



MONTACHUSETT REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION (MRPC)

REMOTE MEETING ONLY

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 2024, 7:00 PM

MRPC MEETING MATERIALS:

[March 21, 2024 MRPC Meeting Material](#)

MINUTES

1. Open Meeting, Introductions and Announcements

This meeting was 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 were taken by roll call. Vice Chairperson R. Hoyt called the meeting to order at 7:01 pm.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Reid - Present
B. Yocum - Present
C. Sexton-Diranian - Present
G. Tillotson - Present
G. Corbosiero - Present
K. Norton - Present
K. Nartowicz - Present
M. Bohart - Present
P. Cunningham - Present
R. Swartz - Present
S. Donahue - Present
R. Hoyt - Present
A. Pease - Present

(Attendees that joined the meeting after the roll call will be included on the meeting attendance)

2. MRPC Minutes – February 8, 2024 – Approval of Commissioners Requested

Having no objections, additions or subtractions, G. Corbosiero moved to accept the minutes as submitted. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - abstain
A. Reid - abstain
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - abstain
P. Cunningham - abstain
R. Swartz - abstain
S. Donahue - yes
R. Hoyt – yes

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

R. Swartz presented the February 2024 cash schedule. The opening balance for February 1, 2024, \$472,878.66, total receipts and transfers for the month \$699,498.70, total cash on hand before this warrant \$1,172,377.36, less the amount of this warrant \$400,210.71, left a balance after the warrant of \$772,166.65.

Having no objections, G. Corbosiero moved to accept the February 2024 cash schedule as presented subject to audit. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes

R. Swartz - yes
S. Donahue - yes
R. Hoyt – yes

3. Guest Announcements and Questions

H. Ford, Administrative and H.R. Director announced that staff will be participating in the collection of housing and personal items which will be donated to the Montachusett Veterans Outreach Center (MVOC). Staff will start collecting items on Monday, March 25th and will run through May 20th. To make a donation, please contact Holly Ford at hford@mrpc.org to arrange a pickup or drop off of items.

5. Administrative Matters

5.1 Audit Presentation from Roland Lambalot, CPA – Action Requested

R. Lambalot, CPA presented the FY23 Audit. Highlights of his presentation included:

- Status of the revolving loan fund. Payments have been received consistently and on time. This is now shown on the current assets as well as the non-current assets.
- MA State Board of Retirement – MRPC is looking at a \$229,00 annual contribution which is an actual dollar amount that was paid by the state.
- Summary of lease payments
- Post retirement health benefit payments.
- State Retirement Dispute
- Multi-year contracts – what is done if too much or not enough money is received in any given year. No longer need to track.
- Indirect cost computation schedule
- Total expenditure of Federal Awards
- Review of the Statement of Net Position
- Management letter- one invoice was found unrecorded. This was not recorded as a finding but a clerical error.

Having no questions or comments, G. Corbosiero moved to accept the audit as presented. Motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes

M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes
R. Swartz - yes
S. Donahue - yes
R. Hoyt – yes

5.2 Hiring of Planner for Transportation Dept. – Action Requested

REPORT:

Mr. Brad Harris resigned his position as Transportation Projects Director and retired on January 5, 2024. He was succeeded by Mr. Brian Doherty. MRPC has received several applications for the Transportation Planner position which was previously held by Mr. Doherty. Management is in the process of negotiating with one of the two finalists and another finalist is waiting in the wings should the first party withdraw from contention. The Executive Director respectfully requests the authority to hire one of the two finalists at an annual salary not to exceed \$70,000 where the actual starting salary could be lower than this amount.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approves of the Executive Director's request to hire a qualified person to be the agency's new Transportation Planner at an annual salary not to exceed \$70,000 and that the name of the new employee will be presented to the Commissioners at their next meeting.

G. Eaton will provide an update including the name of the new employee at the next meeting. This confirmed the new employee is she accepts, would start prior to the next MRPC meeting.

P. Cunningham moved to accept the resolution as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes

R. Swartz - yes
S. Donahue - yes
R. Hoyt – yes

5.3 Hiring of Interns for Summer Break 2024– Action Requested

REPORT:

The Administrative and Human Resources Director, Transportation Projects Director, Planning and Development Director, and Executive Director have interviewed at least five candidates for one or more Intern positions for this summer. We have so many great candidates to choose from. The interview process is in the process of closing. The Executive Director respectfully requests the use of up to \$30,600 for the hiring of up to four Interns for no more than 12 weeks at an hourly rate of \$17.00 per hour to:

- Augment staff capacity primarily in the Planning and Development Department but one or more Interns will also be available to the GIS and Transportation Departments, as needed; and,
- Provide MRPC with potential candidates for future hiring per past report of the Executive Director.

Sufficient funds exist in the Planning and Development and MASSDOT contracts to fund this initiative.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approves of the Executive Director's request to allocate up to \$30,600 for the hiring of up to four Interns for no more than 12 weeks at an hourly rate of \$17.00 per hour to complete the objectives identified in the above report.

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

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes
R. Swartz - yes

S. Donahue - yes

R. Hoyt – yes

5.4 April Meeting – Action Requested

G. Eaton asked, with this meeting being held so late in the month, would we like to meet again in two weeks, or would everyone like to skip the April meeting and just have a meeting on May 9th? All staff in attendance confirmed they had nothing to discuss that couldn't wait until May 9th. All agreed to hold the next meeting on May 9th.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes

A. Reid - yes

B. Yocum - yes

C. Sexton-Diranian - yes

G. Tillotson - yes

G. Corbosiero - yes

K. Norton - yes

K. Nartowicz - yes

M. Bohart - yes

P. Cunningham - yes

R. Swartz - yes

S. Donahue - yes

R. Hoyt – yes

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/>

6.1 Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

No new updates at this time.

6.2 Planning & Development

6.2.1 Out of State Conference Travel (Revitalizing New England: Brownfields Summit, Portland, ME) – Action Requested

MRPC requests the approval of out of state travel for G. Eaton, K. Chapman, T. Murphy, and R. Doherty to attend the US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Revitalizing New England: Brownfields Summit.

REPORT:

The US EPA Revitalizing New England: Brownfields Summit 2024 is being held from May 29 through May 30, 2024, in Portland, Maine. The Executive Director requests approval for four MRPC staff persons, Glenn Eaton, Executive Director; Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director; Tracy Murphy, Senior Planner; and Ryan Doherty, Regional Planner to attend. Continued attendance at these and similar events assists our staff to administer EPA Brownfields Environmental Site Assessment (ESA) funds advancing cleanup projects leading to the creation of new jobs, affordable housing, and the creation of new open spaces. In addition, attendance at this particular conference includes New England specific information and guidance from the EPA Region 1 Brownfields staff and state Brownfields staff. This expands employees' awareness of best practices in assessing and redeveloping brownfields throughout New England and helps staff improve MRPC's management of our EPA grants.

MRPC currently has a Brownfields award in the amount of \$500,000 and staff have attended these conferences throughout the 25 years MRPC has been awarded Brownfields funding. The current EPA grant began October 1, 2023, and runs to September 30, 2027.

MRPC's grant contract with EPA (or cooperative agreement) includes a line item for attendance at these conferences. EPA strongly encourages grant recipients to attend as it benefits grant recipients in understanding brownfield redevelopment, legal and financial matters, and increases our awareness of new contaminants such as "per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances" (PFAS).

The total cost for travel, hotel, registration, and meals will not exceed \$2,200 for the employees. Conference costs for this conference will be charged to the existing EPA-MRPC grant award travel line item which anticipated this conference for Karen, Tracy, and Ryan. Administrative funds will be used for Glenn's travel costs.

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission approves the out-of-state travel of Glenn Eaton, Executive Director; Karen Chapman, Planning and Development Director; Tracy Murphy, Senior Planner; and Ryan Doherty, Regional Planner, to the US EPA Revitalizing New England: Brownfields Summit 2024 in Portland, Maine on May 29th and 30th, 2024, at a total cost not to exceed \$2,200.

P. Cunningham moved to accept the resolution as presented. The motion was seconded.

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes
R. Swartz - yes
S. Donahue - yes
R. Hoyt – yes

6.2.2 Award Round 1 DLTA Community Requests – Action Requested

REPORT:

MRPC was awarded \$207,474 in DLTA funds for 2024. This is the 17th year regional planning agencies (RPAs) and councils of government (COGs) have been awarded these funds from the state budget.

In the past, MRPC has tried to complete as many projects as possible for our communities with these funds. Statistically, MRPC has funded an average of 14 projects per year under the DLTA program, with an average dollar amount per project of \$14,820, or a total of 255 hours for each project at the lowest paid planner's billing rate. This number of hours equals approximately six weeks of work. This is an insufficient amount of time needed to complete a project at a high level of execution and quality. Providing the best service to our communities includes delivering high quality planning products within budget is this agency's goal. DLTA projects typically require that an experienced planner be assigned to work with those planners rising through the ranks on projects to provide experience, knowledge, and mentorship.

Historically, we have funded too many projects with DLTA funds. It costs approximately \$113,436 for MRPC to pay our most junior planner for a year (in FY24). Most likely, hourly rates will increase on July 1st, for FY25, increasing the amount needed to pay our planners. Thus, DLTA funding covers about 1.75 full-time equivalent (FTE) of our lowest paid planners for one year. We cannot expect 1.75 FTE in human resources to complete all 14 DLTA projects in approximately nine months. MRPC needs to pivot into being more realistic with its DLTA work assignments to its planning staff to deliver the highest quality project possible to its

communities.

In response to a first solicitation, issued January 10, 2024, a total of twelve (12) proposals were received for use of District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) resources to provide a variety of services. The proposals received are as follows:

1. **Ashburnham:** Review and update of inaccuracies on the zoning map and street map. \$2,500
2. **Ashburnham:** Final public presentations and compilation of final Master Plan. \$15,000
3. **Athol:** Update of draft Economic Development and Transportation/Circulation master plan elements and development of Land Use and Services & Facilities master plan elements. \$0
4. **Groton:** Completion of evaluation of the economic, transportation, and related impacts of the Groton Hill Music Center on the town. \$12,000
5. **Harvard:** Update of all the 2012 & 2016 master plan elements. \$0
6. **Leominster:** Review of city ordinance and recommendations for amendments to facilitate increased housing development. \$8,000
7. **Royalston:** Development of the following master plan elements: goals & objectives, land use, economic development, and housing. \$103,737
8. **Shirley:** Assistance complying with the new Chapter 40A, Section 3A for MBTA Communities. \$14,000
9. **Sterling:** Mapping project to prioritize parcels for acquisition and protection for preserving ecosystems, wildlife corridor conservation, and critical water resource. \$2,000
10. **Townsend:** Assistance complying with the new Chapter 40A, Section 3A for MBTA Communities. \$11,000
11. **Townsend:** Assistance reviewing and amending the town's Accessory Dwelling Unit bylaw and recommending changes to facilitate permitting and affordability. \$11,000
12. **Westminster:** Assistance complying with the new Chapter 40A, Section 3A for MBTA Communities. \$12,237

All costs are approximate. Final budgets may differ between this date and the time that the DLTA planning services agreement has been fully executed with each town.

The Following Master Plan Criteria was Used in MRPC's DLTA Call for Proposals:

- i. Has your community ever had a Master Plan?
- ii. If yes to i., what is the date of your community's most recent Master Plan?
- iii. Does your community have any elements of a Master Plan completed? And if so, what elements are they and what was their date of completion?

- iv. Will your community apply for additional grants outside of DLTA to complete your Master Plan elements? OR, will your community appropriate local funds for completion of elements?
- v. Will your community appoint a Master Plan Committee to oversee and contribute to the process?

RESOLUTION:

BE IT RESOLVED the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission (MRPC) recommends that numbers 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of the above-named project requests for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA), if eligible, be **conditionally** awarded based upon further communication/clarification/negotiation with the applying communities and **approval from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities**. Moreover, all activities in some applications may not be awardable or fundable under the DLTA program. MRPC commits to working with the towns of Athol and Harvard, to help them obtain funding from other available resources (such as the Massachusetts One Stop and/or Planning Assistance Grant [PAG] programs) to complete master planning tasks in place of using DLTA funding.

These recommended projects are conditionally awarded and are subject to the conditions listed below.

- 1. The services to be delivered to the communities will be completed commencing no earlier than a fully executed contract between the subject (lead) community and the MRPC.
- 2. Services will be delivered to the subject community(ies) during the implementation of the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program year (2024).
- 3. The award of services from the MRPC is subject to the:
 - a. Funding available to the MRPC during the program year (2024);
 - b. Successful negotiation of a detailed scope of services, schedule for the completion of the tasks identified in the scope of services, and budget utilizing DLTA and other funds, if available and eligible for the aforementioned project;
 - c. Execution of a contract between the MRPC and the community(ies); and,
- 4. Where and when possible, the MRPC will deliver the tasks related to “analysis, preparation and presentation ... report(s) ...” as indicated above. The MRPC and the community requesting services will “outsource” consulting services only when absolutely deemed to be necessary by both the lead community and the MRPC.
- 5. This is an award of services from the MRPC to the applicable community(ies). This is not a cash award.
- 6. If at any time the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) determines that the project is ineligible, the award of services will be null and void.

7. The municipality and all municipal departments shall provide MRPC with cooperation/access/assistance to public data applicable to the DLTA project including providing such materials. Related costs associated with this (data collection, photocopying, etc.) will be at the expense of the municipality(/ies).

B. Yocum pointed out that \$0.00 are shown for Athol and Harvard and Royalston is listed as having over \$103,000. K. Chapman explained we are approaching DLTA differently due to the number of communities asking for master plans. We decided this year we were going to use half of the DLTA money to start a community's master plan. Next year we will start another town.

B. Yocum asked is this is the first time we are doing this? G. Eaton stated this is an experiment, there are several things going on here. We've realized that we are spreading ourselves too thin. There are not enough DLTA dollars to do every project and to do every project well. DLTA money doesn't support enough human resources. In the past, because there are not enough dollars in the DLTA to pay for the staff to provide DLTA services, we have to do is use the EDA contract to try to essentially subsidize the DLTA program or use admin dollars which increases our overhead rate. We have always said for 17 years in our DLTA RFP that we reserve the right as a commission to say no due to too many projects and we can't do everything. But we promise to work with the communities to identify and pursue other grant resources.

S. Donahue mentioned the lifting of the cap at Devens might change all their calculations in Harvard to waiting to see how that shakes out might be a good thing. G. Tillotson offered to forward an article regarding the changes to Devens.

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

Roll Call Vote Followed:

A. Pease - yes
A. Reid - yes
B. Yocum - yes
C. Sexton-Diranian - yes
G. Tillotson - yes
G. Corbosiero - yes
K. Norton - yes
K. Nartowicz - yes
M. Bohart - yes
P. Cunningham - yes
R. Swartz - yes
S. Donahue - yes

R. Hoyt – yes

6.3 Transit & Transportation

B. Doherty pointed out that there is a survey available as part of our City Action plan which is all part of the Safe Streets for All grant that we are working on. We are looking at crash data, data from the transit, and MBTA and several other resources. We are also looking for anecdotal data in relation to safety on the transportation facilities in the region.

7. New Business

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 – May 9, 2024, 7:00 p.m.

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.

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
Hoyt, Roger	M	Ashburnham	7.2011	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, Geoffrey	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	
Cunningham, Peter	M	Groton	7.2022	X	
Burke, Russell	A	Groton	7.2016		X
Minar, Kara	A	Harvard	7.2021		X
Donahue, Stacia	M	Harvard	7.2018	X	
Kresge, Mark	A	Hubbardston	7.2023		X
Munroe, Kristofer	M	Hubbardston	2.2023		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	7.2020.		X
Reid, Amanda	M	Lunenburg	7.2022	X	
Ermini, Annette	A	Petersham	7.2022		X
Vacant	M	Petersham			X
Telepciak, John	M	Phillipston	10.2001		X
Jackson, Melanie	A	Phillipston	7.2022		X
Barclay, James	A	Royalston	7.2017		X
Nartowicz, Kyle	M	Royalston	7.2015	X	
Oelfke, Bill	A	Shirley	7.2020.		X
Yocum, Barbara	M	Shirley	8.2017	X	
Newman, Kristen	A	Sterling	7.2023		X

Page, Patty	M	Sterling	7.2019		X
Toth, Timothy	A	Templeton	7.2023		X
Rich, Dennis	M	Templeton	7.2017		X
XSexton-Diranian, Charles	A	Townsend	7.2022	X	
Shifrin, Laura	M	Townsend	7.2019		X
Vacant	A	Westminster			X
Buckman, Gregg	M	Westminster	7.2021		X
Ward, Rick	A	Winchendon	7.2019		X
Corbosiero, Guy	M	Winchendon	7.2011	X	

Guests: George Kahale, MART Representative, Roland Lambalot, CPA

Staff: G. Eaton, H. Ford, K. Chapman, L. Quinlivan, C. McNamara, B. Doherty, J. Stanton

DOCUMENTS/EXHIBITS DISTRIBUTED AT THE MEETING:

February 8, 2024 MRPC Meeting Minutes

March 7, 2024 MRPC Meeting Agenda

March 7, 2024 MRPC Meeting Agenda with Details

Current Grant List

Spring Into Action Poster

MRPC Audit FY23

MRPC Financial Statements FY23

MRPC Governance Communication FY23

MRPC Letter From Roland FY23

MRPC Statement of Net Position 1 FY23

MRPC Statement of Net Position 2 FY23