



Region Matters

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Merrimack Valley
Planning Commission
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For more details go to:
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Photo by: Mike Labella,
Eagle Tribune

MVPC Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio to Retire

"I love it when a plan comes together" has been said by many but never has it had a more true meaning than when Dennis DiZoglio made it his mission for the Merrimack Valley!

After serving nearly 10 years as Executive Director of MVPC, Dennis DiZoglio will retire effective November 13, 2016. Dennis has had a long and extremely successful career working in city and regional planning, economic development, management, and public facilitation. Dennis's ability to facilitate meetings and find consensus is legendary! Also legendary for all who know Dennis is his sharp mind, ability to laugh, and his extraordinary leadership capabilities.

Dennis has a wonderful gift for public service. His storied career actually began as an intern at MVPC. Dennis then worked as an Economic Development Planner in Lawrence; the Planning Director in Taunton and Planning and Community Development Director for the City of Peabody. Then he was off to Methuen where he served as Mayor for six years, followed by six years as the Deputy General Manager of the MBTA, coming full circle returning to MVPC as Executive Director. Dennis has always known how to nicely tie the knot! What a great gift!

With every job he held, Dennis left great accomplishments too numerous to list. It can be clearly recognized though, that he left each position, department, city, and agency he worked for in better shape than when he started. That alone speaks volumes and is an indication of Dennis's work ethic, enthusiasm, knowledge, and personality.

At MVPC, Dennis graciously recognizes his talented staff as being second to none, and staff in turn recognize in Dennis a manager and leader whose style and direction will truly be missed. Among the many accomplishments during Dennis's tenure include development of the first regional comprehensive plan in 30 years - The Merrimack Valley Priority Growth Strategy. MVPC also developed the first energy plan for the region - The Merrimack Valley Clean Energy Action Plan. Both Plans were recognized on the Federal and State levels as being model plans for innovation in the industry.

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Painted Windows, Haverhill
- by Will Emerling

"MVPC Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio to Retire"

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Dennis is also proud to have lead the development of a more succinct, policy driven Regional Transportation Plan and Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. These Plans now provide goals, objectives, and direction to guide the development of the region into the future.

Possibly one of Dennis's greatest achievements at MVPC is the new-found relationship he has forged with our member communities - a relationship that has promoted cooperation, coordination and a sharing of ideas and solutions to common regional challenges. The creation of the Merrimack Valley Mayors/Managers Coalition as well as regular meetings with the region's Planning Directors, DPW Directors, Town Administrators, and state legislators, has given the region's decision makers a stronger, unified voice. Having Dennis as facilitator in this effort has resulted in more efficiency and effectiveness at the local level by generating solutions to local problems and issues. His ability to turn "ideas" into "actions" has been a focal point of his career and this leadership has helped the region's communities strengthen and grow.

As is with most leaders, Dennis has served on the Board of Directors and has Chaired no less than a dozen different organizations. Agencies that have benefitted from Dennis's leadership and organizational skills include the YMCA in Methuen, the Massachusetts Mayor's Association, the Holy Family Hospital, and the Massachusetts Municipal Association, to name a few.

We all hope Dennis has a very long and prosperous retirement ahead. We know he will especially enjoy spending many hours a week with his five grandchildren (making them Peter Rabbit eggs and beans!), playing tennis, and possibly writing a book for all of his many friends to enjoy. And we all know he will live each day following the 7-Ps! Sorry readers, but if you haven't heard of the 7-Ps, Dennis will be happy to recite them!

Please join us to celebrate Dennis's Retirement !

Thursday, November 3

5:30pm - 8:30pm

Merrimack Valley Golf Club

The Equinox Ballroom

210 Howe Street Methuen, MA

Hors D'Oeuvres and Cash Bar

RSVP

Or go to: <http://conta.cc/2c8rX4P>



Rate of Job Growth in the Region Exceeds State Averages

How the Region has fared over the last 10 years from the economic recession was the focus at this year's Regional Planning Day event held on June 23rd at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill. MVPC Executive Director, Dennis DiZoglio, provided an overview on the "State of the Region" for the 75 people who attended.



The morning event began with MVPC Chairman Rick Byers introducing the keynote speaker Secretary Jay Ash from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED). The Secretary commented on Governor Baker's Municipal Modernization Legislation, which has been subsequently passed by the legislature, and the Economic Development Bill filed by the Governor, which was also approved at the end of the legislative session.

Director DiZoglio followed with a PowerPoint presentation highlighting key demographic changes in the Region through the years. He commented that "the region has been challenged for some time trying to replace the jobs that were lost when the region's economy pulled away from traditional industries like textiles and shoes but it appears there may be progress." In 2015 the Region saw a 5.5% increase in the number of jobs available while the State saw an increase of 4.6%. "So the good news is our economy is growing, and it appears faster than the State as a whole," stated DiZoglio.

However, the Region's labor force exceeds the number of jobs being created in the Region and its unemployment rate exceeds the State average. In 2015, the Region had an unemployment rate of 6.5% and during this timeframe the State unemployment rate was 5.1%.

With fewer jobs available in the Region to meet workforce demands, residents seek employment opportunities outside the region. In 1990, 61% of the residents in the region worked within the region. In 2000, that number decreased to 54.3% and in 2010 it continued to decline to 52.6%.

While the traditional manufacturing industries have left the region, the number of manufacturing jobs continues to exceed the State and the Nation. In 2010, 20% of the jobs in the Region were in manufacturing compared to 8.9% in Massachusetts and 10.8% in the United States.

Although there were fewer jobs available in the Region, the rate of population growth has been greater than the State as a whole. Our Region's population growth was 10.5% in 1990 from the previous decade, 10% in 2000 and 4.8% in 2010. During that same time frame the State grew by only 4.9% in 1990, 5.5% in 2000 and 3.1% in 2010. "So we continue to grow faster than the State as a whole and are projected to do so through 2030," stated DiZoglio.

"What is driving the growth in population is housing costs. While most folks would like to live near their place of employment they have found that the cost of housing is prohibiting them from doing so. Housing costs are over 10% lower in the Merrimack Valley region than Greater Boston. So we are a bigger bang for your buck so to speak and the region responded by adding almost 8% to the existing housing stock between 2000 and 2010," according to DiZoglio.

This demand for housing has made it difficult for the residents in the Valley to find affordable housing. In 2013, 9% of the region's housing stock met the 40B affordable housing index. This is insufficient considering over 50% of the Region's residents are spending more than 50% of their income on housing. "The bottom line is our residents are having a hard time finding places to live in the communities where they grew up," continued DiZoglio.

In addition, our population is getting older and projections indicate the 65+ population doubling to 80,000 people by 2035. Clearly the region will need to factor this demographic change into its housing and transportation policies.

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Rate of Job Growth in the Region Exceeds State Averages

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Residents in the Region are spending more time commuting to their jobs. In 1990, the average commute was 22 minutes, in 2000, the average commute was 27 minutes, in 2010 it increased to 28 minutes.

This need for commuting is putting a strain on our existing transportation network. In response the Region is seeking more travel options to expand our transportation network. The region began to identify rail corridors, and on and off-road options that could be formed into a strategic network of trails. In 2003 there were only two rail to trail segments developed in the region. By 2016, a total of 39.5 miles of multi-use trails are proposed in the region, of which 13.7 miles are currently open to the public. In addition, ridership on the MVRTA has increased significantly. Between 2010 and 2015, ridership on the MVRTA fixed route service increased by almost 23% with over 2.1 million trips provided in 2015.

The Merrimack River, which binds the Region together, also creates infrastructure challenges as we keep pace with the need to maintain the 244 bridges in the Valley. While 64% of the Region's bridges are adequate, 8% are structurally deficient and 28% are functionally obsolete and need attention. In 2015, 81.7% of our roadways were in either excellent or good condition. So we seem to be making progress in keeping our roadways in a "State of Good Repair".

Following DiZoglio's comments the MVPC Program Managers discussed how the programs they manage can help the Valley address the many issues it faces. Complete presentations can be found on the MVPC website at www.mvpc.org.

*Written by Dennis DiZoglio
Executive Director*

MVPC Hires New Economic Development Planner



MVPC recently hired Angela Vincent, AICP to fill the position of Economic Development Planner. Angela replaces Heidi Murphy who left to become the Town Planner in Georgetown.

Angela comes to MVPC with over 15 years of experience in comprehensive planning and community engagement in both the public and private sector. Most recently, Angela was a Senior Resiliency Planner and a Senior Sustainability Manager with the BSC Group and with VHB, respectively.

Angela's broad range of experience includes developing Master Plans, writing and managing federal and state grants, coordinating regional efforts to identify inter-municipal services, organizing and facilitating workshops, and developing social media strategic plans.

Angela is also very active in the American Planning Association (APA), currently serving as President of the Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors and as Chair of the 2016 SNEAPA Conference.

MVPC welcomes Angela to our staff. She can be reached at 978-374-0519 x28 or AVincent@mvpc.org

*Written by Mike Parquette
Comprehensive Planning Manager*

"This Old House" Helps This Great Marsh

PBS Producers Visit the Upper North Shore



A Nevada Landscape Design consultant talks about marsh-friendly plantings for the Ask This Old House cameras.

Last month, MassBays' Upper North Shore Regional Coordinator Peter Phippen convened television producers, the Salisbury Beach Betterment Association, a landscaping company, volunteers, and a coastal homeowner to demonstrate landscaping that will prevent contaminated rainwater from reaching the Great Marsh -- all under the bright glare of television lights and cameras.

The rain garden built on property abutting Black Rock Creek Marsh will catch stormwater before it runs off a paved driveway and into the marsh, protecting habitat from pollutants carried in the runoff -- and it looks great, too!

Ask This Old House Productions caught the installation on tape and will broadcast it on PBS this fall. Peter, the landscaper, and homeowner will all be featured. We

hope that this "how to" film will instruct and inspire other homeowners living adjacent to wetlands to do the same for their local environment.

*Written by Peter Phippen
Great Marsh Coordinator*

MVPC Awarded EPA Funding for Cleanups of Contaminated Brownfield Properties

Cleanup and re-use efforts for so-called "Brownfields" contaminated sites in the Merrimack Valley are getting a financial boost from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The EPA has announced that in August they executed an agreement for \$820,000 in grant funding to support the MVPC Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund.

The Fund provides low-interest loans and grants to clean up distressed properties and advance redevelopment plans led by cities and towns in the 15-community Merrimack Valley region. The Loan Fund has helped finance brownfields cleanup and planning activities in Lawrence, Methuen, Haverhill, Newburyport, Amesbury, and Salisbury.

"Thanks to EPA support and resources, we are able to provide flexible financing options that can leverage more private investment in long-neglected properties and create jobs and healthy neighborhoods," said Dennis A. DiZoglio, Executive Director of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission.

In an additional boost for the Merrimack Valley, EPA awarded the Town of Merrimac a \$530,000 Cleanup grant for site remediation at the abandoned Coastal Metals industrial site located off the Town's Village center. The site once housed an electronic plating company, and for decades has been a public safety and blight concern in the densely developed Little Court neighborhood. The Cleanup funds, and possible gap financing with the Merrimack Valley Revolving Loan Fund, will enable the Town to proceed with plans to convert the dilapidated property into housing.

MVPC is also a partner in the MassDEP successful proposal for Brownfields Assessment funding targeted to the Lawrence area. The \$400,000 Assessment grant award from the EPA will be used to conduct environmental testing at sites in preparation for cleanup and redevelopment.

Anyone interested in the Merrimack Valley Brownfields Cleanup Revolving Loan Fund should contact Joseph Cosgrove, MVPC Environmental Program Manager at 978-374-0519 or jcosgrove@mvpc.org.

*Written by Joe Cosgrove
Environmental Program Manager*

Cycling the Ciclovía



What a couple of beautiful days to hold the City of Lawrence's Ciclovía. More than 800 people came out to enjoy bicycling, walking, skateboarding, and more downtown where the streets were closed to auto traffic. MVPC worked hand-in-hand with other members of the Mayor's Health Task Force to organize the events held on the first and third Sundays of August.

Organizers put a greater emphasis on bicycle safety this year. MassBike and the Biccocina taught safe on-road bicycling through a bicycle rodeo. The public had the chance to learn more about Complete Streets efforts around the City, including upgrades to the pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. MassRides promoted Safe Routes to Schools. Free helmets were given out by MassRides and the Greater Lawrence Family Health Center (provided by Lawrence General). While the majority of people arrived without helmets, most left the event with one on their head.



This year, more businesses opened their doors during Ciclovía on a day when most are closed. Businesses, such as the Essex Street Market, did a bang up job selling healthy and delicious foods. The Essex Street Market participates in the Healthy on the Block initiative in Lawrence to provide healthy food choices as part of the Mass in Motion program in the City.

Open Streets events are spreading across the country. MVPC staff member Betsy Goodrich moderated a workshop on these events at the Moving Together Conference on September 29th. Lawrence's Vilma Martinez-Dominguez spoke and MassDOT's Pete Sutton said that he will use these events to encourage more public participation in the transportation process.



If you didn't make it to this year's Ciclovías, be sure to put them on your calendar for next year (1st and 3rd Sundays in August).

*Written Betsy Goodrich
Senior Transportation Planner*

MVPC Monthly Commission Meetings

Third Thursday of the month @ 7pm

2016

September 15
October 20
November 17
December 15

2017

January 19 April 20
February 16 May 18
March 16 June 15

MVPC Invitation for Bid

Brownfields Environmental Professionals
Advertisement for Proposals for
Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund Program

Go to mvpc.org for more details

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

Upcoming Workshops

10/24 CPTC—Reading a Subdivision Plan
Location: MVPC Conference Room
Time: 7-9pm

11/15—16 New England Stormwater Finance Forum
Register on-line <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/water-as-a-resource-financing-opportunities-and-challenges-for-municipal-stormwater-management-tickets-27293611928>

11/28 CPTC—Creating a Master Plan (MIIA Credit)
Location: MVPC Conference Room
Time: 7-9pm

To Register for the CPTC classes go to:
<http://masscptc.org/workshops/cptc-workshops.html>

If you attended the MVPC 2016 Citizen Planner Program contact [Nancy Lavallee](mailto:Nancy.Lavallee@mvpc.org) 978.374.0519 to register for the CPTC Workshops

MVPC Commission Office 160 Main Street Haverhill, MA

Contact: Nancy Lavallee nlavallee@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