

## **MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Monthly Meeting November 19, 2020

### **Virtual Go To Meeting**

Time: 11:00 am

**For details to join this meeting**

**contact Nancy Lavalley – [nlavalley@mvpc.org](mailto:nlavalley@mvpc.org) or call 978-374-0519 x10**

### **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of October Meeting Minutes
4. Warrant for October
5. Chairman's Comments
6. Director's Report
7. Contracts
8. Personnel Committee
  - a. Staff Evaluations – Annual Review
9. Local and Regional Issues
10. Other
11. Adjourn



**MINUTES**

**Thursday – November 19, 2020**

**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 11:05 am
2. **Roll Call** – Secretary Laplante called the roll and declared a quorum of 13 commissioners present at the time of roll call. Commissioner Colwell joined the meeting at 11:10 am making a total of 14 commissioners present. 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
Methuen	Kathleen Bradley Colwell, Vice Chair
Newbury	Martha Taylor
Newburyport	Rick Taintor
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
- Jerrard Whitten, GIS-IT Program Manager
- Mikayla Minor, GIS Analyst
- Steve Lopez, Senior GIS Analyst
- Jennifer Hughes, Environmental Program Manager
- Peter Phippen, Coastal Coordinator
- Nate Robertson, Community & Economic Development Planner
- Jenifer Dunlap, Finance Administrator
- Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator

### 3. Adoption of October 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Secretary Laplante reviewed the October 15th minutes and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Cashell and seconded by Commissioner Barnes to approve the October 15th meeting minutes. The October 15<sup>th</sup> minutes were approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 13 attending commissioners with 3 votes to abstain.

### 4. Warrant for October

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

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Masiello and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to approve the October Warrant. The October 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 October meeting.

Mr. Snow noted that The Personnel Committee, made up of Chairman Bob Snow, Vice Chairwoman Kathleen Colwell, and Secretary Robert Laplante, met on November 17th to review the annual performance evaluations and determine meritorious increases. A recommendation will be presented later in the meeting.

Mr. Snow reported that the state is issuing two RFPs in November. One is the refunding of MassDOT's Shared Winter Streets and Spaces Grant program grants of \$5,000 to \$300,000 for quick-build improvements to sidewalks, curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces, and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce (program overview can be found here: <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/program-overview-shared-winter-streets-and-spaces-grant-program>). The second is for resiliency planning, which will be released later this month.

Mr. Snow announced that The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative's (CPTC) schedule of workshops is available on their website (<http://masscptc.org/training/autumn/fall-workshops-20.html>). MVPC is co-sponsoring the one on Drafting Zoning Amendments, scheduled for Monday, December 7, from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM. MVPC will cover the cost of these workshops for Commissioners, please let Nancy Lavallee know if you are interested in attending any of them.

MVPC was a co-sponsor for T4MA's "Transportation & Climate Initiative: Clean Transportation for Rural Communities" ([https://www.t4ma.org/rural\\_tci](https://www.t4ma.org/rural_tci)). The event, which discussed the linkage between the two topics, was attended by more than 160 people.

Mr. Snow gave a warm welcome to Ken Cram, Haverhill's new representative to the Planning Commission. Ken is a member of their Planning Board.

In honor of Veterans Day, Mr. Snow expressed appreciation and thanks to several Commission members and MVPC staff who have proudly served our country. He referred to the list in the commissioner's packets.

Mr. Snow noted that the traditional holiday commission meeting will not be occurring, the commission is hoping to find an alternative way to celebrate the holiday cheer.

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

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

Ms. Park completed the annual performance evaluation of the MVPC staff. The Personnel Committee with a report on their recommendations later in the meeting.

Ms. Park reported that she initiated a preliminary meeting with NMCOG to plan a regional housing forum for the greater region, which is planned for the 1st quarter of the new year. She is reaching out for participation from the planning staff from local municipalities.

Ms. Park attended a press event for the Governor's office earlier today and she was very pleased to report that 3 MassWorks applications are being granted within the region:

**Haverhill** – \$1.95M for infrastructure improvements to their Bradford station to support housing development and mixed-use development.

**Lawrence** - \$1.13 M for their Island Park Side Project

**Methuen** - \$950k for the Trustee retaining wall improvement project

### **Transportation Program Updates:**

MVPC's Transportation Program Manager, Tony Komornick reported that he will be meeting with John Pettis of Haverhill to review the status of the North Avenue project. MassDOT and the MVMPO are eager to hear how the City of Haverhill proposes to split the project into two parts and get one part of the project into the 2022 element of the TIP.

He added that Betsy Goodrich is unable to attend this meeting because she is presenting the Active Transportation Plan to the Moving Together Conference.

Mr. Komornick reported that he and MVPC's Senior Transportation Engineer, Jim Terlizzi, met with Groveland's Planner, Rebecca Oldham, and Highway Surveyor Renny Carole to discuss implementing the Groveland Pavement Management Program. Data collection for this project will begin very soon.

### **Environmental Program Updates:**

MVPC's Environmental Program Manager, Jennifer Hughes, congratulated Rowley for submitting their Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Summary of Findings to the state for acceptance and is hopeful that they will receive their designation soon.

Ms. Hughes reported that last month MVPC applied for a new grant to EPA grant for assessment funding for the Brownfields Program. She added that in December MVPC will be submitting to FEMA for grant funding to update the Regional Hazard Mitigation Program for 13 communities. Georgetown and North Andover are not included in this plan as they have already updated their Hazard Mitigation Plans as part of the MVP Planning grants.

Ms. Hughes noted that there have been many webinars with MassDEP regarding an update to the stormwater handbook. The Mass EPA MS4 permit requires that all municipalities update their stormwater bylaws/regulations this year, which may require Town Meeting or City Council approval. Updates to regulations usually only require public meetings held by the permitting authority.

Ms. Hughes reported that in December Rowley will submit a plan for Green Communities designation. The Town of Newbury is also planning to submit in 2021.

### **Coastal Program Updates:**

MVPC's Coastal Coordinator, Peter Phippen reported on the many activities he participated in as follows.

Mr. Phippen said that he had a final consultation and review with Storm Surge (nonprofit) for the course curriculum on the Great Marsh for Newburyport Middle school.

Mr. Phippen added that there was the Eelgrass harvest in Gloucester and planting at Nelson's Island site, in Newbury.

He added that he contracted with UNH and Seaside Sustainability (nonprofit) to develop and submit the Great Marsh microplastics grant to NOAA.

In addition to the above mentioned, Mr. Phippen participated in the following Great Marsh activities.

- Attended Boston University Great Marsh processes class final presentations.
- Strategized with partners (UNH, TTOR, PRNWR) on runnel project permitting and began the process.
- Investigated Essex County Mosquito Control and Wetlands District ability and funding to mow treated Phragmites in the Salisbury marsh.
- Coordination meeting and product review for Great Marsh Partnership website and education and outreach products with an ad-hoc group of scientists doing most of the work. He noted that the Great Marsh website is being updated to include more information material.
- Beach sand collection and preliminary processing at six Great Marsh beaches for Governors Academy analysis.
- Reconnaissance for additional eelgrass restoration site in Plum Island Sound and preliminary pilot planting – looking into new sites to plant eelgrass.
- Attended Technical Transfer of Association of National Estuary Programs workshop on coastal restoration activities.
- Co-lead with MassAudubon field trip on King Tides of the northern Great Marsh.

### **GIS Program Updates:**

MVPC's GIS Program Manager, Jerrard Whitten, said that the GIS group was busy celebrating International GIS Day that occurs on November 18. GIS Analyst, Mikayla Minor posted a story describing the significance of GIS Day on MVPC's website and explained how MVPC's GIS Program has evolved throughout its 23-year history since being designated as the Regional GIS Service Center for northeastern Massachusetts.

Mr. Whitten noted that all renewal contracts for municipal mobile application services have been completed for FY2021. These will be presented later in the meeting for commission authorization. He added that scopes of work have been provided for two new projects. One to the Town of Salisbury who will be the coordinator for the operation of a Tri-Town Fire Hydrant Locator. Amesbury, Newburyport, and Salisbury are the participating communities and the other for Merrimac for mapping recreational trails and updating the open space data layer for Merrimac's Open Space Committee.

Mr. Whitten noted that the GIS Program is working with MIMAP software developers to improve system functionality and make it easier for the end-user.

Mr. Whitten explained that the GIS team is working with the many consultants involved in municipal projects to integrate their data collection efforts with the regional GIS “ecosystem” that MVPC operates. Most recently, consultants working in the communities of Boxford, Rowley, Salisbury, and West Newbury have coordinated their data collection efforts with MVPC and have been successful in directly updating information housed in MVPC’s GIS. This is representative of the future direction for data integration between organizations.

Mr. Whitten noted that changes in the organization's work structure due to COVID-19 have prompted research into the feasibility of relocating MVPC’s file system to be based in the “cloud”. More information and associated expense and logistics will be provided at a later date.

### **Community and Economic Development Updates:**

MVPC’s Community and Economic Development Planner, Nate Robertson reported that he has been busy working with *Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF)*, *Elevated Thought*, and *Creative Community Builders* and has finalized the Merrimack Valley Expression Book and has planned a December distribution. Additionally, we are planning two workshops. One will be held with the board of Essex County Community Foundation and the other will be held for the planners in the region. These workshops will be used to present the Expression Book and the Cultural Focal Points Map while brainstorming about productive next steps.

Mr. Robertson reported that he worked with Lawrence’s Transformative Development Initiative Fellow Jess Martinez to review consultants for an upcoming vacant storefront program.

Mr. Robertson continues to work on the following.

#### **EDA Grant Applications**

- Working with the *Lawrence Partnership* to advocate for their \$800,000 EDA grant application for the expansion of the *Revolving Test Kitchen*, a food industry business incubator, in downtown Lawrence. This project is a partnership between the Lawrence Partnership, Northern Essex Community College, Entrepreneurship for All, and Merrimack Valley Planning Commission. Awaiting final notice of award from EDA.
- Working with Entrepreneurship for All (EforAll) to apply to fund their proposed Haverhill expansion.
- Working with regional stakeholders to apply to fund a Broadband Feasibility Study, something FEMA is very aware of.

#### **CARES Act**

- Currently working with the Small Business Coalition (Andover, North Andover, and Lawrence) to help inform the creation of a small business technical assistance program to serves COVID impacted businesses in the Merrimack Valley.

#### **Data Portal**

- MVPC has continued to meet with stakeholders to introduce the Data Portal and educate them on its functionality. We met with stakeholders in Haverhill and both Workforce Investment Boards Executive Directors.
- MVPC used the Data Portal to provide business lead sheets to the municipalities of Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover. These lead sheets identified businesses in the restaurant sector and the personal care sectors.

Executive Director Theresa Park added that many projects discussed could be useful to other communities. MVPC will be reaching out to each community to discuss if any of the projects could apply to them.

Chairman Snow expressed how appreciative the commission is for MVPC's continued efforts during these difficult Covid times. The hard work is reflected in the monthly comprehensive reporting by the MVPC staff.

## 7. Contracts

- **Boxford - \$3,000 (No match required)** – Annual renewal of Parcel Mapping Update and MIMAP operation FY21
- **Boxford - \$ 2,500 (No match required)** - Annual renewal of Stormwater Inspector Mobile application FY21
- **Georgetown - \$2,000 (No match required)** - Annual renewal of MIMAP operation FY21
- **Groveland - \$ 1,500 (No match required)** - Annual renewal of Water System Mobile application FY21
- **Newburyport - \$ 5,000 (No match required)** - Annual renewal DPS Mobile application suite FY21
- **Newburyport - \$ 2,000 (No match required)** - Annual renewal of Stormwater Inspector Mobile application FY21
- **Newburyport - \$ 2,000 (No match required)** - Annual renewal of FOG & Tree Mobile applications FY21
- **West Newbury - \$4,500 (No match required)** – Annual renewal of Parcel Mapping Update and MIMAP operation FY21

*MVPC to receive funding from municipalities to provide the above GIS products and updates.*

GIS Program Manager Jerrard Whitten reviewed the above-mentioned GIS contracts and requested the approval of the Commission.

**Vote:** There was a motion by Commissioner Cashell and second by Commissioner Taylor to authorize the above- mentioned contracts. The contracts were unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 14 attending commissioners.

## 8. Personnel Committee

Chairman Snow reported that the Personnel Committee, himself, Kathleen Colwell, and Robert Laplante met on Tuesday, November 17 to review the personnel report. Before continuing, Chairman Snow asked Executive Director Theresa Park if the staff would stay for the meeting. She reverted to Finance Administrator Jen Dunlap who noted that the staff has received the Personnel Minutes as presented and added that if specifics are mentioned to individual evaluations, the staff should then be excused.

Mr. Snow noted that the staff is represented by Theresa Park, Executive Director, and Jen Dunlap, Finance Administrator and continued to review the Personnel Committee notes as presented at the November 17, 2020 meeting. At the meeting the Personnel Committee minutes from November 21, 2019, was presented with a motion made by Commissioner Laplante, seconded by Commissioner Colwell to accept the minutes and then unanimously approved by a roll call vote of all committee members.

The Personnel Committee was informed by the MVPC staff that there were no changes to be made on the Policies/Employee Handbook, Job Descriptions, and Salary Scales.

Mr. Snow added that the Executive Director reviewed her MVPC 2021 Work Program and staff evaluations with the Committee. The Commission had authorized a budget including a 3.5% approximate average increase for salary adjustments in FY2021. After discussion with the Executive Director and listening to her recommendations the Committee recommended a series of salary adjustments based on the staff evaluations:

- 9 – Very Good 3.0%
- 2 – Good 2.75%
- 2 – Satisfactory 2.5%
- 10 employees were recommended for a one-time salary adjustment – \$11,250 in total.

It was also pointed out that all the recommended raises would increase the annual salary account by the full 3.5%.

In a motion made by Commissioner Laplante and seconded by Commissioner Colwell, it was voted unanimously by a roll call vote of all committee members to recommend the proposed salary adjustments to the Commission.

In a motion made by Commissioner Laplante and seconded by Commissioner Snow, it was voted unanimously by a roll call vote of all committee members to enter into Executive Session at 11:49 am to discuss the personnel evaluation of the Executive Director and any potential increase to her salary. Results to be shared at the November 19, 2020 Commission meeting.

*Note:* There was a motion by Commissioner Barnes and second by Commissioner Cashell to accept the recommendation by the Personnel Committee. The recommendation was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call vote of 14 attending commissioners.

Commissioner Barnes requested that the Commission go into Executive Session to further discuss anything related to the Executive Director's salary. Chairman Snow said that after the regular meeting adjourns the Commission will go into Executive Session.

**9. Local and Regional Issues - None**

**10. Other – None**

**11. Adjourn**

There was a motion at 11:50 am to adjourn the regular commission meeting and go into Executive Session by Commissioner Barnes and second by Commissioner Cashell. The motion was unanimously approved by Secretary Laplante's roll call of 14 attending commissioners.

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Robert Laplante, Secretary