

## **MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION**

Monthly Meeting of February 20, 2020

### **Meeting Location**

MVPC Offices  
160 Main Street, Haverhill

Time: 7:00 pm

### **AGENDA**

1. Call to Order
2. Roll Call
3. Adoption of January Meeting Minutes
4. Warrant for January
5. Chairman's Comments
6. Director's Report
7. Contracts
  - **TEDS** (Targeted Economic Development Strategy)  
by Nate Robertson, Community and Economic Development  
Planner
8. Finance Committee Report
  - a. FY'19 Audit
  - b. Adoption of Updated FY'20 Budget #2
  - c. Adoption of FY'21 Local Assessment Rate
  - d. Adoption of FY'21 Budget #1
  - e. New IRS Mileage Reimbursement Rate – 57.5 cents/mi.
9. Local and Regional Issues
10. Other
11. Adjourn

**MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION**

ROLLCALL FOR THE MONTH OF FEBRUARY 20, 2020

TAKEN BY: Kathleen Bradley Colwell, Secretary \_\_\_\_\_

**COMMISSION COMMITTEE MEETING**

**AMESBURY**

Robert Laplante

C[]

Vacant

A[ ]

**ANDOVER**

Lisa Schwarz

C[]

John J. McDonnell

A[ ]

**BOXFORD**

Jim Barnes, Treasurer

C[]

Joe Hill

A[ ]

**GEORGETOWN**

John Cashell

C[]

Vacant

A[ ]

**GROVELAND**

Rebecca Oldham

C[ ]

Robert Arakelian

A[ ]

**HAVERHILL**

April Der Boghosian

C[]

William Pillsbury

A[ ]

**LAWRENCE**

Vilma Martinez-Dominguez

C[]

Vacant

A[ ]

**MERRIMAC**

John Thomas

C[ ]

Vacant

A[ ]

**METHUEN**

Kathleen Bradley Colwell,  
Secretary

C[]

William Buckley

A[ ]

**NEWBURY**

Martha Taylor

C[]

Peter Paicos

A[ ]

**NEWBURYPORT**

Rick Taintor

C[]

Bonnie Sontag

A[ ]

**NORTH ANDOVER**

Rick Byers

C[ ]

Jean Enright

A[ ]

**ROWLEY**

Robert Snow, Chairman

C[]

Joe Perry

A[ ]

**SALISBURY**

Lou Masiello

C[ ]

Jerry Klima

A[ ]

**WEST NEWBURY**

Brian Murphey

C[]

Vacant

A[ ]

**REPRESENTATIVE-AT-LARGE**

Brad Buschur

C[ ]

Heather McMann

A[ ]

## MINUTES

**Thursday – January 16, 2020**

- 1. Call to Order** – Chairman Snow called the meeting to order at 7:09pm.
- 2. Roll Call** – Secretary Colwell called the roll and declared a quorum present. The following Commissioners and Staff were in attendance:

### Commissioners

Amesbury	Robert Laplante
Georgetown	John Cashell
Groveland	Rebecca Oldham
Lawrence	Vilma Martinez-Dominguez
Methuen	Kathleen Bradley Colwell, Secretary
Newbury	Martha Taylor
Newburyport	Rick Taintor
Rowley	Robert Snow, Chairman
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-At-Large	Brad Buschur

### Staff

Tony Komornick, Acting Executive Director/Transportation Program Manager  
Jenifer Dunlap, Finance Administrator  
Nancy Lavallee, Office Administrator  
Mikayla Minor, GIS Technician  
Jerrard Whitten, GIS-IT Program Manager  
Betsy Goodrich, Senior Transportation Planner  
Jim Terlizzi, Senior Transportation Engineer  
Nate Robertson, Community & Economic Development Planner  
Jennifer Hughes, Environmental Program Manager

Guests: Bernard Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates and Theresa Park

### **3. Adoption of December Meeting Minutes**

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

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Laplante and seconded by Commissioner Taylor to approve the December meeting minutes. The December minutes were approved.

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

In Treasurer Barnes absence, MVPC's Finance Administrator, Jenifer Dunlap, reported on December Warrant and recommended the Commission's authorization for adoption.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Murphey to approve the December Warrant. The December warrant was approved.

## 5. Chairman's Comments

Chairman Snow welcomed and thanked all who attended the December Commission meeting and holiday gathering and send-off for Karen Conard. A good time was had by all.

He noted that the Executive Director Search Committee will be presenting a report later in the evening. The committee consists of Lisa Schwarz, Kathleen Colwell, Martha Taylor, Lou Masiello, John Cashell, Robert Snow and MVPC staff Jenifer Dunlap and Anthony Komornick. Chairman Snow announced that the ED Search Committee will presenting their recommendation for the Executive Director position and requesting authorization for the hiring of Theresa Park. He added the following statement:

Chairman Snow reminded all that the February 20 Commission meeting will include the usual budget discussion and adoption along with approval of the FY'21 Assessment rates. The Finance Committee will convene to review the finances sometime before the Commission meeting. Finance Committee members consists of Treasurer Jim Barnes, Joe Perry and Lisa Schwarz. He added that anyone else of the Commission is interested in participating on the Finance Committee, please contact him within the next two weeks.

## 6. Executive Director's Report

Acting Executive Director, Tony Komornick, highlighted the Executive Director's activities since the last meeting in December. He reported that he worked with the MVPC Environmental Staff on developing options for creating a flagging system on the Merrimack River for the City of Newburyport. He and Jennifer Hughes met with NECC President Lane Glenn and Kelly Bovio, Regional Director for Congressman Moulton, earlier to further discuss this matter.

Mr. Komornick added that he participated in a test ride of an MVRTA commuter bus in the Breakdown Lane along I-93 Corridor between the Anderson Transportation Center in Woburn and Boston.

He also participated in the Kick-Off meeting for the Merrimack Valley Regional Transit Authority's Comprehensive Regional Transportation Plan meeting that took place earlier in the day.

## 7. Contracts

The following contracts were presented for authorization by the Commission.

- **Cultural Asset Mapping Contract with ECCF - \$7,500**

MVPC will receive funding to create a cultural asset database and host a series of sessions across the region to identify and strengthen our arts and culture ecosystem. No matching funds required.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Colwell to authorize the above-mentioned contract and seconded by Commissioner Taylor. The contract was unanimously approved.

- **Newburyport - \$7,500**

MVPC will receive funding to provide Newburyport's FY2020 parcel update and operation of MIMAP for FY2020. No matching funds required.

*Vote:* There was a motion by Commissioner Cashell to authorize the above-mentioned contract and seconded by Commissioner Murphey. The contract was unanimously approved.

- **Kieran Kesner - \$30,000**

Consultant to perform phragmites mapping via Aerial Drone in Salisbury and Great Marsh Partnership Marketing. The work is to be funded by our FY2020 Department of Marine Fisheries contract awarded in September to restore and revitalize the Great Marsh.

**Vote:** There was a motion by Commissioner Taintor to authorize the above-mentioned contract and seconded by Commissioner Cashell. The contract was unanimously approved.

## **8. Executive Director Search Committee Update**

On behalf of the Executive Director Search Committee (Lisa Schwarz, Kathleen Colwell, Martha Taylor, Lou Masiello, John Cashell, Robert Snow and MVPC staff Jenifer Dunlap and Anthony Komornick) Bob Snow updated the commissioners on the review process for qualified candidates. Of the 22 resumes received, 8 candidates were identified with one candidate dropping out. Interviews took place over two days resulting in two finalists. The two finalists were interviewed in the presence of MVPC staff on January 2. The process resulted with the recommendation to hire Theresa Park as the new MVPC Executive Director.

Ms. Park thanked the commission for considering her for the position. She added a little background growing up and working within the Merrimack Valley region. She is looking forward to working with the staff.

The Executive Director Search Committee made a recommendation to the Commission to hire Theresa Park as MVPC Executive Director.

**Vote:** There was a motion by Commissioner Taylor and seconded by Commissioner Oldham. The recommendation to hire Theresa Park was unanimously approved.

## **9. Personnel Committee**

### **Executive Session**

**Vote:** There was a motion by Chairman Snow, seconded by Commissioner Laplante, to go into Executive Session to conduct contract negotiations with the Executive Director and to reconvene in Open Session. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

**Roll Call** - Commissioners around the table announced their names as proof of their vote to enter Executive Session. The following Commissioners were in attendance:

Amesbury	Robert Laplante
Georgetown	John Cashell
Groveland	Rebecca Oldham
Lawrence	Vilma Martinez-Dominguez
Methuen	Kathleen Bradley Colwell, Secretary
Newbury	Martha Taylor
Newburyport	Rick Taintor
Rowley	Robert Snow, Chairman
West Newbury	Brian Murphey
Rep-At-Large	Brad Buschur

Staff present: Finance Administrator Jen Dunlap, and Acting Executive Director Tony Komornick

Guest: Bernard Lynch, Community Paradigm Associates, LLC

**Vote:** There was a motion to discuss the Executive Director Contract negotiations by Chairman Snow, seconded by Commissioner Laplante. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Vote:** There was a motion to include Bernard Lynch of Community Paradigm Associates, LLC in the discussion by Chairman Snow, seconded by Commissioner Laplante. The motion was unanimously approved.

**Vote:** After the negotiations were completed, there was a motion to reconvene in Open Session by Commissioner Laplante, seconded by Chairman Snow. The motion was unanimously approved.

## **10. Story Map Presentation on Municipal Vulnerability Presentation**

The Story Map presentation was tabled to the next meeting on February 20.

## **11. Local and Regional Issues**

There was discussion on the proposed 40B housing units off Coffin Street in West Newbury.

Amesbury Commissioner Laplante requested information on the procedure for an upcoming LTA request in Amesbury. GIS Program Manager, Jerrard Whitten, clarified the process and asked Mr. Laplante to contact him to discuss the project in detail.

Georgetown Commission Cashell reported that Mello's Transfer Station is considering moving to another location due to disposal tonnage has increased from 30 tons to 500 tons. The current location cannot sustain the volume increase.

## **12. Other**

Chairman Snow thanked the Executive Search Committee for their time and efforts through the process for hiring MVPC's new Executive Director.

## **13. Adjourn**

There was a motion by Commissioner Laplante and second by Commissioner Taintor to adjourn the meeting at 8:30pm

I hereby certify that these minutes are an accurate account of the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission meeting held on January 16, 2020.



Kathleen Bradley Colwell  
Secretary



MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION  
**JANUARY 2020**  
**MONTHLY WARRANT # 7**  
 February 20, 2020

Check #	Amount	Vendor	Description
16705	\$ 496.00	AM. PLANNING ASSOCIATION	ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP DUES
16706	\$ 6,056.09	BANK OF AMERICA PAYMENTS	CREDIT CARD CHARGES-JAN'20
16707	\$ 171.34	BANK OF AMERICA-BANK FEES	BANK SERVICE CHARGES
16708	\$ 110.00	BOSTON BUSINESS JOURNAL	ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL
16709	\$ 3,821.21	BOSTON UNIVERSITY GRANTS REC.	DIRECT(DMF)-RESTORING THE GREAT MARSH PARTNER/CONSULTANT
16710	\$ 507.88	COMCAST	PHONE/INTERNET SERVICE-JAN'20
16711	\$ 342.00	COSTAR REALTY INFO. INC.	DIRECT(DHCD)-REAL ESTATE DATA SUBSCRIPTION-JAN'20
16712	\$ 60,831.27	CREDERE ASSOCIATES, LLC	DIRECT(EPA)-BROWNFIELDS CONSULTANT
16713	\$ 33.74	CRYSTAL ROCK LLC	WATER/COOLER RENTAL-JAN'20
16714	\$ 203.70	CTS LANGUAGE LINK	DIRECT(MADOT)-DOCUMENT TRANSLATION SERVICES
16715	\$ 31.09	FEDERAL EXPRESS	EXPRESS POSTAGE
16716	\$ 41.63	BETSY GOODRICH	DIRECT EXPENSE REIMB.-JAN'20
16717	\$ 250.00	GRANTS MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS	ACCTG.SFTWR.MAINT./LICENSE FEE-JAN'20
16718	\$ 138.89	JENNIFER HUGHES	DIRECT EXPENSE REIMB.-JAN'20
16719	\$ 362.45	JENIFER D. DUNLAP - PETTY CASH	REPLENISH PETTY CASH-DEC&JAN
16720	\$ 250.00	KIA MOTORS FINANCE	MVPC VEHICLE LEASE PMT.-JAN'20
16721	\$ 460.00	ELLEN KUHL	CLEANERS-JAN'20
16722	\$ 14,500.00	ROLAND P. LAMBALOT, P.C.	FY19 AUDIT FEE
16723	\$ 80.00	LAPLUME & SONS PRINTING INC.	BUSINESS CARDS-T.PARK
16724	\$ 311.10	MERR.VALLEY ECON. D.C.	RENT UNIT G - APR'20
16725	\$ 3,348.96	MVPC REGIONAL RES.C.	RENT UNITS A-H,F - APR'20
16726	\$ 933.60	NATIONAL GRID (GAS CHARGES)	GAS CHARGES-JAN'20
16727	\$ 364.43	NATIONAL GRID	ELECTRICITY-JAN'20
16728	\$ 72.57	NE COPY SPECIALISTS, INC.	COPIER SUPPLIES
16729	\$ 500.00	NEOFUNDS OR TOTALFUNDS	REPLENISH POSTAGE METER BALANCE
16730	\$ 273.69	PETER PHIPPEN	DIRECT EXPENSE REIMB.-JAN'20
16731	\$ 42.56	NATHANIEL ROBERTSON	DIRECT EXPENSE REIMB.-JAN'20
16732	\$ 512.00	RUMBO	DIRECT(MADOT)-LEGAL NOTICE
16733	\$ 493.55	STAPLES CREDIT PLAN	OFFICE SUPPLIES
16734	\$ 1,206.37	UNIVERSITY OF NEW HAMPSHIRE	DIRECT(DMF)-RESTORING THE GREAT MARSH PARTNER/CONSULTANT
16735	\$ 159.96	VERIZON WIRELESS	IPAD DATA CHARGES (4)-JAN'20
16736	\$ 823.78	VERIZON CONNECT NWF,INC.	ADMIN./DIRECT(NBPT)-FLEET MONITORING FEES-JAN'20
16737	\$ 158.13	JERRARD J. WHITTEN	DIRECT EXPENSE REIMB.-OCT-DEC'19
	<b>\$ 97,887.99</b>		

Warrant Paid Items:

16704	\$ 9,448.50	JILLFRANCES GRAY	BALANCE DUE - MVPC.ORG WEBSITE REDESIGN
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<b>TOTAL WARRANT</b>	<b>\$ 107,336.49</b>	<b>**TOTAL PASS THRU TO DIRECT PROJECTS = \$ 61K</b>	
		<b>***TOTAL PASS THRU NWF/DMF GREAT MARSH RESTORATION = \$ 5K</b>	
		<b>****ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS OF NOTE</b>	

APPROVED BY:

ROBERT SNOW, ACTING CHAIRMAN \_\_\_\_\_ Date

## Monthly Commission Meeting

### Chairman's Report

February 20, 2020

- You will find the 2019 MVPC annual report in your packet – hot off the press for your reading pleasure! The staff went with a more economical and streamlined version this year. Congratulations to all the were involved on a job well done!
- Tonight, the focus of the meeting will be the annual reporting of the Finance Committee including discussion and adoption of the Budgets and FY21 Assessment rates.
- Under the discussion of “contracts” we will also be hearing from our Community and Economic Development Planner Nate Robertson who will make a brief presentation on our newest contract opportunity in his program area – **Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) funding for the “Targeted Economic Development Strategy – (TEDS)”**
- Lastly, I am excited to say that our new Executive Director's start date is upon us – Monday, February 24th and that at next month's Commission meeting she will be sitting next to me officially taking the reins. I would like to thank Tony for filling in for the last two months. Given his long history and knowledge of MVPC, we didn't miss a beat during this interim period.



**MONTHLY COMMISSION MEETING**  
**Executive Director's Report**  
**February 20, 2020**

**Meetings/Activities of Note**

- Participated in the Northern Boston Urbanized Area MPO Coordination meeting that was held in Boston on January 29. For the first time, this workshop included representatives from the three MPOs in southern New Hampshire.
- Mary Kay Beninati and I participated in the annual “TIP Readiness Days” conference call with MassDOT staff to identify the status of projects that should be considered by the MPO in developing the MVMPO’s FFYs 2021-2025 TIP.
- Joint MARPA/MassDOT Annual Meeting to discuss funding assumptions to be used in developing the FFYs 2021-2025 TIP and FFY 2021 Unified Planning Work Program, and other transportation issues.
- Merrimack Valley MPO Meeting on January 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Merrimack River Watershed District Commission meeting in Newburyport on February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- MVRTA Advisory Board meeting on February 6<sup>th</sup>.
- Participated in Merrimack Valley Stormwater Coalition/DPW Directors meeting that was held on February 12<sup>th</sup>.
- Working with consultant to fulfill MVPC’s role as arbiter to appeals of decisions made by local Historic District Commissions as called for under Chapter 40C. This review of is of an appeal to a decision made by the Fruit Street Historic District Commission.
- Participated in Merrimack Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness planning workshops that were held on January 28<sup>th</sup> and February 11<sup>th</sup>.
- February 19<sup>th</sup> public meeting on proposed transit amendments to the MVMPO’s FFYs 2020-2024 TIP.
- Newburyport Traffic Safety Advisory Committee meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>.
- MVPC Finance Committee meeting on February 13<sup>th</sup>.

- Worked with Environmental Staff on developing scope of services for a creating a flagging system on the Merrimack River for the City of Newburyport. Also, involved in developing the Decision Framework for the Merrimack River District Commission.
- Continued to work with MVRTA in developing options for providing Bus on Shoulder Transit service in the breakdown lane along the I-93 Corridor between the Anderson Transportation Center in Woburn and Boston.
- Prepared and sent notices for February 26<sup>th</sup> MVMPO Meeting
- Working with GIS and Transportation staff in developing a new agreement between MVPC and CarteGraph for implementing the agency's regional and local pavement management studies and analyses.
- Northeast Regional Transportation, Housing, and Workforce Strategy Session #1 on January 23<sup>rd</sup>.
- MARPA Meeting on February 14<sup>th</sup> where there was a discussion on recent developments in the State Retirement issue.

Pension Issue Update for Commission meeting:

Legislation (H.48) was filed in 2019 regarding the on-going pension system issue which would require MVPC and six (6) other RPAs, along with other similar organizations, to make employer contributions for the first time in their 50-year membership. The Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) sent written testimony contesting the legislation.

H. 48 was submitted by the Treasurer's office unilaterally after meetings of a group convened by the Secretary of Administration and Finance to discuss and resolve this issue slowed down before a compromise was reached. The working committee included AAANF, MARPA representation and the Massachusetts State Employee's Retirement System Executive Director. At these meetings, MARPA explained that the RPAs are not "non-governmental units" but are "special state districts" bound by all applicable state and federal laws.

H. 48 would allow the Massachusetts State Retirement System to collect "employee normal costs" from "non-governmental units" on an ongoing basis and, further, to collect outstanding payments from 2016, 2017 and 2018.

MARPA Counters that the RPAs are not "non-governmental units" and as such, should not be subject to this legislation. If the RPs were affected by this legislation, the ongoing costs for each RPA would be significant, and the payment costs would be so prohibitively expensive, that most of the Commonwealth's RPAs would be forced to close.

In January 2020, the legislation was reported favorably out of Committee. Although MARPA is confident of their position with regard to this issue, they are going to contract with a lobbyist to help monitor the legislation on the Hill and if necessary, assist us with conversations with the Treasurer's office and next steps.

We have been dealing with this issue for six years now.

# Contracts & Proposals

February 20, 2020

The following Contracts requires the authorization of the Commission.

## Grants/Local Community Contracts

- **Groveland**
  - **\$2,000** (No match required) - Development of an open space application
  - **\$7,000** (No match required)- Data collection for pavement management
- **Newburyport - \$2,500** (No match required) - Water System Inspector (mobile application)
- **North Andover – \$35,000** (No match required)- **Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Planning Process and All-Hazards Mitigation Plan Update**

MVPC to receive funding from North Andover to provide MVP planning assistance and to update their all-hazards mitigation plan. Funds to be expended by June 2020.

- **Essex County Community Foundation (ECCF) Resiliency and Innovation Fund - \$150,000** (No match required) – **Targeted Economic Development Strategy (TEDS)**

MVPC received \$150,000 in funding from the Resiliency and Innovation Fund for Merrimack Valley Businesses and the Essex County Community Foundation. The grant will be used to support a new staff person in the Economic Development Department and implement the Targeted Economic Development Strategy (TEDS).

The TEDS was developed by the Lawrence Partnership, MVPC, ECCF, Lawrence, Andover, North Andover, and Mt. Auburn Associated in the wake of the Columbia Gas Disaster. The coalition concluded that it is not enough to focus entirely on short-term economic recovery programs. If we want to make ourselves more resilient it is critical to ensure that the region is positioned for long-term economic growth. Thus the Targeted Economic Development Strategy was born.

- **Economic Development Administration (EDA) - \$37,500** (\$37,500 in matching funds from DHCD DLTA) - **Data Portal Project**

MVPC to receive funding from EDA to develop the Merrimack Valley Data Portal with the assistance of a consultant specializing in GIS software application development. The Merrimack Valley Data Portal will be a public tool capable of instantly accessing the most robust available data for this region, including demographic, employment, industry, income, education, commuting, rental, real estate, and housing data. This innovative tool will make accessing essential planning and economic development-related data easier, faster, and more streamlined. We aim to make this tool an essential part of all our planning processes both in-house and throughout the region.

## **MERRIMACK VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION – ASSISTANCE TO THE REGIONS CITIES AND TOWNS**

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has awarded the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funds allowing us to offer additional local technical assistance to our communities to advance projects in three categories: 1) **“Planning Ahead for Housing”** to help support affordable and market rate housing production, or 2) **“Planning Ahead for Growth”**; and 3) **Community Compact Cabinet** activities as articulated in the Community Compact Best Practices Areas. Examples of services MVPC can provide include:

### **PLANNING AHEAD FOR HOUSING AND PLANNING AHEAD FOR GROWTH**

- Assistance to communities seeking to achieve designation under the Housing Choice Initiative Program;
- The creation of as-of-right zoning districts such as those eligible under the Compact Neighborhoods policy or the Chapter 40R-Smart Growth statute including starter homes;
- The development of market, mixed-income and affordable multi-family housing in transit-oriented-development locations, priority development areas, etc;
- Identify challenges and solutions in respect to infrastructure requirements that affect the ability to construct multi-family residential projects in as-of-right zoning districts;
- Implementation of Housing Production Plans;
- Assess impediments to economic development and recommend steps to take to enable projects to move forward; encourage use of the Economic Development Assessment Tool;
- Identify, assess, and map Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas;
- Develop or update components of municipal Master Plans.

### **SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITY COMPACT BEST PRACTICES**

- Assistance with adoption of the state's "best practices" under the community compact program. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/best-practice-areas>
- Facilitate collective purchasing options
- Identify and examine potential shared services and collaborations

**This is a great opportunity for your community and MVPC to work together on housing production and land use issues, economic development, and regional collaborations that can have a positive impact on your community and the region. Please contact Nate Robertson, Community and Economic Development Planner.**



## Merrimack Valley Planning Commission Regional Resource Center, Inc

### Statement of Work

### for the Targeted Economic Development Strategy

Total Budget:

\$150,000

#### Timeline

1 year (12 Months)

#### The Need

As part of the effort to support the business recovery in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover, the three communities impacted by the September 2018 gas explosions, the Lawrence Partnership and the Essex County Community Foundation convened a coalition of business leaders, staff from the cities of Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover, state officials, and community advocates. The Lawrence Partnership asked this coalition to align resources and to develop strategies to address the immediate *recovery* needs of businesses impacted by the explosions, to support efforts related to the *resiliency* of the impacted communities, and to begin to develop strategies that would better position the communities for long-term economic *growth*. A subset of this coalition formed a five-person Steering Committee that is overseeing the implementation of ongoing efforts as well as the longer-term planning.

As part of the research on the strategic work focused on *growth*, the coalition found:

- The residents of each of the towns work throughout the region, with 66 percent of the residents of Lawrence employed outside of the city. Therefore, **the economic well-being of all residents is tied to the economic strength of the of the Merrimack Valley.**
- The region has a number of strong regional economic clusters, including life sciences, advanced manufacturing, food production, IT, and specialized footwear and textiles.
- Companies in these clusters provide relatively high-quality jobs for residents. More than 1,000 middle-skill jobs in the region do not require a college degree.
- The region is facing increasing competition from other regions in Massachusetts for what has been one of its most critical clusters—life sciences (including biotechnology and medical instruments). Two companies, Philips and Eisai, are moving their headquarters out of the region, and Philips is moving manufacturing jobs out of state. There is limited local capacity to address the loss of these 2,000 jobs or to plan for the ancillary impacts of local employees, contractors, and small business in the region.

- The economic development focus of the individual towns in the region is primarily on downtown and real estate development. There is less capacity to address some of the competitiveness issues that manufacturers and other companies in key economic clusters are facing in the region.
- The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) receives an annual grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for economic development planning. As part of this grant, MVPC maintains the region's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which develops goals and objectives for economic development in the region. However, funding limitations prevent MVPC from executing on all of the recommendations that it put forth in this document.
- While a large number of the towns in Massachusetts are part of an economic development organization, such as 1Berkshire, the 495/MetroWest Partnership, the Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts, the North Shore Alliance for Economic Development, the South Coast Development Partnership, and Middlesex 3, the towns in the Merrimack Valley have not had a regional economic development organization representing their interests since the Merrimack Valley Economic Development Corporation dissolved.

Given these findings, the coalition has concluded that it is not enough to focus on immediate recovery and resilience for the companies and communities impacted by the disaster; it is also critical to ensure that the region is positioned for long-term economic growth. This will require working collaboratively on a longer-term vision (as outlined in the CEDS) for the regional economy and creating the capacity needed to transition from planning to implementation.

A critical first step in that process is to hire a full-time economic development specialist who will be focused on economic development within the impacted communities. Housing the specialist at MVPC maximizes the effectiveness of the funding given the infrastructure, data, and economic development initiatives already underway at MVPC. The mission of this economic development strategy is consistent with the mission of the agency and, more specifically, identical to the objectives of MVPC's Economic Development Department. This full-time economic development professional will convene an Advisory Committee to take steps to launch a new regional economic development initiative, to be known as the Targeted Economic Development Strategy (TEDS) that is administered by and housed within MVPC.

This memo provides an overview of a strategic plan for creating this new initiative, with preliminary recommendations about its vision and goals, strategic priorities, governance structure, a preliminary work plan, and an approach to measurement and evaluation.

## Vision and Goals

The vision for the TEDS:

**Improve the economic well-being of all residents and provide quality employment opportunities by enhancing the economic strength and vitality of the key regional economic clusters in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover and their relationship within the larger, regional economy.**

The proposed goals of the new entity are:

1. Launch the TEDS to increase collaboration among the three communities, economic development and workforce development organizations, business organizations, and individual companies in key clusters.
2. Retain existing jobs and tax base in the region by ensuring that existing businesses in the three communities have the skills and resources needed to stay in business, to overcome future shocks/challenges, and to remain in the region.





3. Create new jobs in the region by strengthening the long-term vitality of businesses in key industry clusters in Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover.
4. Establish additional capacity for regional alignment and promotion while working within MVPC's existing programmatic infrastructure, which allows for this effort to utilize the existing capacity and relationships developed for the 15 member communities in the region (which includes the three affected communities).
5. Examine strategies and methods for sustaining this effort beyond the one-year pilot program. Potential financial pathways forward include leveraging MVPC's Economic Development Designation (EDD) for additional federal funding, leveraging the Commonwealth's District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding administered by MVPC, as well as other potential funding sources both government and private.

## Strategic Approach

To achieve these goals, the proposed regional economic development initiative will concentrate on the following four strategic priorities:

### 1. Retention and growth of companies in targeted economic clusters

Research completed recently by Mount Auburn Associates found that focusing on regional clusters was a critical component of regional economic development initiatives around the world. A cluster is...

*"a geographically bounded concentration of similar, related, and complementary businesses with active channels for business transactions, communications, and dialogue, that share specialized infrastructure, labor markets and services, and that are faced with common opportunities and threats."*

Studies of strong regions have found that that ability to link assets—people, institutions, capital, and infrastructure—and to focus on clusters with critical competitive advantages are the ingredients needed to "turbo charge a region's economy."

The preliminary analysis of the regional economy completed for the coalition identified the following strong clusters:

- Life Sciences – biotechnology and medical devices
- Food – manufacturing and artisan food production
- Advanced textiles and apparel
- IT services and engineering
- Advanced manufacturing, including instruments and electronic components.

**Together, these clusters not only provide about 15,000 jobs, but most of these jobs also have relatively high average wages, provide opportunities for skilled residents without a college degree, and drive the economic vitality of the three communities.**

Given the importance of these clusters, one of the priority strategies of the new economic development initiative will be to ensure the continued competitiveness of companies in these clusters in the region and to seek to expand the number of businesses and number of jobs within these clusters. Connecting existing businesses in these clusters to regional business support programs is a priority and essential to cluster retention.

### 2. Collaborative regional marketing

An important role of the TEDS is to market the three affected communities and the region as a whole, not only to attract new companies, but also to retain existing companies. While each community plays some role in its own marketing, often this focuses on their downtowns and commercial areas. The effort within the Merrimack Valley to





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attract the new Amazon headquarters is perhaps the best example of regional collaboration around marketing. While the region did not win the national competition, the process was collaborative, and the materials put together were effective in convincing Amazon to open a new warehouse facility in the region. MVPC served as a crucial convener and participant for this bid. Additionally, MVPC put together a comprehensive regional business development and marketing website, [www.WeAreMV.com](http://www.WeAreMV.com). In summer 2019, a \$40,000 marketing campaign, dubbed “Here for the Making”, was funded and organized by MVPC to drive traffic to the new website through telling the success stories of small businesses in the region.

The TEDS will help continue the type of collaborative approach to marketing the region as seen with the Amazon proposal and the 2018 “Here for the Making” regional marketing campaign. Better marketing and communication will help to create a stronger regional identity and brand and will create more opportunities to make the case for the locational advantages of the three communities. MVPC already identifies, compiles, and markets all of the available retail, commercial, and industrial space in the region. This puts MVPC in an excellent position to do site selection and analysis for potential businesses. The existing relationships MVPC has with the region’s economic development and planning professionals also positions it well to “hand off” companies to the appropriate parties i.e. companies looking to connect with municipalities, financing, and/or workforce development organizations. This effort should also focus some attention on a growing trend—the reshoring of manufacturing, a goal only possible through leveraging all of the region’s resources.

The alignment of the TEDS within MVPC makes sense with the 2020 launch of a comprehensive regional data portal, which will provide valuable real-time, updated information for employers and municipal officials alike.

### 3. Aligning workforce development and economic development in the region

**Issues related to workforce are one of the primary challenges many employers in the region face. Moreover, the mismatch between the skills of residents and the needs of businesses has a serious impact on the economic well-being of many of the region’s low-income residents. Within the three communities are many institutions that are focusing on building the skills of residents, and the Merrimack Workforce Board has developed strategies to better meet the workforce needs of businesses. However, there is often a disconnect between those working on economic development and those involved in the workforce development system. The new economic development capacity can bridge this divide by deepening our understanding of the needs of businesses and by acting as an intermediary, ensuring that businesses in the region are aware of workforce development services and that the workforce system is addressing the specific needs of businesses, particularly those in the targeted clusters. Deliverables will**

### 4. Supply chain opportunities for regional businesses

**Many of the smaller companies in the targeted clusters are suppliers to major industries in the larger Massachusetts economy as well as other large national and international companies. Most notably, many provide goods and services to large companies in the regional defense industry and the healthcare and life sciences sector. A supply chain strategy should increase the ability of local small businesses to generate new contracts with large companies and institutions and, conceivably, could identify areas where there are opportunities for entrepreneurial development or strategic attraction.**

Some foundational pieces of this effort started in 2019 with MVPC’s Regional Business Inventory initiative, a database built in partnership with MassEcon, the Commonwealth’s go-to site selection specialist. The database includes crucial information about which companies are located within the region, the industries they represent, their parent company (if applicable), annual revenue, and other information crucial to supply chain and vendor matching efforts.



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A supply chain strategy will build off of this initial work and could include designing specialized training and certification on supplier resilience for local small businesses, identifying specific procurement opportunities, and involving support (finance and management assistance) to help local companies take advantage of procurement opportunities.

## Governance

The TEDS will be administered by and housed within MVPC, which will act as the administrative lead and have fiduciary responsibility.

Initially, an Advisory Committee will approve the work plan for the TEDS. This Advisory Committee will include at a minimum the following participants:

- Lawrence Partnership (ex-officio);
- ECCF (ex-officio);
- MVPC (ex-officio);
- Merrimack Valley Business Recovery and Resilience Steering Committee (ex-officio);
- an economic development staff person from each of the three communities—Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover;
- a representative of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board; and
- a business representative from one of the targeted clusters.

This Advisory Committee will work with MVPC's Executive Director to hire and oversee the economic development professional who will lead and implement the work over the one year period.

## ONE Year Work Plan

### Year 1: Launch

The purpose of the following Objectives is to provide suggestions and potentialities for pathways forward. These Objectives are not binding and exist to give the TEDS Specialist concrete tasks that can be acted on. The workplan is subject to change by the Executive Director with input from the Advisory Committee.

#### **Objective 1: Lay the foundation for the TEDS**

##### **Action steps**

1. *Coalition endorsement of goals and work plan:* A first step in the process will be for the Steering Committee to review this memo and to endorse the overall vision, goals, and strategy.
2. *Convene Advisory Committee:* The partners will identify individuals to appoint to the Advisory Committee and will provide initial support for its convening. This group will meet on a monthly basis and will be responsible for the allocation of funding, coordination with MVPC for the hiring and supervision of a Targeted Economic Development Specialist, tracking results, and overseeing the development of a longer-term sustainable business plan.
3. *Provide MVPC with a grant and establish MOU for fiduciary oversight:* Once the partners approve the general plan and convene the Advisory Committee, it will provide a grant to MVPC for \$150,000 to cover the hiring of a Targeted Economic Development Specialist to provide support for early implementation activities.



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4. *Advisory Committee review of preliminary goals and work plan:* The Advisory Committee needs to own this initial business plan in conjunction with MVPC. At the first convening, it will present the plan and it will approve a final set of initial objectives and action steps.
5. *Hire a Targeted Economic Development Specialist.*

## Objective 2: Better understand the needs of businesses in key clusters

### Action steps:

1. *Initiate a business calling program:* The new TED Specialist will work with the Advisory Committee to put together a “calling team.” The team will include representatives from the Workforce Investment Board, the three communities, and the MVPC. The team will identify and meet with 50 companies. These meetings will focus on:
  - Identifying any specific impacts related to the recent move of Philips;
  - identifying any specific workforce development needs;
  - identifying any needs related to facilities, financing and expansion; and
  - identifying any possible supply chain needs or the potential for supplier training for other small businesses in the region.
2. *Host biannual economic development events:* To expand awareness of the new initiative and to involve local businesses, the Advisory Committee could host bi-annual events that focus on a theme of importance for further economic growth in the region.
3. *Undertake some additional research and create a regional business database:* The TED Specialist and Advisory Committee may identify some additional research and support for its activity. Most notably, it will be important to expand upon MVPC’s Regional Business Inventory in order to identify/confirm key clusters, companies to visit through the calling program, and to track progress on their goals. The launch of the MVPC Data Portal in mid 2020 will further enhance this effort.

## Objective 3: Explore best practices in regional cluster strategies

### Action steps:

1. *Identify other relatively small regions that have pursued cluster development strategies:* In order to better understand the specific elements of the regional cluster work, the TED Specialist and Advisory Committee should select 5-10 communities that share commonalities with the Merrimack Valley and that have developed cluster strategies.
2. *Interview key leaders in five communities:* Once the TED Specialist and Advisory Committee have identified communities, they should support a research effort that will involve interviewing key stakeholders in five communities to gain an understanding of how they selected their clusters, how they organized and supported companies in key clusters, and how they measure their success.
3. *Write short white paper:* A short white paper summarizing the findings from the interviews will help to inform key leaders in the three communities about the benefits of undertaking cluster work and could provide concrete examples of programs that the new entity could implement.

## Objective 4: Enhance regional marketing and outreach

### Action steps



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1. *Maintain a list of priority development sites in the region:* The three communities should identify priority development sites in their community and work with local property owners and real estate professionals to provide detailed information on vacant properties and developable sites. The TED Specialist would include the established Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and available property inventory to focus growth in targeted areas.
2. *Implement regional commercial and industrial site tours for developers and prospective businesses:* As part of the marketing and outreach effort, the new entity should offer regional tours of both available commercial and industrial facilities as well as vacant and developable sites.
3. *Help to enhance and increase awareness of the MVPC website “Merrimack Valley: Here for the Making”:* MVPC has created a new website to market the larger region. However, it has limited capacity to keep the website up to date and relevant and to increase awareness of the site. As part of this initial launch year, the new initiative would build off of the initial website/marketing campaign and continue to build out information, keep it updated, and drive traffic to the site.
4. *Develop specific promotional materials for the three communities:* Related to the website, the new TED Specialist could oversee the development of some simple promotional materials about the three communities.

#### **Objective 5: Identify and implement a workforce development-related program emerging from the company visits**

##### **Action steps**

1. *Identify common workforce challenges as part of the visitation effort:* Those involved in the visitation program will probe companies about their specific workforce-related challenges. Following the completion of the visit, the TED Specialist should identify companies that have expressed similar challenges.
2. *Convene companies that have common challenges and local educational institutions and training providers:* Based on the findings in step one, the TED Specialist will convene one or more groups of employers to discuss their challenges and to brainstorm about potential responses.
3. *Develop a collaborative initiative to address needs.* Working with a partnership of companies, the TED Specialist will develop a specific collaborative workforce initiative and will seek resources to implement it in the region.

#### **Objective 6: Develop a sustainable model**

##### **Action steps**

1. *Develop a long-term funding strategy:* The previous economic development organization in the Merrimack Valley failed because of leadership transitions, the lack of a sustainable funding base, and lack of integration with existing efforts. A critical part of the first-year launch phase will be to identify ongoing needs and to develop a strategy for sustaining the TEDS within the MVPC organizational structure.
2. *Develop a longer-term organizational structure:* Related to the funding strategy is designing a governance structure that aligns with that strategy. This may require expanding the Advisory Committee or creating a more formal board /combining it with the existing Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee. It should also strongly consider an expansion of the geography to include Methuen and Haverhill, the two other communities that share many of the same economic clusters and that are not part of any regional economic development entity.
3. *Design the programmatic focus based on the learning from the launch stage.*





## Years 2-3: Implementation of initiative plan

The priorities for Year 2 will be determined by the end of the launch period as part of the planning process. As part of that process, the staff and Advisory Committee could consider the following programmatic areas.

- continue the business calling program, regional marketing activities, and workforce development efforts;
- facilitate the development of new cluster partnerships;
- take next steps in the implementation of the advanced textile center;
- explore the feasibility of developing a shared kitchen facility for food-related start-ups; and
- explore the development of a supply chain initiative focused on the defense and healthcare sectors.

## Measurement and Evaluation

Embedded in the work of the new initiative will be a strong commitment to both accountability and learning. Incorporated into the planning will be efforts to:

- monitor progress;
- evaluate effectiveness; and
- measure impact.

The purpose of the following performance measures is to provide guidance and a target for the TEDS Specialist. These performance measures are not binding and exist to give the TEDS Specialist concrete tasks to be acted on. The performance measures are subject to change by the Executive Director with input from the Advisory Committee.

In terms of monitoring progress, the following the initial launch phase will track the following:

Launch	
Objectives	Performance Measures
<b>Objective 1: Build initiative momentum</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Business plan adopted</li> <li>MOU developed</li> <li>Advisory Committee convened</li> <li>Initiative specialist hired</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 2: Better understand the needs of businesses in key clusters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convene calling team</li> <li>Visit 50 companies</li> <li>Address some identified issue or challenge for 15 companies</li> <li>Convene two regional workshops</li> <li>Create business database</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 3: Explore best practices in regional cluster strategies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify other similar regions pursuing cluster efforts</li> <li>Interview leaders in 5 communities</li> <li>Produce short paper on best practices</li> </ul>
<b>Objective 4: Enhance regional marketing and outreach</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Number of hits on website increases by 20 percent</li> <li>Increased interest in available sites</li> <li>Increased presence of data on Lawrence, Andover, and North Andover on website</li> <li>Produce promotional materials</li> </ul>



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**Objective 5: Identify and implement a workforce development project**

Identify common workforce challenges as part of the visitation effort  
Convene companies that have common challenges and local educational institutions and training providers  
Develop collaborative initiative to address needs

**Objective 6: Develop a sustainable business model**

Three years of funding identified  
Identification of priority programs  
Formal, longer-term organizational structure designed and implemented

The initiative will track the longer-term outcomes of its work. The tracked outcomes will include:

1. Number of retained jobs and average wage of jobs retained.
2. Number of jobs created for local people and average wage of jobs created.
3. Absorption of commercial and industrial space in the region.
4. Number of new companies created or attracted to the region.

On a biannual basis, i.e., by the 15th of July and January, provide detail actual versus budget report by line item expenditures. Provide an explanation of line items where actual expenditures are off by 20% from the budget. In conjunction with this finance report, provide programmatic reports on the status of all activities noted in this statement of work.