



MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)

REMOTE MEETING ONLY
THURSDAY, JANUARY 9, 2025, 7:00 PM

MRPC MEETING MATERIALS:
[January 9, 2025 MRPC Meeting Material](#)

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.

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

Roll Call Followed:

B. Yocum – present
D. Thornton – present
G. Tillotson – present
G. Corbosiero – present
K. Norton – present
L. Shifrin – present
M. Bohart – present
R. Bialecki – present
R. Swartz – present
D. Valliere - present

2. MRPC Minutes – December 5, 2024 – Approval of commissioners Requested

Having no questions or comments, R. Swartz moved to accept the minutes as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Followed:

A. Pease – yes
B. Yocum – yes
D. Valliere – yes
D. Thornton – yes
G. Tillotson – yes
G. Corbosiero – abstain
L. Shifrin - yes

M. Bohart – yes
R. Bialecki – yes
R. Swartz – abstain

3. Cash Schedule – December 2024 – Acceptance of Commissioners Requested

R. Swartz presented the December 2024 cash schedule. The opening balance for December 1, 2024, \$451,798.62, total receipts, and transfers for the month \$120,620,49, total cash on hand before this warrant \$572,419.11, less the amount of this warrant \$130,970.81, left a balance after the warrant of \$441,448.30.

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

Roll Call Followed:

A. Pease – yes
B. Yocum – yes
D. Valliere – yes
D. Thornton – yes
G. Tillotson – yes
G. Corbosiero – yes
L. Shifrin - yes
M. Bohart – yes
R. Bialecki – yes
R. Swartz – yes

4. Guest Announcements and Questions

G. Kahale, MART representative, announced the award of the recently awarded MassDOT award. Due to the closing of Nashoba Valley Medical Center many residents of Shirley, Ayer and Harvard have been negatively impacted. This grant will be funded through June of 2026 or for \$278,000. MART will provide a shuttle service to Emerson Hospital for Ayer, Shirley and Harvard. MART is still working with the impacted towns to create this service. MART has met with Ayer and Shirley and will be meeting with Harvard on Monday.

5. Guest Speaker Senator James Eldridge; Nashoba Valley Medical Center – Information Only

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Senator Eldridge was unable to attend the meeting.

6. Administrative Matters

6.1 Proposed Salary Increase for Bernard Cahill, Principal Planner – Action Requested

Mr. Cahill's performance has been outstanding. For the benefit of the Commissioners, please be advised that Bernie has written at least 15 grant proposals totaling \$22.3 million and has worked very diligently meeting with city and town committees and boards prioritizing projects, crafting fundable activities, and creating narratives for the applications. Additionally, Bernie regularly emails communities with grant opportunities and fields phone calls from interested parties. Having a dedicated grant writer has increased the MRPC's ability to assist our communities with grant funding to further their goals and objectives. This service is invaluable to our communities, especially those with limited human capacity.

A market rate analysis was conducted, reviewing similar public sector positions recently advertised both within the region and statewide. It was further determined that a salary adjustment is justified, in consideration of agency policy of setting salaries on a competitive basis (See Section C, Item 14 of MRPC Personnel Policies and Employee Procedure Handbook). Management recommends that Mr. Cahill's salary be increased so that the agency can foster its goal of employee retention and maintain

competitive salaries.

We request to increase Mr. Cahill's salary to \$80,000 annually beginning on January 19, 2025.

G. Corbosiero moved to accept the proposed salary increase for B. Cahill as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Followed:

- A. Pease – yes
- B. Yocum – yes
- D. Valliere – yes
- D. Thornton – yes
- G. Tillotson – yes
- G. Corbosiero – yes
- L. Shifrin - yes
- M. Bohart – yes
- R. Bialecki – yes
- R. Swartz – yes

6.2 Monthly Meeting of the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) Update – Information Only

- A comparison of overhead rates was held. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's (BRPC) overhead (OH) rate is 140%, Metropolitan Area Planning Council's (MAPC) rate is 124%, North Middlesex Council of Government's (NMCOG) is 117%, Old Colony Planning Council's (OCPC) is 101%, and Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's (PVPC) rate is 122%. MRPC OH rate is 135%.
- There has been very little movement on the retirement legislation.
- The following two grant programs will be out this month: 1. Drought Resiliency and Water Efficiency Grant Program Information Session; and, 2. Historic Preservation Projects Fund, Massachusetts Secretary of State.

6.3 Other Administrative Matters – Information Only

Over the summer, Holly Ford, Administrative and Human Resource Director, completed a supply cost comparison between Staples, Staples Advantage, Amazon and WB Mason. MRPC had been ordering most supplies through Staples Advantage but with this new information, we began ordering through Amazon. After only two months of ordering with Amazon, we received a call from Andrea Walen, our Staples Sr. Account Specialist stating they noticed our orders had slowed down and asked if we were still using Staples for all our supply needs. Hearing that Amazon was more cost effective in all areas, Andrea shared how MRPC could receive additional discounts set up an account with Sourcewell CONSORTIUM/GROUP. Pricing on Sourcewell offers over 16,000 items at or below cost. The service is free and is available to Government & Education agencies as well as Nonprofits in the US.

The process to register was easy (<https://www.sourcewell-mn.gov/register>) and once we were assigned a number from Sourcewell, Staples added the information to our account and we are now receiving additional discounts. Below are a few examples of the additional savings we now receive:

- 16pack/carton Multifold Paper Towels was \$35.89, now **\$29.51**
- 96 Rolls/carton Toile Paper was \$77.99, now **\$62.43**
- Steno Pads, pack of 12 was \$26.69, now **\$14.51**
- 250 trash bags was \$60.39, now **\$33.75**
- Duracell Coppertop AA batteries was \$28.39, now **\$13.82**

These are just a few examples.



MRPC staff held a Holiday Potluck on December 17th. The Transportation Department decorated the atrium and the tables, we had music playing in the background and we enjoyed some great food and conversation. We also discovered that we have some exceptional chefs among us!



Row 1 : G. Eaton, Row 2 Left to right : C. McNamara, T. Godin, I. Congdon, G. Belmont, K. Chapman, H. Ford, T. Murphy, B. Cahill, J. Legros, G. Snow, Row 3 Left to right : J. Boyle, J. Stanton, K. Kress, S. Bean, Z. Kay, B. Doherty

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)

No updates at this time

7.2 Planning & Development

K. Chapman reminded everyone that they should have received a copy of the Grant Opportunities spreadsheet, if not, there was a copy included with the meeting documents. If anyone is interested or has any questions they can reach out to Bernie Cahill or Karen Chapman.

The DLTA 18 call for proposals was sent out in December. Proposals are due for the first-round vote on February 4th. We will vote on DLTA projects at our next meeting. We anticipate a large number of requests; we may need to say no to some, but we can look into other grant opportunities for those requests.

7.3 Transit & Transportation

B. Doherty reviewed the following documents included in the meeting folder :

- MMPO Public Participation Plan

This document is currently out for public comment. The MPO sent this out in December. This is our official procedure as it relates to public engagement and outreach. This is federally required to have this in place for the MPO. The full draft document can be accessed on our website under the announcement tab. The public review and comment period ends on February 3rd.

Changes include the number of references related to different policy updates and legislative updates since 2017. COVID remote meeting changes have been updated, and we've made it easier to read and reorganize the document.

The MPO will review the comments at the February meeting and vote to endorse.

- TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) Development Memo

This document is another federally required document from the MPO. This document lists all federal investments in the transportation system in the Montachusett region.

The MPO is responsible for prioritizing a number of projects, carries highway and transit projects in the region.

Over the next several months, we'll be going through the process of updating this and coming up with the federal fiscal year 2026 through 2030 plan. The MPO has full discretion over project placement of about \$17 million per year of this work program.

MRPC has been in close contact with MassDOT and various project proponents and design consultants. We will bring more information to the February MPO meeting.

The idea is to have a draft TIP available for public comment in April and endorse it in May.

This memo went out in December and we're asking all communities with projects that are listed on the TIP to talk to your design consultant, reach out to us and give us an update on them so we can be well informed when it comes to prioritizing some of these projects.

P. Cunningham asked if the TIP included the rail trail projects as well. B. Doherty confirmed that any project that has any federal investment is listed on there. The rail trail projects are on there now and are listed as phase two of the Twin Cities rail trail construction. There is a North Central Pathway project, the bridge reconstruction in Garnder as well. P. Cunningham asked if DCR would be who applies to get on the TIP for reconstruction of that particular trail. B. Doherty confirmed that due the trail falling within two MPO's, it would be on our list as well as the list for the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments.

Any questions regarding the TIP, reach out to Brian Doherty directly.

- **UPWP Project Solicitation Memo 2025**

95% of the work that the transportation staff works on is listed on this work program. It is a contract between MassDOT, Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration. This allows us to run the Metropolitan Planning Organization. We anticipate room in the budget to solicit projects from communities which is why this memo went out earlier this week to our full mail list. Any questions, please reach out to Brian Doherty or Sheri Bean by February 7th.

- **MMPO Caucus Meeting Invitation**

We intend to gather people together in a caucus and determine who would represent each subregion. We have set a date of February 13, 2025. This invitation was sent to all town managers and CEO's earlier this week in hopes that they appoint someone from their town to attend this caucus. It is very important the we have a quorum at these MPO meetings. The snow date listed on the invitation is incorrect, it will not be February 19th, it will be February 20th.

G. Tillotson asked who specifically can or should be appointed. B. Doherty said we asked town managers to appoint somebody to attend this caucus. The subregions will determine who would be the representative.

8. New Business

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

G. Tillotson asked if MRPC had ever done any type of analysis on a townwide speed difference such as 25 miles per hour versus 30 miles per hour or is there any data that could support a conversation about it? B. Doherty confirmed we had not.

B. Yocum asked if there was any information regarding the ruling on the MBTA Communities. G. Eaton stated the decision of the Supreme Judicial Court was to remand it back to the county court which means the county court judge will have to make a decision. P. Cunningham added that the way the regulations were rewritten was unenforceable.

9. Adjournment - The date of the next MRPC meeting – February 6, 2025, 7:00 p.m.

Having no objections, the meeting was adjourned at 7:46pm.

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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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
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
Kell, Veronica	A	Townsend	12.2025		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	

Guests: G. Kahale, MART Representative

Staff: G. Eaton, H. Ford, C. McNamara, B. Doherty, K. Chapman, K. Kress

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED FOR THE MEETING

- December 5, 2024, MRPC Meeting Minutes
- January 9, 2025, MRPC Meeting Agenda
- January 9, 2025, MRPC Meeting Agenda with Details
- MRPC Grant Opportunities Spreadsheet
- PPP Update Summary
- TIP Development Memo
- UPWP Project Solicitation Memo
- MPO Caucus Meeting Invitation