



MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)

REMOTE MEETING ONLY

THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 7:00 PM

*MRPC MEETING MATERIALS:
[January 8, 2026 Monthly Meeting Materials](#)*

MINUTES

1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements

This meeting will be recorded to ensure we have an accurate record of our discussion. If anyone has any concerns about being recorded, please let us know.

This meeting is held under An Act Extending Certain COVID-19 Measures Adopted During the State of Emergency signed by Governor Healey on March 28, 2025, allowing local and regional governments to hold public meetings remotely or in a hybrid fashion through June 30, 2027. All votes will be taken by roll call.

Chair K. Munroe called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Roll Call:

D. Valliere - present
G. Corbosiero - present
D. Thornton - present
T. Russo - present
P. Cunningham - present
Hartley Pleshaw - present
R. Swartz - present
B. Keating - present
A. Pease - present
A. Reid - present
K. Munroe – present

Having no objection, Chair K. Munroe called the guest speaker to share his presentation prior to the approval of the December 4, 2025 minutes and the acceptance of the December 2025 cash schedule.

2. Guest Speaker – Kurt Gaertner, Asst. Secretary for Environmental Policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

- **Topic of Discussion - Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy (MILUS) – Information Only**
To view full PowerPoint presentation, please click on the following link: [MILUS Presentation Link](#)

What is MILUS?

Massachusetts has ambitious goals for housing, clean energy, economic development, land conservation, and climate resilience. While all these goals are important to achieve, land use decisions focused on one set of goals could inadvertently conflict with other priorities. State planners, program managers, and policymakers, in addition to developers and local decision-makers, would benefit from a way to consider and balance multiple objectives when prioritizing land use projects. State agencies are working together to align priorities and develop MILUS as a suite of products and tools that include:

- **A strategy and map**, which will depict agreement among state agencies on preferred future land uses from the Commonwealth perspective and a means for achieving them; and
- **An interactive web-based land use planning tool** that state agencies, planners, project developers, and cities and towns can use to investigate potential locations for development, infrastructure, and conservation, and evaluate them for consistency with the strategy.

MILUS is not a regulatory mandate, nor is it a replacement for local or regional planning efforts. It will be designed to guide planning efforts and investment decisions and offer tools to support decision-making. The project team's goal is to publish the strategy, map, and interactive tool in late summer or early fall 2026.

Why is MILUS important?

The initiative aims to promote future growth that advances livability, environmental sustainability, and economic vitality. It will do so by:

- Identifying optimal, location-efficient uses of land across Massachusetts while addressing potential land use conflicts and identifying co-location opportunities;
- Developing geospatial tools needed to evaluate and implement the consensus land use priorities—and the infrastructure that enables them—through state actions, policies, and programs;
- Guiding policy, permitting, and funding decisions; and
- Fostering collaboration and consistent land use decision-making among state agencies and across different levels of government—aligning statewide, regional, and municipal planning priorities.

Who is involved?

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) is coordinating the MILUS effort in collaboration with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (HLC), the Department of Transportation (MassDOT), The Executive Office of Technology Services and Security (EOTTS), the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED), and the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience (OCIR), among others. The MILUS project includes a Project Management team, a Steering Committee, five working groups (energy infrastructure, housing, economic development, land conservation, and technical tool development), and contractor support. While it is predominantly a state effort, the MILUS project will engage partners to ensure the strategy and tool meet the needs of the full range of potential users. Contact milus@mass.gov for specific questions.

P. Cunningham commented that he hopes this leads to a higher level of coordination among agencies as there appears to be conflicts between the goals of different agencies.

B. Keating asked if towns themselves will be able to self-advocate in this process.

K. Gaertner answered yes, this is one of the reasons we're having conversations like this. There are some possibilities at different scales in the infrastructure investment.

3. MRPC Minutes – December 4, 2025 – Approval of Commissioners Requested

Having no corrections or objections, G. Corbosiero moved to accept the December 4, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

D. Valliere – yes
G. Corbosiero – yes
D. Thornton – yes
T. Russo – yes
P. Cunningham – abstain
Hartley Pleshaw – yes
R. Swartz – abstain
B. Keating – yes
A. Pease – yes
A. Reid – abstain
K. Munroe – abstain

4. Cash Schedule – December 2025 – Acceptance of Commissioners Requested

R. Swartz presented the December 2025 cash schedule. The opening balance for December 1, 2025 was \$536,418.37, total receipts \$257,848.48, total cash on hand before this warrant \$794,266.85, less amount of this warrant \$211,668.29, left a balance after the warrant of \$582,598.56.

Having no objections, P. Cunningham moved to accept the cash schedule as presented, subject to audit. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

D. Valliere – yes
G. Corbosiero – yes
D. Thornton – yes
T. Russo – yes
P. Cunningham – yes
Hartley Pleshaw – yes
R. Swartz – yes
B. Keating – yes
A. Pease – yes
A. Reid – yes
K. Munroe – yes

5. Guest Announcements and Questions

No announcements or questions were presented.

6. Administrative Matters

6.1 Federal Government Impacts on MRPC – Information Only

There are no significant new items to report as of this time.

6.2 Transition in the Planning and Development Department

6.2.1 Hiring a Planner – Action Requested

REPORT

Since 1999, MRPC's Planning and Development Department (P&D D) has had as few as one employee and as many as six. With Tracy (Murphy) Warrington's promotion from Senior Planner to Fiscal Director (September 2025), the number of employees in P&D D was reduced to five. A further reduction of one employee occurred in P&DD in November: Ms. Chapman departed, and Bernard ("Bernie") Cahill was promoted to fill the position of Planning and Development Director.

As of this point in time, the FY26 Budget may have sufficient revenue to support the four remaining P&D D teammates. Any mid-year funding decline may lead to a further reduction in staff from four to three. However, MRPC's Executive Director has observed an increase in grant writing efforts and additional grant awards to the agency. In addition, there is an increasing number of State grants being provided to municipalities and regional planning agencies, and councils of government. If this trend continues, then MRPC will need to add one more Planner to the P&D D.

With all the above in mind, the Executive Director recommends that the MRPC advertise for a new Planner for the P&D D, but not hire a new employee until the revenue picture improves to the point that an additional employee can be supported in the MRPC's FY26 Budget.

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby approves of the Executive Director's proposal to advertise and hire a new Planner for the Planning and Development Department in accordance with the following terms and conditions:

- That the salary be within the salary range of \$55,000 and \$75,000;
- Do so only if revenue can support all anticipated costs plus the new employee;
- Advertise and hire in a manner that is consistent with all applicable laws of the Commonwealth and Personnel Policies and Procedures of the Commission; and,
- Report on the name and credentials of the newly-hired employee at the first Commissioners' meeting following the hiring of the new employee.

Having no additional questions or comments, G. Corbosiero moved to accept the resolution as read and presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

D. Valliere – yes
G. Corbosiero – yes
D. Thornton – yes
T. Russo – yes
P. Cunningham – yes
Hartley Pleshaw – yes
R. Swartz – yes
B. Keating – yes
A. Pease – yes

A. Reid – yes
K. Munroe – yes

6.3 Proposed FY26 Budget Amendment – Action Requested

See separate handout for a REPORT and RESOLUTION on this matter.

[January 8, 2026 Monthly Meeting Materials](#)

G. Eaton presented three spreadsheets showing revenue, expenses and salaries. Mr. Eaton provided a summary of all three. The agency is currently showing a surplus.

Mr. Eaton reviewed the recent changes within the Planning and Development department. Based on the promotion of B. Cahill, the department is in need of another planner.

FY26 Budget Amendment Handout

REPORT

1. As of this point in time, total projected revenue amounts to \$3,010,159, and total expenses may come in as high as \$2,871,150, leading to a potential surplus of \$139,008, or 4.8%.
2. This surplus will be reduced if expenses increase, such as with the hiring of a Fiscal Assistant or another Planner (a new Fiscal Assistant is not proposed as of this point in time).
3. The addition of a new Planner for the Planning and Development Department has been included in tonight's projected budget. expedited completion of tasks related to the two recently awarded Community Planning Grants, and the receipt of new grant awards and local planning contracts.
4. For future reference, when the agency adopts its annual budget (each June), and the budget includes a projected deficit of 20%, then, with aggressive grant writing and awards, the agency can maintain its staff level to the end of the fiscal year.
5. Regardless of possible surpluses and deficits, all MRPC employees need to work cooperatively to obtain additional revenue, monitor all expenses, and not over- or under-hire.

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A summary of the above can be found below.

REVENUE

FEDERAL	\$1,514,273
STATE	\$1,317,917
LOCAL	\$76,000
MUNICIPAL ASSESSMENTS	\$91,969
EPA RLF LOAN ADMIN	\$10,000
TOTAL REVENUE	\$3,010,159

EXPENSES

TOTAL EXPENSES	\$2,871,150
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DEFICIT PROJECTION

\$ ESTIMATED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	\$139,008
% ESTIMATED SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)	4.8%

OVERHEAD RATE CALCULATION

TOTAL INDIRECT COSTS	\$1,264,352
TOTAL DIRECT LABOR AND CONSULTANTS' COSTS	\$1,597,553
PROJECTED OH RATE % FY26	79.14%

RESOLUTION

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approves of the FY26 Budget Amendment as presented.

Having no additional questions or comments, R. Swartz moved to accept the resolution as read and presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

D. Valliere – yes
G. Corbosiero – yes
D. Thornton – yes
T. Russo – yes
P. Cunningham – yes
Hartley Pleshaw – yes
R. Swartz – yes
B. Keating – yes
A. Pease – yes
A. Reid – yes
K. Munroe – yes

6.4 Executive Director Transition 12/31/2026 – 6/30/2027 – Information Only

The Executive Director is planning on retiring at some point in time between the two dates provided above. The next update on this matter will be when the Executive Director has chosen a date for his retirement.

Please be advised that Chairman Kristofer Munroe, Holly Ford, Administrative and Human Resources Director, discussed this matter. With fellow Commissioners, the Chairman would like to discuss the possibility of engaging in a strategic planning process before the current Executive Director retires.

Chair K. Munroe suggested that the Executive Committee begin to meet to outline the process and so we can be better prepared when the time comes. He also recommended revisiting the strategic plan prior to any transition of the Executive Director.

P. Cunningham agreed with both points and suggested setting parameters for any potential candidates.

This topic will remain on the agenda for future meetings to keep members informed. If any commissioners who are not on the Executive Committee would like to volunteer to assist on a subcommittee, please reach out to Mr. Eaton.

6.5 Next Lunch and Learn # 10, January 28, 2026, 12:00 p.m. – Information Only

Draft Agenda

- Westminster-Fitchburg Waste Management Landfill
 - This facility will close in less than five years.
 - MRPC started a regional conversation on this matter.
 - A regional solid waste plan will be needed to find a solid waste disposal solution before this regional asset closes for good.
- Call for Proposals, District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program
 - Free planning and grant writing, planning, and other services available from MRPC
 - Bernie Cahill, Planning and Development Director.
- Development of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2027 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)
 - The UPWP for the Montachusett Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is an annual financial programming document prepared as part of the federally certified transportation and transit planning process.
 - Example tasks may include: Intersection studies, Corridor analysis, Multimodal studies (walkability/bike-ability), Trail planning, Safety analysis, Freight/truck issues, and Transit-related studies.
 - Also, MRPC staff will explain the Transportation Improvements Program (TIP) process to explain how communities can address large-scale road and bridge projects for Federal Aid Eligible roads.
 - Sheri Bean, Senior Planner, and/or Brian Doherty, Transportation Projects Director.
- Planning services available to Montachusett Region communities
 - Planning in areas of community and economic development, environment, housing, land use and zoning bylaws/ordinances amendments, transit, and transportation.
 - Mapping services are also available utilizing MRPC's geographic information system (GIS) staff.
- Federal and State grants available to communities
- The latest from the Federal Government concerning funding cuts

7. Department Updates

Status of all ongoing projects can be found by clicking on the link, below:

<https://mrmapper.mrpc.org/webapps/v2.27/CurrentProjects/>

MRPC staff are prepared to answer questions about any contract with any local, state, and federal entity.

Commissioners are welcome to ask questions about projects in their respective communities

7.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

In addition to our usual tasks, we are currently upgrading our website.

7.2 Planning & Development

We will be sending out MRPC's annual DLTA 2026 Call for proposals to our communities on either Jan. 9th or early next week. This will include instructions for how to apply. Please be as detailed in your included Scope of Work as possible as to the tasks you are requesting and the expected deliverables.

DLTA projects need to be completed within the calendar year in which they are contracted (December 31, 2026). DLTA is useful for projects such as Housing Production Plan Updates, Open Space and Recreation Plan Updates, and smaller zoning overhauls or changes.

This year, MVP Action grants and Planning Assistance Grants ("PAG") will be available through EEA's Eco One Stop (<https://www.mass.gov/environment-climate-one-stop>). PAGs would be awarded in June of 2026, and the life of the project would run from July 1, 2026, through June 30, 2027. PAGs are useful for larger scale projects such as Master Plan updates, and MRPC is sometimes able to offer a match using DLTA funds.

7.3 Transit & Transportation

We sent out our solicitation memo and email for project proposals to include in our work program and the transportation department, the UPWP program for federal fiscal year 2027. In the past, we've included requests from communities on intersection studies, signal warrant analysis, and heavy vehicle exclusions. The solicitation is open until February 6th. We've heard from a few communities already. We have a small portion of our budget and our work program carved out for these types of proposals. I believe all of the commissioners were included on the email. There will be follow up in a few weeks. If there is any interest, please reach out to us at any time.

8. New Business

Open session - This time is reserved for topics that the chair did not reasonably anticipate would be discussed.

9. Adjournment - The date of the next MRPC meeting – Thursday, February 5, 2026, 7:00 p.m.

Having no objections, G. Corbosiero moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded.

Meeting was adjourned at 8:15 pm.

This meeting will be recorded by the Zoom app and will be made available for viewing at

<https://www.youtube.com/user/MontachusettRegion/videos>.

This notice is subject to change with reasonable notice provided to all.

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Meeting Attendance					
<u>Name</u>	<u>M/A</u>	<u>Representing</u>	<u>Appointment Date</u>	<u>Present</u>	<u>Absent</u>
Arpano, Abby	A	Ashburnham	12.2023		X
Vacant	M	Ashburnham			X
LaSorsa, Paul	A	Ashby	7.2025		X
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001	X	
Bialecki, Rebecca	A	Athol	7.2020.		X
Russo, Thomas	M	Athol	7.2025	X	
Copeland, Shaun	A	Ayer	7.2020.		X
Cachel, Kathleen	M	Ayer	7.2025		X
Vacant	A	Clinton			X
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011		X
Angus, Neil	N/V	DREZ	7.2023	X	
Bohart, Mary Jo	A	Fitchburg	7.2021		X
Butland, Alyne	M	Fitchburg	7.2020.		X
Labonte, Amber	A	Gardner	1.2024		X
Swartz, Robert	M	Gardner	7.2019	X	
Burke, Russell	A	Groton	7.2022		X
Cunningham, Peter	M	Groton	7.2016	X	
Minar, Kara	A	Harvard	7.2021		X
Thornton, Doug	M	Harvard	9.2024	X	
Kresge, Mark	A	Hubbardston	7.2023		X
Munroe, Kristofer	M	Hubbardston	7.2023	X	
Keating, Brian	A	Lancaster	7.2025	X	
Streeter, Frank	M	Lancaster	7.2023		X
Vacant	A	Leominster			X
Valliere, Dean	M	Leominster	7.2019	X	

Vacant	A	Lunenburg			X
Reid, Amanda	M	Lunenburg	7.2022	X	
Poodry, Deb	A	Petersham	7.2024		X
Vacant	M	Petersham			X
Jackson, Melanie	A	Phillipston	7.2022		X
Telepciak, John	M	Phillipston	7.2001		X
Barclay, James	A	Royalston	7.2017		X
Nartowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2022		X
Oelfke, Bill	A	Shirley	7.2020.		X
Jones, Mark	M	Shirley	7.2025		X
Newman, Kirsten	A	Sterling	7.2023		X
Newman, Eric	M	Sterling	8.2024		X
Bennett, Jeff	A	Templeton	7.2023		X
Rich, Dennis	M	Templeton	7.2017		X
Goodrich, Valarie	A	Townsend	7.2025		X
Pleshaw, Hartley	M	Townsend	7.2025	X	
Vacant	A	Westminster			X
Ferris, Michael	M	Westminster	7.2025		X
Beauvais, Andrew	A	Winchendon	7.2025		X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	

Guests: Kurt Gaertner, Asst. Secretary for Environmental Policy, Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs, C. Streeter – Townsend, Beth Faxon – Townsend

Staff: G. Eaton, H. Ford, B. Doherty, T. Murphy, B. Cahill and K. Kress

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MEETING

- December 4, 2025, MRPC Meeting Minutes
- January 8, 2025, MRPC Meeting Agenda
- January 8, 2025, MRPC Meeting Agenda with Details
- MRPC CASH SCHEDULE December 2025
- Grant Opportunities Spreadsheet
- MILUS PowerPoint Presentation
- FINAL FY26 FINAL Budget for 1.8.25 Cmsnrs Mtg EXPENSES
- FINAL FY26 FINAL Budget for 1.8.25 Cmsnrs Mtg REVENUE
- FINAL FY26 FINAL Budget for 1.8.25 Cmsnrs Mtg SALARIES
- FY26 FINAL Budget Amendment Handout