities can implement energy reduction policies and programs.

The Leading by Example Award also highlights other energy programs initiated by MVPC. We have procured the services of an Energy Manager and Energy Services Company for use by our communities to assist in developing energy reduction strategies and performance contracts. MVPC also hired an engineering firm to conduct a "fatal flaw" analysis on closed landfills in the region to determine which ones had the potential to be converted to solar and/or wind farms. Several sites had no fatal flaws and can move forward with renewable energy projects on the land. To assist in this effort MVPC has contracted with a Renewable Energy Company for any community to use without having to bid for these services on their own thus saving towns and cities valuable time and expense. These efforts by MVPC have laid the groundwork for projects that our communities would not be able to pursue without the resources provided by the Commission. For more information please contact Dennis DiZoglio, Executive Director or Mike Parquette, Comprehensive Planning Manager. This document is available at the MVPC website: www.mvpc.org

*Written by: Mike Parquette
MVPC Comprehensive Manager*

MVPC Seeks Grants for Petroleum Sites

This December, as part of our ongoing regional brownfields assessment and cleanup program, MVPC applied for a \$200,000 National Brownfields Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. If awarded, the EPA funds will be used to conduct environmental site assessments on eligible municipal, nonprofit, and private properties whose current and future use is impaired by real or perceived *petroleum* contamination. Last May, MVPC won a similar EPA grant to investigate Merrimack Valley sites hampered by hazardous substances pollution.



Petroleum contamination often poses both environmental and public health risks, and can impede economic progress and neighborhood revitalization. Here in the Merrimack Valley, “Birthplace

of the American Industrial Revolution” and the nation’s oldest industrialized corridor, our urban centers were developed prior to the advent of underground natural gas distribution. As a consequence, many of the region’s commercial and industrial sites and residences have relied on heating oil, and heating oil use is still common in the Valley today. Additionally, some of the first gasoline motor fuel dispensaries in the country were established here. As a

result, the Merrimack Valley is home to hundreds of sites potentially contaminated with petroleum hydrocarbons. These sites range from large (1 to 3+ acres) industrial mill complexes with long histories of heating fuel use and storage to small (1 acre or less) corner gasoline filling stations. All told, the Merrimack Valley region has over 450 registered former and current underground storage tank (UST) sites and over 500 documented petroleum releases associated with USTs (source: MassDEP). The highest proportion of these UST sites (248) and releases (279) are in the urban areas of Haverhill, Lawrence, and Methuen.

The MVPC petroleum grant application, if funded (Spring 2013), will allow MVPC and a technical consultant to investigate high priority petroleum sites across the Valley region as the first step toward restoring these abandoned or underutilized properties to productive use. In the meantime, MVPC is actively soliciting eligible projects for assessment assistance under our new brownfields ‘hazardous substances’ grant. All 15 member communities are eligible to apply. For an application form or for more information, contact Alan Macintosh, assistant director/environmental program manager at 978-374-0519 x16 or amacintosh@mvpc.org

*Written by: Alan Macintosh
MVPC Assistant Director/Environmental Program Manager*

Sea Level Rise Symposium Draws Crowd



Water Street, Newburyport

As chance would have it, while the Nor’east storm of November 8th was lashing the coast with high tides, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission and the Great Marsh Coalition joined forces to cosponsor a Sea Level Rise (SLR) Symposium for Great Marsh municipalities at Castle Hill in Ipswich MA. Five MVPC communities border on the Great Marsh and will be subject to increased flooding as sea level rises. Over 100 federal, state, municipal, and nonprofit officials heard from various speakers on topics ranging from Massachusetts policy on sea level rise to actions individual communities can take to prepare for climate change impacts. The MA Office of Coastal Zone Management and the Marine Biological Laboratory at Woods Hole painted a picture of

potential sea level rise impacts on the Great Marsh, including maps of areas of potential inundation. Several examples of problem coastal flood areas in MVPC communities were described in detail by MVPC environmental staff and municipal managers. Local adaptation case studies for other coastal communities that have begun implementing SLR strategies were presented, including freeboard incentives, community regulation changes, vulnerability assessment, sea wall policy, and land acquisition. The COAST tool, used for some communities in coastal New Hampshire to evaluate strategies to reduce financial loss, was presented by the Rockingham Planning Commission. All of the symposium presentations are available on the Great Marsh website. www.greatmarsh.org

*Written by: Peter Phippen
MVPC Coastal Management Coordinator*

MVPC Hosts Timely Meeting on the Future of Manufacturing



Dr. Barry Bluestone

Through MVPC's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) program, 50 community leaders from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors gathered on the morning of December 11 at Northern Essex Community College (NECC) in Haverhill to hear a compelling argument for the fundamental strength of the manufacturing sector in Massachusetts by renowned researcher, speaker, and leading public figure, Dr. Barry Bluestone, founding Director of the Dukakis Center for Urban and Regional Policy, and the founding Dean of the School of Public Policy & Urban Affairs at Northeastern University. His presentation centered on the recently released report, "Staying Power II: A Report Card on Manufacturing in Massachusetts 2012." The report highlights data directly contradicting the conventional wisdom that manufacturing is a dying industry sector facing a bleak future. In reality, after years of downsizing, not only is manufacturing stabilizing in Massachusetts, it has actually experienced recent growth. In addition, because of an expected surge in baby boomer retirements over the next few years, Dr. Bluestone argued that employment opportunities will jump significantly for an industry sector that not only features well paying positions, but also offers highly skilled work. The challenge will be finding enough qualified candidates for a field that has too

often been ignored, due to out-dated thinking, bad marketing, and lacking a strong training pipeline. Two of the main themes touted by Bluestone are the need to greatly increase the level of cooperation between training institutions and manufacturing firms and to continually promote the sector at all levels of government.

NECC President, Dr. Lane Glenn followed Bluestone's presentation with a synopsis of the college's leadership efforts towards filling critical workforce development gaps in sectors such as manufacturing. MVPC staff closed the meeting with corresponding industry data for the Merrimack Valley, demonstrating manufacturing's great importance to the regional economy.

MVPC will organize additional regional CEDS meetings over the coming months, focusing on the development of a shared vision of economic development goals and objectives, leading to the release of the 2013 Merrimack Valley Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Report in the summer. CEDS meetings are open to anyone interested in economic development issues such as infrastructure, green initiatives, marketing, and entrepreneurship support. If interested in participating in the CEDS process, please contact MVPC Economic Development Coordinator, Ted Semesnyei at 978-374-0519 x28 or tsemesnyei@mvpc.org.

*Written by: Ted Semesnyei
MVPC Economic Development Coordinator*

NOTICE OF PUBLIC FORUM

We need your comments on the proposed "Planning Ahead for Growth Plan"

Planning Director's Meeting

*When: Wednesday, January 9 @ Noon
Where: MVPC Offices 160 Main Street, Haverhill*

Commission Meeting

*When: Thursday, January 17 @ 7pm
Where: MVPC Offices 160 Main Street, Haverhill*

MVPC will be giving the region's stakeholders the opportunity to have a robust discussion regarding the future land development and land protection of the region. MVPC, in conjunction with the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) will hold public input meetings on January 9, 2013 at noon, and on January 17, 2013 at 7pm. Both meetings will be held in the MVPC conference room at 160 Main Street, Haverhill, MA. In order to encourage and promote widespread participation, the meetings, open to the public, will be held as part of our regularly scheduled "Planning Director's" meeting and our scheduled MVPC "Planning Commission" meeting.

The purpose of the public forums is to allow EOHED to present a draft of our region's section of their State-wide Development Plan called "Planning Ahead for Growth." The forum will allow EOHED the opportunity to explain the process and methodology of choosing "priority development areas" and "priority preservation areas" in the MVPC region and how these areas align with MVPC's Regional Priority Growth Strategy completed in 2009.

The public is invited to attend and comment on the proposed Plan. For more information contact Mike Parquette at 978-374-0519 x27 or mparquette@mvpc.org

Merrimack Valley Bridges

Merrimack Valley Bridge Projects

In driving around the Merrimack Valley region, one cannot help but notice the level of commitment by MassDOT in repairing/replacing many of our most important bridges. A recent MVPC analysis revealed that 40 of the 238 federal aid-eligible bridges in the Valley (i.e., bridges with spans greater than 20 feet) will have been repaired or replaced between 2010 and 2020 at an estimated aggregate cost of almost \$640 million.

Here's a quick update on the status of four major bridge repair/reconstruction projects in the Valley that are either underway or under design

Rocks Village Bridge over the Merrimack River between Haverhill and West Newbury

The bridge was closed in June 2012 and is a little more than 1/3 complete. The old decking has been removed from the structure and the painting of the truss sections of each span is complete. MassDOT is now in the process of repairing the turn span mechanism. In spring 2013, work will begin on installing the new composite deck surface, which will be followed by painting and other repairs to the lower (below the truss) parts of the structure. The bridge is scheduled to reopen in summer 2013.

Bates Bridge over the Merrimack River between Haverhill and Groveland

The new bridge is taking shape just a few feet downstream of the existing structure. Three of the four bridge piers have been largely completed and concrete decking has been put in place on the north (Haverhill) side of the river over Piers One and Two. Basecoat asphalt has been put down on the Groveland side of the bridge along with a section of sidewalk along East Main Street. Work has also begun on the installation of the bridge fender system. The project is 66% complete and the new bridge is scheduled to open in 2014.

Canal Street Bridge over the Spicket River in Lawrence

Project is 67% complete. Both of the new Canal Street approaches to the new bridge will soon be paved and traffic rails and a sidewalk will be installed on north side of the structure. Traffic will be diverted from the existing bridge to the north side of the new bridge. MassDOT will then begin on the retaining wall, traffic rails and sidewalks on the south side of the bridge.

Whittier Bridge (Interstate 95) over the Merrimack River between Amesbury and Newburyport

This \$285 million project includes the replacement of the Whittier Bridge as well as the replacement or repair to other bridges along or over I-95 and the widening of the highway between the Route 113 interchange in Newburyport north to the Toll Road exit in Salisbury. The preliminary design work on this design/build project is now coming to a conclusion. Work is likely to begin in summer 2013 and will be completed in summer 2016.

MVPC Monthly Commission Meeting

Third Thursday of the Month

Location: MVPC Offices

Time: 7pm

January 17	April 18
February 21	May 16
March 21	June 20

Check our website and Facebook page
for details on upcoming events...

www.mvpc.org



Register Today !

MVPC Citizen Planner Program
Cost: \$100

Location: MVPC Offices, Haverhill, MA
Time: 7pm

Session I	Monday, January 7
Session II	Monday, February 4
Session III	Monday, March 4

Contact Nancy Lavalley - nlavallee@mvpc.org
978-374-0519 x10

Serving the communities of:

Amesbury Andover Boxford Georgetown Groveland Haverhill Lawrence Merrimac Methuen
Newbury Newburyport North Andover Rowley Salisbury West Newbury