



## MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)

### **REMOTE MEETING ONLY**

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2024, 7:00 PM

**MRPC MEETING HANDOUTS:**  
**[December 5, 2024 MRPC Meeting Handouts](#)**

## **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 Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023, signed by Governor Healey on March 29, 2023, allowing local and regional governments to hold public meetings remotely or in a hybrid fashion. All votes will be taken by roll call.

Chairperson L. Shifrin called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

#### **Roll Call Followed:**

G. Tillotson – present  
D. Thornton – present  
M. Bohart – present  
K. Norton – present  
B. Yocum – present  
K. Munroe – present  
L. Shifrin - present

### **2. MRPC Minutes – November 7, 2024 – Approval of Commissioners Requested**

Having no questions or comments, G. Tillotson moved to approve the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Thornton – yes
- G. Tillotson – abstain
- K. Norton – yes
- K. Munroe – yes
- L. Shifrin – yes
- M. Bohart – yes

**3. Cash Schedule – November 2024 – Acceptance of Commissioners Requested**

C. McNamara, Fiscal Director presented the November 2024 cash schedule. The opening balance for November 1, 2024, \$459,618.35, total receipts, and transfers for the month \$266,298.46, total cash on hand before this warrant \$725,916.81, less the amount of this warrant \$274,118.19, left a balance after the warrant of \$451,798.62.

G. Tillotson moved to accept the cash schedule as presented subject to audit. Motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

- A. Pease - yes
- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Thornton – yes
- G. Tillotson – yes
- K. Norton – yes
- K. Munroe – yes
- L. Shifrin – yes
- M. Bohart – yes

**4. Guest Announcements and Questions**

**5. Administrative Matters**

**5.1 Out of State Travel for Transportation Staff – Approval Requested**

**REPORT**

MRPC has a history of encouraging all employees to obtain training in their respective fields. Brian Doherty, Transportation Projects Director has requested approval for Grace Belmont, Principal Planner, and Sheri Bean, Senior Planner, to attend the Transportation Research Board (TRB) Annual Meeting from January 4<sup>th</sup> through the 9<sup>th</sup>, 2025 in Washington, DC.

The meeting program covers all transportation modes, with sessions and workshops addressing topics of interest to policymakers, administrators, practitioners, researchers, and representatives of government, industry, and academic institutions. Some of the many dozens of topics to be discussed include the following:

- Transportation Asset Risk and Resilience Strategies and Tools
- Modeling and Simulation for the Design and Evaluation of Roadside Safety Hardware
- Performance Analysis Workshop
- Future Uncertain: Research and Tools for Transportation Planning Under Deep Uncertainty
- Rev It Up: Equipping Transportation Managers for Pollinator Conservation Agreements
- Everyday Uses of the AASHTO Guide for Bridge Preservation Actions and the AASHTO Guide to Preservation of Highway Bridge Decks
- Resilience and Disaster Recovery Tool Suite
- Global Pathways to Net Zero: Behavioral, Social, and Technological Research and Innovation Strategies for Transportation Decarbonization

Learn more about the Annual Meeting/Conference by clicking on the following link <https://trb-annual-meeting.nationalacademies.org/schedule>.

The total cost has been estimated to be \$6,567.00 (for two employees – \$2,250.00 for conference registration, \$1,960.00 for lodging, \$800.00 for flights, \$957.00 for meals, and \$600.00 for incidentals (i.e. educational materials [books] available only at the conference, local transit costs, tips, etc.).

Per Policy, Government Services Administration (GSA) rates will be adhered to.

The Executive Director recommends that the Transportation Department staff identified above attend the TRB Annual Meeting. The MRPC will authorize training for the advancement of the employees and the Commission, funding allowing.

The MRPC intends to charge all conference-related costs as a “direct charge” to the annual MassDOT-MRPC Transportation Planning contract (a request for such approval has been submitted to MassDOT).

## **RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) hereby approves of MRPC management’s request to send Ms. Belmont and Ms. Bean out of state, to Washington, D.C., for the TRB Annual Meeting.

L. Shifrin asked what amount was allocated to travel in the admin. budget. C. McNamara stated we budgeted \$1,000 for travel and \$3,800 for conference meetings and trainings for a total of \$4,800.

Having no objections, B. Yocum moved to accept the resolution as presented, the motion was seconded.

B. Yocum commented that she feels it is so important for people to attend these conferences. Not only to learn new things but for networking as well.

### Roll Call Vote Followed:

- A. Pease - yes
- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Thornton – yes

G. Tillotson – yes  
K. Norton – yes  
K. Munroe – yes  
L. Shifrin – yes  
M. Bohart – yes

## 5.2 Budget Amendment – Approval Requested

### REPORT

At the November meeting of the Commissioners, the Executive Director recommended that the funding allocations for the Interns who were hired in the summer and fall of 2024 reflect the actual expenditures. This left no funding for Interns for the balance of FY25. Recently, the Planning and Development Director, Transportation Director, and Executive Director met and identified additional tasks that could be completed by Interns through the end of FY25 (June 30, 2025).

Public outreach assistance is our highest need in the Planning and Development Department for at least five of the approximately 35 ongoing projects. Those five projects are listed below.

- Digital Equity Planning (DEP) projects funded by Massachusetts Technology Collaborative (MassTech) and Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) for the communities of Ashburnham and Townsend.
- Looking Upstream, Learning Downstream: A Geo-Spatial Chronicle and Lessons Learned from the Leominster Flood Emergency of 9/11/2023, Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Plan (MVP) Program.
- Master Planning projects in Royalston and Westminster, funded in part by the DLTA and One Stop grant programs.

The Open Space and Recreation Planning project in Lancaster will also include a public outreach component and possibly additional projects that are expected to come online this fiscal year (through the MA Planning Assistance Grant [PAG]) program, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs [EOEEA]).

Working collaboratively with Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director and the Fiscal Director, Chris McNamara we propose that \$25,000 of the projected surplus of \$80,608 be allocated to an Interns' Budget for the balance of FY25. This figure was arrived at thusly: \$5,000 from the MBI contract; \$10,000 from the MVP-Leominster project; and, \$10,000 from both the Royalston and Westminster master Plans. By allocating \$25,000 from our projected surplus to Interns for the balance of FY25, MRPC would have a remaining projected balance of \$55,608.

(Please be advised that MRPC management also determined that centralizing procurement is also a high priority. One to two employees will be formally trained by the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General in FY25 and FY26.)

### RESOLUTION

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby approves of MRPC

management’s request for \$25,000 to be allocated for the hiring of one or more part-time Interns to assist MRPC employees with public outreach and related planning tasks through June 30, 2025.

Having no objections, A. Pease moved to accept the resolution as presented. Motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

- A. Pease - yes
- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Thornton – yes
- G. Tillotson – yes
- K. Norton – yes
- K. Munroe – yes
- L. Shifrin – yes
- M. Bohart – yes

### **5.3 Hiring Seasonal Interns – Approval Requested**

#### **REPORT**

MRPC management has discussed the need to hire temporary, seasonal employees as Interns for the balance of FY25. The Interns to be hired will complete public outreach, research, and planning tasks related primarily to many ongoing projects being completed by the Planning and Development Department.

Management proposed to advertise in accordance with the MRPC Employee Policies and Procedures Handbook for the “January break,” spring, and early summer seasons.

MRPC was very fortunate to have a “dream team” of Interns in the summer of 2024. We wish to replicate the quality of Interns previously hired to assist with ongoing projects for the balance of FY25.

#### **RESOLUTION**

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission hereby authorizes the Executive Director to advertise and hire Interns as needed to address the above projects and tasks. Management will provide reports to the Commissioners when new Interns have been hired throughout FY25.

Having no objections, B. Yocum moved to accept the resolution as presented. Motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

- A. Pease - yes
- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Thornton – yes
- G. Tillotson – yes
- K. Norton – yes
- K. Munroe – yes

L. Shifrin – yes  
M. Bohart – yes

#### 5.4 Other Administrative Matters

MRPC strives to address concerns within the region and request the Commissioners to submit via email topics of interest to either Holly Ford, Administrative and Human Resource Director at [hford@mrpc.org](mailto:hford@mrpc.org) or Glenn Eaton, Executive Director at [geaton@mrpc.org](mailto:geaton@mrpc.org).

MRPC staff attended an artificial intelligence training session provided by Employers Association of the Northeast (EANE) on November 26<sup>th</sup>. Staff are in the process of drafting and AI policy. We will present it to the Commissioners for approval this winter. Management is in the process of testing several AI platforms. One of more AI apps may be available for use by employees. As this is new to all MRPC employees, we may need to adjust the AI apps to be used and/or this policy moving forward.

B. Yocum shared that she attended a tour of Devens on November 19<sup>th</sup> along with many MRPC staff regarding sustainable practices and it was fantastic, fun and engaging. She learned a lot and it was great to be out with so many MRPC staff. Barbara learned that legislation had passed and the housing cap restrictions at Devens is going to be removed. We should see a lot more development there in the housing department which will affect our community.

G. Tillotson stated he unable to attend that day, but he works closely with N. Angus and has also seen a lot of what they do there. He encouraged all to go if they have the chance. Geoff reiterated that the changes represent phenomenal opportunities for people. Geoff stated the contractor sat down with Devens and asked about what the need was. Their answer was a place for people to eat, socialize and a gym, so they are building all that in. The space is becoming very attractive to corporations who are in the incubator stage. The buildings are well built, they are built out for everything they need, and they are built out as green buildings.

L. Shifrin asked if it is zoned as mixed-use or just commercial. G. Tillotson said the buildings are designed for office and research, but they are designed to be finished in whatever your business requires.

#### 6. 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.*

##### 6.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

No updates at this time

##### 6.2 Planning & Development

K. Chapman announced that the MRPC is working with CMRPC (Central Mass Regional Planning

Commission) collaborating for a joint application for a Paul Bruhn Historic Preservation grant for both of our regions. The funds would be used to sub-grant to our communities to do historic preservation of historic buildings with an eye towards economic development. More information will be provided at a later date. The grant is not due until March. If you have any buildings that your are curious about redeveloping or preserving, email [kchapman@mrpc.org](mailto:kchapman@mrpc.org).

The One-Stop for Growth application, the expression of interest is coming up in January. If any towns want to work with us to do the application, we can start now.

Congratulations to the following towns for passing the MBTA Community, Shirley, Ayer, and Fitchburg. Leominster City Council will be voting on this Monday, December 9, 2024.

B. Yocum asked if a town-owned building that is used as a community center and is historic would qualify for the Paul Bruhn Historic Preservation grant and K. Chapman thought it would.

L. Shifrin asked K. Chapman to email her the ADU bylaws.

### **6.3 Transit & Transportation**

No updates at this time

### **7. New Business**

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

### **8. Adjournment - The date of the next MRPC meeting – January 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m.**

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

Chair L. Shifrin adjourned the meeting at 7:44pm.

*This meeting will be recorded by the GoToMeeting 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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<b>Meeting Attendance</b>					
<b><u>Name</u></b>	<b><u>M/A</u></b>	<b><u>Representing</u></b>	<b><u>Appointment Date</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>	<b><u>Absent</u></b>
Arpano, Abby	A	Ashburnham	12.2023		X
Vacant	M	Ashburnham			X
Leab, Doug	A	Ashby	7.2023		X
Pease, Alan	M	Ashby	7.2001	X	
Bialecki, Rebecca	A	Athol	7.2020.		X
Norton, Kathy	M	Athol	11.2023	X	
Copeland, Shaun	A	Ayer	7.2020.		X
Tillotson, Geoff	M	Ayer	7.2022	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	
Dolan, Kelly	A	Lancaster	7.2023		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
Yocum, Barbara	M	Shirley	8.2017	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
Vacant	A	Townsend	9.2024		X
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2019	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
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**Staff:** G. Eaton, H. Ford, C. McNamara, J. Stanton, B. Doherty, K. Chapman, T. Murphy

**DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MEETING**

November 7, 2024, MRPC Meeting Minutes

December 5, 2024, MRPC Meeting Agenda

December 5, 2024, MRPC Meeting Agenda with Details

MRPC Grant Opportunities Spreadsheet

Letter to UMass Memorial Hospital 11-5-2024