



**MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)**  
**THURSDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2021**  
**7:00 PM**

**MINUTES**

**1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements**

Chairman Guy Corbosiero called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. G. Corbosiero stated in accordance with Governor Bakers Covid-19 Executive Order regarding the Open Meeting Law and remote participation, votes will be taken through Roll Call.

**2. Approval of November 4, 2021, MRPC Minutes – Approvals of Commissioners Requested**

G. Kahale mentioned that the information he provided during the November meeting was not listed in the minutes. After hearing that there were issues with the recording as well as the transcript, G. Kahale suggested we ask B. Harris for the minutes of the MJTC meeting as he spoke about the same information. H. Ford stated she would do that and would add the MART updates into the November 4, 2021 minutes.

J. Kranz moved to accept the November 4, 2021 minutes with the corrections requested. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed:

- B. Yocum- yes
- G. Corbosiero- yes
- J. DeRoy- yes
- J. Kranz- yes
- L. Shifrin- yes
- M. Bohart- abstain
- R. Hoyt- yes

**3. Cash Schedule – November 2021 – Approvals of Commissioners Requested**

G. Eaton read the November 2021 cash schedule.

Opening balance \$517,343.07; Total receipts this month \$107,079.45; Total cash on hand before this warrant \$624,422.52; Less amount of this warrant \$100,827.72; Balance after this warrant \$523,594.80.

L. Shifrin moved to accept the November 2021 cash schedule as read subject to audit and to be placed on file. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed:

- B. Yocum-yes
- G. Corbosiero- yes
- J. DeRoy- yes
- J. Kranz- yes
- L. Shifrin- yes
- M. Bohart- yes
- R. Hoyt- yes

G. Corbosiero mentioned this month's agenda has a different format as we will no longer have the Status Report section each month. We will have a full status report quarterly which will begin in January. This month we will have a representative from each department to who will talk about any highlights and will be available to answer any questions.

#### **4. Administrative Matters**

##### 4.1 Update: COVID-19 Office Space Management and Safety – Information

Glenn had a staff meeting this past week due to spike in Covid cases and to protect the health and safety of all, he is allowing all staff to work remotely providing it is approved by the Supervisors.

##### 4.2 Update: FY19 Community Development Block Grant, COVID Response Award of \$296,100 to Shirley (Lead community), Lunenburg, Royalston, Townsend, and Westminster – Information

MRPC will conclude management services on December 31, 2021.

##### 4.3 Montachusett Enterprise Center, Inc. (MEC) – Information

All required reports have been updated (there is nothing to upload, just online changes) to the Massachusetts Secretary of State's Corporations website.

##### 4.4 Administrative Matters

###### 4.4.1 Housekeeping Editions to the MRPC Personnel Policies and Employee Procedures Handbook – Action of the Commissioners Requested

The consulting firm, Employers Association of New England (EANE), has been engaged to assist the MRPC with improving this agency's personnel policies.

###### 4.4.2 Flexible Work Locations and Scheduling Policy – Information

Edits were completed to this Policy and provided to the staff. Comments from the Commissioners were taken into consideration and included in the Policy. This task has now been completed. In the future, this policy may be edited as needed. Changes to any policy require approval of the Commissioners.

#### 4.4.3 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) – A New Federal Funding Program for Cities, Towns, Counties, and States

On Friday, November 5<sup>th</sup>, the Executive Director reached out to all, 22 communities in the Montachusett Region. He spoke with leadership in Lunenburg on November 8<sup>th</sup> and Hubbardston on November 10<sup>th</sup>.

An ARPA SLFRF listening session was held on November 18<sup>th</sup> at Noon. At these meetings, MRPC encourages the sharing of best practices among the communities and informs the attendees of the possibility of the MRPC's delivery of ARPA management services.

Another listening session will be held at Noon on Thursday, December 16<sup>th</sup>. This will be an online meeting utilizing the MRPC's GoToMeeting app. Mayors, Town Administrators/Managers, DPW Department Heads, Planners, Community and Economic Development officials, Commissioners, and other local officials will be invited.

#### 4.5 Other Administrative Matters

##### PREFACE

Later in this meeting, Karen Chapman will provide more information concerning the MRPC's receipt of another Planning Assistance Grant (PAG) award, from the Commonwealth's Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA), in the amount of \$148,000; \$90,000 must be expended by June 30, 2022 and the balance by June 30, 2023.

- As of December 8<sup>th</sup>, MRPC has a total, projected surplus in excess of \$100,000 which means that we have an insufficient number of employees to deliver all services.
- This \$100,000+ figure includes the hiring of Jeffrey Legros as a new Principal Planner and increasing the new Regional Planner (Tyler Godin) and Economic Development Intern (Ryan Doherty) from part- to full-time employment status (see relevant REPORTS and RESOLUTIONS, below).
- The currently vacant Economic Development Manager position has been included in the MRPC's FY22 budget (this position remains vacant).
- Management will reexamine applications received for all positions and may reinterview candidates to increase staff capacity and continue outreach to other organizations to find additional applicants.

##### 4.5.1 Hiring an individual for the Principal Planner Position

###### **REPORT**

In the fall, the MRPC advertised for this position. We received very few applicants for this position. An interview was held with a candidate. The Commissioners approved of the hiring of the individual who was offered the position. She later opted to take a job closer to her home. A recent applicant, Mr. Jeffrey Legros, was interviewed on Friday, December 3<sup>rd</sup> by Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director and Glenn Eaton, Executive Director. MRPC staff recommends the hiring of Mr. Legros as Principal

Planner.

## **RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby approves of the staff recommendation to hire Mr. Jeffrey Legros as a Principal Planner at an annual salary of \$67,500.00 where he will work in the Planning and Development Department under the supervision of Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director where his starting date will be on or about January 2 or January 9, 2022.

B. Yocum asked for a little more information on J. Legros background. K. Chapman stated during the interview she noticed Mr. Legros had the same path into Planning as she did. K. Chapman feels comfortable in hiring him and feels he will do great with MRPC. Mr. Legros is excited about being a Regional Planner. Most recently he was in Gardner as their Conservation Agent/Planner before being moved to Development where he worked on CDBG. K. Chapman is excited about working with him and feels he will be a great mentor for some of the younger Planners.

R. Swartz stated he knows of Mr. Legros and has worked with him. Mr. Legros is an attention to details kind of guy, always wanting to do the right thing.

R. Swartz moved to accept the resolution as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll call vote followed:

B. Yocum-yes  
G. Corbosiero- yes  
L. Shifrin- yes  
M. Bohart- yes  
R. Swartz- yes  
R. Hoyt- yes  
S. Copeland- yes

### 4.5.2 New Regional Planner Update

## **REPORT**

Tyler Godin began his tenure as the newest Regional Planner in the Planning and Development Department on Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. Tyler worked for the MRPC during the traffic counting seasons in 2018 and 2019 for the Transportation Department.

Approximately one week ago the MRPC received another grant award from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for the four Planning Assistance grants the agency submitted to the Commonwealth approximately six months ago. Please see Karen Chapman's report, below. A sufficient amount of funds exists to justify increasing this part-time Regional Planner's hours from 22.5 to 37.5 per week (up to full time). MRPC staff recommends the increase in hours for Mr. Godin from part- to full-time to increase the capacity in the Planning and Development Department to deliver services.

## **RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby approves of the staff recommendation to change Mr. Godin's status from part- to full-time, as described above for the same pay rate, which is currently at an annualized rate of \$45,103.50 (or \$23.13 per hour) to go into effect December 13, 2021.

### 4.5.3 New Regional Planner Update Economic Development Intern Update

## **REPORT**

Ryan Doherty started his employment as the new Economic Development Intern in the Planning and Development Department on Monday, November 15<sup>th</sup>. Most recently, Ryan was employed in the Town of Sterling as the Administrative Assistant to the Planning Board.

Approximately one week ago the MRPC received another grant award from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) for the four Planning Assistance grants the agency submitted to the Commonwealth approximately six months ago. Please see Karen Chapman's report, below. A sufficient amount of funds exists to justify increasing this part-time Economic Development Intern's hours from 22.5 to 37.5 per week (up to full time). MRPC staff recommends the increase in hours for Mr. Ryan Doherty from part- to full-time to increase the capacity in the Planning and Development Department to deliver services.

## **RESOLUTION**

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby approves of the staff recommendation to change Mr. Ryan Doherty's status from part- to full-time, as described above for the same pay rate, which is currently at an annualized rate of \$29,250.00 (or \$15.00 per hour) to go into effect December 13, 2021.

B. Yocum stated the salaries for Mr. Godin and Mr. Doherty is very low. G. Eaton stated the salaries are within the guidelines of the compensation plan accepted by the Commission a few months ago. That is where those salaries came from.

M. Bohart stated given the labor shortage that is currently going on, the rates being offered are not keeping up which is probably why we have not gotten any respondents for the Economic Development Manager position. G. Eaton clarified; the Economic Development Manager salary is about \$60,000. M. Bohart stated she understood however the intern position salary is lower than an hourly wage earner at a retail store. G. Eaton stated that the salaries of both Mr. Godin and Mr. Doherty will be reviewed after their probationary period as described in the management plan.

R. Hoyt pointed out the difference between this position at this rate and a retail position at minimum wage is that this position also comes with benefits.

Roll call vote followed:

- B. Yocum-yes
- G. Corbosiero- yes
- L. Shifrin- yes
- M. Bohart- yes
- R. Swartz- yes
- R. Hoyt- yes
- S. Copeland- yes

4.5.4 Posting of Economic Development Manager and ARPA SLFRF Grant Management and Compliance Director Positions

The internal posting of the Economic Development Manager and ARPA SLFRF Grant Management and Compliance Director was conducted on November 2<sup>nd</sup> and the positions were publicly advertised approximately two weeks later with [www.mma.org](http://www.mma.org) (Massachusetts Municipal Association), [www.planning.org](http://www.planning.org) (American Planning Association), and in the Boston Globe on November 21<sup>st</sup>. MRPC has not yet received any applications for either position. MRPC's management will continue to reach out to additional job search organizations to increase awareness of the availability of these positions.

4.5.5 Community Progress Towards Affordable Housing in the Montachusett Region - Presentation and Discussion (See attachment)

K. Chapman presented a spreadsheet showing statistics and information on Montachusett Region Affordable Housing. Of the 22 Communities, the three largest populations are Leominster, Fitchburg, and Gardner. The three smallest are Phillipston, Royalston and Petersham. Everyone else fall in between there. 17 communities are Rural by definition.

Some major impediments to affordable housing include restrictive zoning, no housing entity/housing champion, lack of staff/no planning/no housing production plan, lacking infrastructure (water/sewer) and lacking public support.

Out of the 22 communities, 62% are single detached family dwellings. Excluding Fitchburg, Gardner and Leominster 70% are single detached family dwellings. Most of the communities are above the state level of single-family dwellings.

J. Kranz requested to add parking regulations to the list as it can inhibit progress. J. Kranz also pointed out that with the exception of Clinton, the relative proportion of single-family units are notable for their density of population to the ratio of population per acre. Ayer has about 8,000 people in a little under 10 acres, so it is a small town but relatively dense. As we think about planning, density is a good thing that we should be encouraging especially around transportation hubs to meet our multiple goals.

K. Chapman stated out of our 22 communities, eight have a housing production plan (HPP) and 14 have an expired plan or no plan at all. A HPP is important to get grants for housing. In addition, nine communities have an active master plan and 13 have no master plan or have an expired plan.

Water and sewer infrastructure: seven communities have no sewer, 12 have limited sewer. Five communities have no water and 14 have limited water.

Information for the Home Values/Sales slide came from the American Community Survey estimates and those are based on assessors values. Looking at the slide, the orange line is median home sales according to [www.realtor.com](http://www.realtor.com) in the last six months.

Median household income vs. home values. People under \$100,000 annual income probably can't afford most of what is out there. Although the housing market is crazy right now, a family has to have not just two incomes but some times three incomes just to get by.

K. Chapman will have H. Ford share the slide presentation with all communities.

#### 4.5.6 Lancaster Proposed Mixed-Use Development Project, Presentation and Discussion

K. Chapman reviewed a map (see attached map) showing the north side of Leominster, the address of the first project is 1263 Reservoir Rd. It is on 32 acres of land. Previously the property was a removal site for Keating Stone and Gravel and is proposed to be a 372,000 square foot warehouse distribution center. The hearing in Lunenburg was closed on November 15, 2021. Details state that there is a maximum of 140 peak hour trips. If this is exceeded, they will need to do something else. We do not have all details.

There is also a project at 580 Fort Pond Rd. It is an addition to an existing manufacturing site, Unified Global Packaging. A public hearing is scheduled with the Lancaster Planning Board next week. This has not been permitted yet.

The third project is labeled Capital Commerce. Lancaster is in the process of having their public hearing with the Board of Selectmen to submit their application to the state. It will have the housing units and four or five lots are slated for retail or small business.

B. Yocum expressed concern about the impact on the town of Shirley. Barbara also pointed out that the rotary was not designed for semi-tractor trailers. Many of the Shirley residents are at a loss as to what they can do to control any of this and would appreciate any help or ideas that they can get from MRPC. G Eaton stated he will keep the commissioners' informed and will get input about what they think for their communities as far as reasonable traffic and mitigation measures. G. Eaton addressed issues with Route 2 and its capacity to handle the traffic.

## 5. Additional Department Updates

### 5.1 GEOGRAPHIC INFORMATION SYSTEMS (GIS)- Jason Stanton, GIS and IT Director

No new updates at this time

### 5.2 PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT- Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director

Karen stated in May, MRPC applied for four planning grants, and we were finally awarded \$148,000. With these funds, we will have money to update Townsend's Open Space and Recreation Plan,

develop a solar bi-law for the town of Hubbardston, do four master plan chapters for the town of Ashburnham and we have money to do a climate resiliency plan for the town of Phillipston. The climate resiliency was submitted by the Transportation Department so the Planning Department will be working in conjunction with the Transportation Department on this project. We have received the executed contract back from the state today so we can start working on that immediately. We plan on doing kickoff meetings in January with those four communities.

The Shirley Housing Production Plan was recently approved by the State.

On December 1, 2021, we submitted a Brownfield’s grant application in the amount of \$500,000. If approved, it will be used for assessments and planning.

In April, we applied for competitive grants for Harvard, Fitchburg and Townsend. They were awarded \$510,506 between the three of them.

We applied in October for Athol, Ashby, Groton and Westminster for the fall round of the competitive grant. We expect to hear about the award in February or March.

In November we did 12 Green Communities annual reports. Kayla Kress was instrumental in assisting with this. The next competitive round is in April and two or three communities have expressed interest in applying.

If a community is looking for Hazard Mitigation funds, there is HGMP grant program where there is no match required. The state person in charge of that program said there is \$110 million available. You only have to put in a Notice of Intent. For more information contact K. Chapman.

**5.3 TRANSIT & TRANSPORTATION** - Brad Harris, Transportation Projects Director

No new updates at this time

**6. New Business**

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

**7. Adjournment**

There being no further business the meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.

*This meeting will be recorded by GoToMeeting app and will be made available for viewing on <https://www.youtube.com/user/MontachusettRegion/videos> .*

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

Meeting Attendance					
Name	M/A	Representing	Appointment Date	Present	Absent
Janssens, Leo	A	Ashburnham	7.2021		X



Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	X	
Stacy, Wayne	A	Ashby	7.2021		X
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001		X
Bialecki, Rebecca	A	Athol	7.2017		X
Doherty, Jacqueline	M	Athol	7.2020		X
Copeland, Shaun	A	Ayer	7.2020	X	
Kranz, Jonathan	M	Ayer	7.2021	X	
Vacant	A	Clinton			X
Duffy, Phil	M	Clinton	12.2011		X
Lowitt, Peter	N/V	DREZ	7.2001		X
Bohart, Mary Jo	A	Fitchburg	7.2021	X	
Alyne Butland	M	Fitchburg	7.2020		X
DeRoy, Jessica	A	Gardner	7.2021	X	
Swartz, Robert	M	Gardner	7.2019	X	
Haddad, Mark	A	Groton	7.2021		X
Burke, Russell	M	Groton	7.2016		X
Maiore, Richard	A	Harvard			X
Donahue, Stacia	M	Harvard	7.2018		X
Stauder, Michael	A	Hubbardston			X
Livdahl, Alice	M	Hubbardston	7.2021		X
Christopher, Thomas	A	Lancaster	7.2016		X
Williston, Russell	M	Lancaster	11.2018		X
Vacant	A	Leominster			X
Valliere, Dean	M	Leominster	7.2019		X
Marino, James	A	Lunenburg	7.2020		X
Brenner, Matthew	M	Lunenburg	7.2020		X
Allen, Nancy	A	Petersham	7.2015		X

Vacant	M	Petersham			X
Telepciak, John	A	Phillipston	10.2001		X
Vacant	M	Phillipston			X
Barclay, James	A	Royalston	7.2017		X
Nartowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2015		X
Oelfke, William	A	Shirley	7.2020		X
Yocum, Barbara	M	Shirley	8.2017	X	
Kilcoyne, John	A	Sterling	7.2014		X
Page, Patty	M	Sterling	7.2019		X
Bennett, Jeff	A	Templeton	7.2020		X
Rich, Dennis	M	Templeton	7.2017		X
Kell, Veronica	A	Townsend			X
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2018	X	
Vacant	A	Westminster			X
Smith, Michael	M	Westminster	7.2019		X
Ward, Rick	A	Winchendon	7.2019	X	
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	

Guests: George Kahale- MART Representative, Doug Thornton- Harvard Planning Board

Staff: Glenn Eaton, Holly Ford, Karen Chapman, Jason Stanton

**DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT MEETING:**

- November 4, 2021 MRPC Minutes
- December 9, 2021 Meeting Handout
- December 9, 2021 Meeting Agenda
- Potential large project map