

## **MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Monthly Meeting of January 21, 2021

Time: *11:00 AM*

**Virtual Go To Meeting**

For more details on this meeting contact Nancy Lavalley at [nlavalley@mvpc.org](mailto:nlavalley@mvpc.org)

### **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of December Meeting Minutes
4. Warrant for December
5. Chairman's Comments
6. Director's Report
7. Contracts
8. Personnel
  - Authorization of the hiring of Ian Burns, Targeted Economic Development Specialist. (TEDS)
9. Local and Regional Issues
10. Other
11. Adjourn

MINUTES

**Thursday – January 21, 2021**

**Virtual Commission Meeting (GoToMeeting)**

Recorded from MVPC, 160 Main Street, Haverhill, MA

Consistent with the Governor’s orders suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law and banning gatherings of more than 10 people, this meeting will be conducted by remote participation to the greatest extent possible. The public may not physically attend this meeting, but every effort will be made to allow the public to view and listen to the meeting in real-time. Persons who wish to do so are invited to watch the meeting on the MVPC web site or join the meeting from your computer, tablet, or smartphone by using the link: <https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/748821525> or you can also dial in using your phone by calling +1 (571) 317-3112 and using access code 748-821-525. If live transmission proves infeasible, an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive records of the meeting will be made available on the MVPC website as soon as possible.

1. **Call to Order** – Chairman Snow called the meeting to order at 11:02 am
2. **Roll Call** – Secretary Laplante called the roll and declared a quorum of 15 commissioners present at the time of roll call with 1 commissioner arriving late due to technical difficulties for a total of 16.

\*Note: Due to technical difficulties with GoToMeeting commissioners were disconnected and returned at different times during the meeting, thus note the inconsistent number of votes.

The following Commissioners and Staff were in attendance:

**Commissioners**

Amesbury	Robert Laplante, Secretary
Andover	Lisa Schwarz
Boxford	Jim Barnes, Treasurer
Georgetown	John Cashell
Groveland	Rebecca Oldham
Haverhill	Ken Cram
Lawrence	Pedro Soto
Merrimac	Bob Bender
Methuen	Kathleen Bradley Colwell, Vice Chair
Newbury	Martha Taylor
Newburyport	Rick Taintor
North Andover	Rick Byers
Rowley	Robert Snow, Chairman
Salisbury	Lou Masiello
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-At-Large	Brad Buschur

## **Staff**

Theresa Park, Executive Director  
Tony Komornick, Transportation Program Manager  
MaryKay Beninati, Senior Transportation Planner  
Betsy Goodrich, Senior Transportation Planner  
Jim Terlizzi, Transportation Engineer  
Dan Ovale, Field Services Specialist  
Jerrard Whitten, GIS-IT Program Manager  
Mikayla Minor, GIS Analyst  
Steve Lopez, Senior GIS Analyst  
Jennifer Hughes, Environmental Program Manager  
Peter Phippen, Coastal Coordinator  
Ian Burns, Targeted Economic Development Specialist  
Nate Robertson, Community & Economic Development Planner  
Jenifer Dunlap, Finance Administrator  
Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator

### **3. Adoption of Dec 17, 2020 Meeting Minutes**

Secretary Laplante reviewed the minutes and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

**Vote:** There was a motion by Rep-At-Large Buschur and seconded by Commissioner Colwell to approve the December 17 meeting minutes. The December 17 minutes were approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 14 attending commissioners. One commissioner abstained and one commissioner left the meeting due to technical difficulties.

### **4. Warrant for December**

MVPC's Treasurer Barnes reported on the December Warrant and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

**Vote:** There was a motion by Commissioner Masiello and seconded by Commissioner Murphey to approve the December warrant. The December warrant was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 14 attending commissioners.

### **5. Chairman's Comments**

Chairman Snow reported on the following activities since the December meeting.

Chairman Snow expressed a hopeful 2021 for the new year. He stated the following – "May our country make solid headway in tackling COVID-19, our small business community survive the biggest challenge they've ever faced and become prosperous again, and may we continue to make Merrimack Valley a strong, resilient region that is not just our home, but a place where we work and whose amenities we enjoy."

Chairman Snow gave a warm welcome to Bob Bender who was appointed by Merrimac's Board of Selectmen as its MVPC Commissioner, and MVPC's new Targeted Economic Development Specialist, Ian Burns, whose hire will be authorized by a vote of the Commission later in the meeting. Ian will support the economic development activities in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover.

Chairman Snow reported that The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has released the MA 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap report ([www.mass.gov/2050Roadmap](http://www.mass.gov/2050Roadmap)) and the Interim Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 ([www.mass.gov/2030CECP](http://www.mass.gov/2030CECP)). There is a public comment period until February 22<sup>nd</sup> for the 2030 CECP which can be submitted online, by emailing [gwsa@mass.gov](mailto:gwsa@mass.gov) or leaving a voicemail to (617) 506-9630.

Chairman Snow added that several contracts will require MVPC's approval later in the meeting. He highlighted the state's District Local Technical Assistance Program, the funding source that allows MVPC to support

planning efforts in your communities, adding that while MVPC has to advocate for it every year; we have our municipal partners to thank for their letters to the state, its importance cannot be understated.

Chairman Snow noted that at the February Commission meeting the Finance Committee will introduce a revised budget for FY20 and a new budget and assessment rate for FY21 for your consideration and adoption. The Finance Committee will meet during the week prior to the Commission meeting. If any of the commissioners are interested in serving on the Finance Committee with existing members Lisa Schwarz of Andover, Joe Perry of Rowley, and Treasurer Jim Barnes of Boxford, please let him know at your earliest convenience. The FY2020 Audit should also be completed and ready to be presented at the February Commission meeting.

As a final note, he reported that the 2020 Annual Report will be distributed in the coming weeks. Executive Director Park expressed her appreciation for the time and effort Nancy Lavallee has put into the Annual Report. Chairman Snow gave praise to the new Cultural Mapping Project Book; if any of the commissioners haven't received their copy to contact Nancy Lavallee and she will get a copy to you. Executive Director Theresa Park added that Commissioner Masiello's wife has a piece of her artwork included in this book.

## **6. Executive Director's Report**

MVPC's Executive Director, Theresa Park, gave a comprehensive update of MVPC activities since the December meeting highlighting the following.

Ms. Park expressed her appreciation and thanks to the staff for their input and time in the creation of the Annual Report and a shout out to Nancy Lavallee who has been compiling the input and attention to the fine details. Ms. Park also acknowledged Michelle Collado of Elevated Thoughts, a local artist who created the cover, and Jen Myers for their contribution to the Annual Report. The Annual Report will be printed and available on the MVPC website.

Ms. Park reported that the Mayors and Managers Coalition are working together on how to address the broadband network issues within the Merrimack Valley communities. They participated in a virtual meeting and presentation with Commissioner Karen Charles Peterson of MA Department of Telecommunications and Cable and the Coalition for a state perspective on the digital divide that exists in many of the Merrimack Valley communities. There are many different forces in sorting through the problem within the communities, the legislative consideration, and technical understanding of how the network is deployed and connected. Ms. Park added that MVPC's Nate Robertson is working on a feasibility study on this topic that will be submitted to EDA. She will report back on any updates.

Ms. Park announced that MVPC is participating with opportunities to get the word out on who we are and what we do on several social media platforms. She reported that she and Nate Robertson have participated in live interviews with WHAV, a local radio station, and Jen Hughes is participating on Senator DiZoglio's upcoming quarterly broadcast.

Ms. Park reported on a breaking news announcement made today that MassDOT's Secretary Pollack has been appointed as the new Deputy Administrator for FHWA under President Biden's administration. Ms. Park acknowledged that Secretary Pollack was a champion in her role with MassDOT and will continue that in her new position.

Ms. Park referred commissioners to the Executive Director's report on detailed project updates that MVPC has participated in and invited the program managers to report on highlighted activities since the January meeting.

### ***Transportation Program updates:***

MVPC's Program Manager, Tony Komornick, reported that the MVMPO is meeting on January 27<sup>th</sup> to kick off the development of the FFYs 2022-2026 TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) and the FFY 2022 UPWP (Unified Planning Work Program). He is accepting requests from communities that would like a project study or analyses to be considered in the FFY 2022 UPWP until March 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Komornick said that program status updates are presented at upcoming MVMPO and Commission meetings.

Mr. Komornick reported on the completed draft analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 on daily and peak period traffic volumes in the region using data collected at 30 locations throughout the Merrimack Valley. The analyses found that AM, PM, and Average Daily traffic volumes are 15% lower than they were pre-COVID.

Mr. Komornick reported that the Transportation staff is nearing completion of the collection of road surface condition data for all publicly maintained roadways in Groveland as part of MVPC's contract with the community to establish a Pavement Management program. The data is being collected with the new Cartegraph OMS Pavement Management Software mobile app.

***GIS Program updates:***

MVPC's GIS Program Manager, Jerrard Whitten, reported that his team finalized Merrimack Document Intake and Management System contract. Feedback from the vendor performing the scanning reports that the process is going very well. Mr. Whitten suggested that communities who do not have a document management system and interested in participating contact him and he will discuss the process and demonstrate how powerful the program is when integrated with MIMAP.

Mr. Whitten reported that the GIS team is working collaboratively with the Environmental program to develop a Regional Open Space Management application. This application allows communities to manage their open space conservation and agricultural restriction parcels. West Newbury and Newburyport needed a method to better manage and keep track of maintenance needs for parcels under their jurisdiction. The opportunity arose to consolidate these needs to look into developing the application on a more regional platform. Mr. Whitten will keep the group updated on the status of the development of the application.

***Environmental Program updates:***

MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Jennifer Hughes, reported that MVPC received a MassDEP MS4 Assistance Grant to assist the Collaborative Communities with a Year 4 permit requirement to identify municipally-owned properties where impervious can be converted to green infrastructure. This work will be done in collaboration with MVPC's GIS team. She will be contacting communities to discuss municipal sites that may be suitable for green infrastructure retrofits. In addition to incorporating these sites into each community's MIMAP, GIS will also work with the Greenscapes program to incorporate the sites into their LID Viewer.

Ms. Hughes reported that MVPC is hosting an energy efficiency webinar with All in Energy and Action, Inc. on February 4<sup>th</sup>. The webinar will highlight energy-efficient opportunities available to communities, homeowners, landlords, and renters. The invite will go out soon.

MVPC is working with Newburyport, using program income from MVPC's old RLF, to provide Brownfields Phase 1 Assessment of the Brown School site. Redevelopment for housing and potentially other uses is proposed.

MVPC is providing additional Brownfields assessment funding at the Haverhill Housing Support site (also with RLF Program Income) to assist with closeout following clean up. The City of Haverhill is also providing funding.

Ms. Hughes reported that Joy Duperault, Director of the Flood Hazard Mitigation Program, will be presenting updates on floodplain bylaws at the upcoming Planners meeting.

Ms. Hughes noted that the virtual 2021 Great Marsh Symposium will be held on March 17<sup>th</sup>. She referred to MVPC's Coastal Coordinator Peter Phippen for his update on the Great Marsh.

Peter Phippen updated the group on Great Marsh activities and reported that collaborative efforts between partners, SPS New England, Salisbury Beach Betterment Association, MVPC, and NE Mass Mosquito Control (NEMMC&WD) are underway. NEMMC&WD mowed 10+ acres of large, high density treated stands of Phragmites in the northern Salisbury marsh south of Beach Road.

Mr. Phippen reported that he had drafted a letter to the EOEEA Secretary for funding the Environmental Bond Bill line item for MassBays regions and small grants program.

### ***Community and Economic Development updates:***

MVPC's Community and Economic Development Planner, Nate Robertson, reported that over the past year MVPC with collaborative efforts with partners ECCF (Essex County Community Foundation), Elevated Thought, have developed the Creative Mapping Expression Book. A priority item in the CEDS document, this book was developed based on cultural planning within the Merrimack Valley. The book will be distributed to Commissioners, Mayors and Managers, and Planners within the region.

Mr. Robertson reported that MVPC is moving forward with the CARES Act Program. Meetings were with the Small Business Coalition to help inform the creation of a small business technical assistance program to serve COVID impacted businesses in the Merrimack Valley.

Mr. Robertson reported that MVPC drafted an RFP for the Small Business Technical Assistance Program and met with other EDD's in the Commonwealth to discuss best practices.

Mr. Robertson added that he participated in WHAV's morning news segment to discuss the CARES Act program and MVPC Small Business Technical Assistance Program.

Mr. Robertson reported that MVPC is helping communities to develop EDA projects, including Amesbury, Lawrence, and Haverhill. He also participated in a Broadband Internet workshop and worked with regional stakeholders to submit an application to fund a Broadband Feasibility Study.

Mr. Robertson explained the role of MVPC's newest staff member Ian Burns and that Mr. Burns has begun work on the TEDS (Targeted Economic Development Specialist) initiative. Mr. Burns expressed his excitement being part of the MVPC Team and shared his background in that he lives in North Andover, attended Assumption College in Worcester, and got his Master's Degree from Merrimack College while working at Groundwork Lawrence for the past two years. He is looking forward to working with Nate on the TEDS initiative and the MVPC team.

## **7. Contracts**

### **Community and Economic Development**

- **Mass. Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) - \$205,030 (\$20,503 in match: 5% cash and 5% in-kind)**

MVPC to receive funding from the State DHCD District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) to provide technical assistance to its member municipalities. *Per MGL Section 6 of Chapter 205 of the Acts of 2006 as amended by Sections 6&7 of Chapter 310 of the Acts of 2006: "Technical assistance services funded by this grant shall be provided at the request of a municipality in any subject within regional planning expertise, including but not limited to: zoning and permitting; economic development; land use planning, conservation planning, and water resources; municipal management; public safety planning and emergency response; transportation; data management, information technology, geographic information systems, statistical trends and modeling; and other land use and smart growth issues."*

***Vote:*** There was a motion by Commissioner Masiello and second by Commissioner Taylor to authorize the above- mentioned contract. The contract was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 16 attending commissioners.

### **Environmental**

- **Mass. Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) - \$ 45,000 (\$5,775 total In-kind match from all 15 communities)**

MVPC / Merrimack Valley Stormwater Collaborative to receive funding from a MassDEP Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Municipal assistance grant to assist with the Year 4 requirement to identify 5 Best

Management Practices (BMPs) retrofit sites in each MVPC community. Based on the site drainage area size, soils, and other information available, MVPC will identify at least 2 BMPs suitable for implementation for a minimum of 2 of the permittee-owned proposed retrofit/modification sites. Funding is for both Environmental and GIS Programs.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Taylor and second by Commissioner Barnes to authorize the above-mentioned contract. The contract was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 15 attending commissioners. One commissioner left the meeting due to technical difficulties.

## **GIS**

- **Merrimac - \$ 5,000 (No match required)**

MVPC received funding from the Town of Merrimac for the Development of a Document Intake and Management System for its Inspectional Services department.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Taylor and second by Commissioner Byers to authorize the above-mentioned contract. The contract was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 15 attending commissioners.

## **8. Personnel**

Authorization of the hiring of Ian Burns, Targeted Economic Development Specialist (TEDS)

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Schwarz and second by Rep-At-Large Buschur to authorize the hiring of Ian Burns. The motion was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 16 attending commissioners.

## **9. Local and Regional Issues**

Commissioner Barnes reported that Boxford's Town Administrator, Alan Benson, announced his retirement this summer. Commissioner Snow added that the Route 95 to Route 1 bridge at Glen Street in Rowley is out, please take an alternate route.

Commissioner Masiello noted that on the behalf of Salisbury Betterment Board of Directors expressed his thanks to MVPC and Coastal Coordinator Peter Phippen for their support and efforts of the Resiliency Task Force to save the marsh.

Commissioner Barnes asked the commissioners to carefully review the financial documents included in the February meeting packet.

## **10. Other – None**

## **11. Adjourn**

There was a motion at 11:55 am to adjourn by Commissioner Cram and second by Commissioner Taylor. The motion was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 15 attending commissioners.

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Robert Laplante, Secretary