

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, October 8, 2020
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Commission Members Present Were:

Joanna Brown	Commissioner	South Hadley
Lillian Camus	Commissioner	Granby
Christopher Flory	Commissioner	Williamsburg
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Michael Hutchins	Commissioner	Blandford
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Jack Jemsek	Commissioner	Amherst
Jay Joyce	Alternate Commissioner	Granby
Daniel Lavalley	Commissioner	Southampton
Linda LeDuc	Alternate Commissioner	Palmer
Michael Marciniac	Commissioner	Palmer
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Marcus Phelps	Commissioner	Southwick
Tracey Plantier	Alternate Commissioner	Wilbraham
Stephen Snow	Commissioner	Williamsburg
Judy Terry	Commissioner	Chesterfield

Guest Presenters:

Patty Gambarini, Principal Environmental Planner and Section Manager, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
Douglas Hall, Data Manager and Analyst, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
Monica Moran, Manager of Domestic Violence Prevention Programs, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
Gary Roux, Principal Planner and Manager, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)

PVPC Staff Present:

Patrick Beaudry, Manager of Public Affairs
Bridgit Johnson, Planner I
Indrani Kowlessar, Office Manager and Executive Assistant
Jeff McCollough Senior Transportation Planner
Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
Keith Robitaille, Housing Rehabilitation Specialist
Louise Sullivan, Administrative Assistant I Specialist
Lori Tanner, Economic Development Manager
Eric Weiss, Manager of Regional and Municipal Programs

Communities Not Represented at the October 8, 2020 Commission Meeting

Belchertown	Holland	Russell
Brimfield	Holyoke	Southampton
Chester	Huntington	Springfield
Chicopee	Ludlow	Tolland
Cummington	Middlefield	Wales
East Longmeadow	Monson	Ware
Easthampton	Montgomery	West Springfield
Goshen	Northampton	Westfield
Granville	Pelham	Westhampton
Hadley	Plainfield	Worthington
Hampden		

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held on June 11, 2020

The October 10th virtual meeting of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed all those present. Mr. Gunn congratulated Executive Director Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP on her excellent leadership since taking the helm of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission a year ago. Mr. Gunn underscored that the PVPC's endeavors have excelled during this pandemic and Ms. Robinson has done an amazing job. Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Thursday, June 11, 2020 Commission meeting.

MOVED BY JUDY TERRY, SECONDED BY JOANNA BROWN, TO APPROVE THE OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2020.

Mr. Gunn asked if there were any questions, comments or corrections regarding the subject meeting minutes. Joanna Brown, Commission member representing the Town of South Hadley, asked that no number be mentioned relative to the number of housing development units being proposed as a subdivision over the Dry Brook Aquifer in South Hadley.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE AMENDED MINUTES OF THE JUNE 11, 2020 COMMISSION MEETING WERE APPROVED WITH ONE ABSTENTION BY DANIEL LAVALLEY, NEWLY APPOINTED COMMISSION MEMBER REPRESENTING THE TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON.

2. Presentation and Discussion on Domestic Violence: Background of PVPC's work, the Impact of COVID-19 and PVPC's Response

Mr. Gunn welcomed the first guest speaker, Monica Moran, PVPC Manager of Domestic Violence Prevention Programs, to discuss the impact of COVID-19 and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's (PVPC's) response and on-going related work. Ms. Moran explained that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) is involved with domestic violence work because it is a serious public health issue that not only hurts individuals, but also impacts almost every sector of the Pioneer Valley region, including police, courts, schools, health care, faith communities, colleges, universities, and neighborhoods. She reported that most police departments estimate they're using 20 to 40% of their time responding to domestic violence, Ms. Moran noted that one in four women and one in seven men will be a victim of domestic violence at some point in their lifetimes. She underscored that the abuse is often more severe and longer lasting for women. Ms. Moran added that approximately 14% of the women who go to a hospital emergency room are there because of domestic violence-related issues.

Ms. Moran reported that the PVPC became involved with domestic violence prevention in 1998 and she has managed its domestic violence programs for the past 22 years. She announced that the domestic violence programs recently received a little over \$350,000 to assist in the development of helpline services for people at risk of harming someone they love and the delivery of education, support and resources to their friends and family members. Ms. Moran shared that domestic violence incidents during the pandemic have gotten worse. She has learned of cases where women aren't calling the police or asking for help because they're afraid of contracting COVID-19 in a shelter, a hospital or in a court room.

Ms. Moran announced that the PVPC in collaboration with 25 towns and in partnership with the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) will be using the recent grant money to develop a helpline for those who perpetrate domestic violence and want to stop. The helpline will operate 12 hours a day and 365 days a year. Ms. Moran stated that there are 37 domestic violence hotlines in the state of Massachusetts but not a single helpline for those who abuse others. She then responded to several questions which included citing the reasons why it's more difficult for victims of domestic violence to obtain help in rural communities.

Tracey Plantier, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of Wilbraham, asked Ms. Moran how she was reaching out to police departments in order to notify them that this Domestic Violence Prevention Program helpline service is available to communities. Ms. Moran replied that this helpline service is not yet available but when it's launched, she will be calling the police chief of every one of the 25 cities and towns that are partnering with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the Behavioral Network to advise them of this Domestic Violence Prevention Program helpline service. Ms. Moran added that the success of the program depends on one to one outreach. Ms. Plantier then commented that the Town of Wilbraham has a Health Coalition group comprised of community members that collaborates with

Wilbraham's schools on substance abuse prevention. Ms. Plantier asked if this Domestic Violence Prevention Program, which now includes a helpline service for people at risk of harming someone they love, could be made available to community health coalition groups, especially those focusing on substance abuse, in all the Pioneer Valley Commission cities and towns. Ms. Moran replied that she can deliver helpline service information to community health coalition groups, and she asked Ms. Plantier to provide her with contact information. Mr. Gunn thanked Ms. Moran for her presentation and her dedicated domestic violence work and he then moved on to the next agenda item.

3. Presentation on Various Economic Impacts of COVID-19 in the Pioneer Valley

Mr. Gunn welcomed Douglas Hall, PVPC Data Manager and Analyst, to address the various impacts of COVID-10 in the Pioneer Valley. Mr. Hall stated that his presentation would center on the economy of the Pioneer Valley since mid-March. He noted that cities and minority populations have been adversely impacted by the pandemic and that unemployment in Massachusetts has significantly increased compared to a year ago. In comparing April 2019 with April 2020, Mr. Hall reported that the unemployment rate increased in Franklin County by 11.5%, in Hampshire County by 10.1% and in Hampden County by 14.1%. He noted that the unemployment rate improved in most states in July with the exception of Massachusetts. Mr. Hall pointed out that in July 2020, Springfield and Holyoke had the highest unemployment rates and one in four workers in Springfield were unemployed.

Mr. Hall stated that the data being displayed in his PowerPoint slides is a combination of estimates and surveys. He explained that his Pioneer Valley data indicates that health, social assistance, food, accommodations, manufacturing, retail trade and public administration were the sectors most adversely affected by the COVID-19 pandemic from March 8 through May 16 2020. Mr. Hall underscored that during that time frame, the Pioneer Valley had a significantly higher share of unemployment insurance claims in the health and social assistance sector compared to the total unemployment claims in the state of Massachusetts. Mr. Hall reported that at the same time, the Pioneer Valley fared better in construction and in professional and technical services.

Mr. Hall pointed out that not only do people of color have the highest unemployment insurance claims but that the highest unemployment rates for them occurred in July whereas both white workers and Asian workers hit their peak unemployment claims in early May. He explained that this can be partially explained by white and Asian workers having more of an opportunity to work at home. Mr. Hall added that the higher the income and the higher the education level of a job, the more quickly that position returned to work. He indicated a similar unemployment pattern comparing unemployment insurance claims for male and female workers. Male worker unemployment claims spiked in early May but unemployment claims for female workers hit their highest point several weeks later. Mr. Hall emphasized that the differential impact of the pandemic isn't just by race; it's also by gender. Mr. Hall underscored, however, that the greatest and longest impact of COVID-19 is being borne by the lower income earners. He reported that following the initial wave of COVID-19 shut-downs, the highest income earners had not only bounced back, but were doing better while lower income earners saw no improvement and proved to be slower to recover.

Mr. Hall reported that the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) greatly benefited the Pioneer Valley in the aftermath of the onset of the pandemic. He noted that the PPP assisted 9,000 Pioneer Valley businesses with about \$1.1 billion dollars in loans and in the process saved over 100,000 jobs during that period of time. Mr. Hall explained that although there were some substantially large loans, most of the PPP loans were for \$150,000 or less and were primarily made to restaurants, limited service restaurants, business offices, doctors, dentists, lawyers, schools, religious institutions and organizations. Mr. Hall further reported that responses to a McKinsey global survey in July revealed that business executives anticipate having their employees work from home a substantial amount of time two years from now. Mr. Hall then closed his presentation by announcing that a new blog section has been added to the PVPC's data website, www.pioneervalleydata.org/blog and he welcomed any feedback, questions, comments or concerns. Mr. Gunn thanked Mr. Hall for his presentation, and it was suggested that Mr. Hall's data analysis of COVID-19's impact on the Pioneer Valley's economy be added to the PVPC's monthly *Pioneer Valley Progress Report*.

4. Presentation the Top 100 High Crash Intersections in the Pioneer Valley

Mr. Gunn announced the next guest presenter, Gary Roux, PVPC Principal Planner, to discuss the top 100 high crash intersections in the Pioneer Valley. Mr. Roux began his presentation by displaying an interactive map that can be found on

the www.PVPC.org website which reflects the locations of the top 100 high crash intersections. Mr. Roux indicated that when a location is selected, information about that location can be obtained. He reported that there are a few locations where drone footage can be obtained consisting of photographs and videos as well. Mr. Roux explained that the *Top 100 High Crash Intersections in the Pioneer Valley* report is based on crash data from 2015 to 2017. He explained that data is available for 2018 – 2020 but the data has not been finalized yet. He reported that ranking of the crash data is based on EPDO which stands for *Equivalent Property Damage Only* scoring. Mr. Roux explained that EPDO is now calculated differently. The new method assigns property damage a “1” and serious injury and fatal crashes are assigned a value of “21” in an attempt to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes by assigning a higher priority to them. Mr. Roux remarked that when he speaks about high crash locations, the East Longmeadow rotary is always mentioned. He reported that the East Longmeadow rotary is not listed on the top 100 crash locations list because rotaries operate differently from intersections.

Mr. Roux reported that where there are two very closely spaced intersections, they are treated as a cluster and appear as one intersection on the top 100 list. He remarked that a safety problem at one of the intersections is usually the result of something happening at both intersections. Mr. Roux announced that ten communities have at least one intersection that appears on the list. He reported that the City of Springfield has the greatest number of high crash intersections with 63, and the intersection that ranks number one with the most crashes is the “X” in Springfield. He added the intersection of Buckley Boulevard, Route 116, Prospect Street and Montgomery Street in Chicopee increased in rank moving up by 78 places to be ranked number 10 on the list with 78 crashes. Mr. Roux underscored that 25 intersection locations on the top 100 list have had improvements made; 11 locations are scheduled on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for improvements; and 41 of the locations have already had a roadway safety audit.

Mr. Roux stated that the *Top 100 High Crash Intersections for the Pioneer Valley* report is scheduled to be finalized this month and it will appear on the www.PVPC.org website along with the interactive map reflecting the locations of the top 100 high crash intersections. He added that a link to the report and map will be sent out to everyone. After Mr. Roux entertained a few questions, Mr. Gunn thanked him for his insightful presentation and then Mr. Gunn moved on to the next agenda item.

5. Clean Energy and Climate Action Planning — the Power of Regional Planning, Municipal Successes and Moving Ahead with Regional Implementation

Mr. Gunn then invited Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager, and Patty Gambarini, Principal Environmental Planner and Section Manager, to update Commission members on relevant clean energy and climate action planning. Ms. Rattè reported that in 2003, the PVPC set aggressive goals and secured funding to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with state goals. Ten years later, the regional greenhouse gas emissions goals were exceeded. Ms. Rattè underscored that those goals of generating clean, safe, sustainable energy in the Pioneer Valley are on target. She reported that the PVPC in collaboration with the federal government, the state government, academic institutions, the business sector, the not-for-profit advocacy sector, and the 43 municipalities in the Pioneer Valley is pursuing the Commonwealth’s Green Communities Initiative and the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP). Ms. Rattè further reported that currently there are 43 designated Certified Green Communities in the Pioneer Valley that are implementing measures that will reduce their environmental impacts.

Ms. Rattè explained that Al Gore’s *Inconvenient Truth* published in 2006 raised the public’s awareness of the climate crisis; and as a result, climate action was integrated into the PVPC’s clean energy and sustainability work. Then In 2010, the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) was created. Ms. Rattè explained that the MVP assists cities and towns in the process of planning for climate change resiliency by awarding communities with funding to complete vulnerability assessments and develop resiliency plans and projects. She noted that communities that complete the MVP program become certified as MVP communities and are then eligible for MVP Action Grant funding. Ms. Rattè announced that 34 Pioneer Valley municipalities are either already certified or working on being certified as Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness communities.

Patty Gambarini, Principal Environmental Planner and Section Manager stated that climate is a global issue. Ms. Gambarini noted that climate change is tied to fossil fuel use and carbon emissions. She underscored that if everyone continues with business as usual, the climate scenarios will be dire, and she emphasized that a lower emission scenario

will be more manageable. Ms. Gambarini explained that the two climate trends that are most concerning for the Pioneer Valley region are temperature and precipitation. Temperatures have been increasing in the Pioneer Valley but more important is the number of days that will have temperatures over 90 degrees. Ms. Gambarini remarked that a higher emission scenario toward the end of the century could result in as many as 76 additional days that are above 90 degrees. She reported that precipitation projections for the Connecticut River Basin indicate between 1.7 inches and 8.3 inches annually but the issue is that the rainfall pattern may be much different. Ms. Gambarini indicated that rainfall is expected to increase in the spring and winter months with increasing consecutive dry days in the summer and fall that combined with higher temperatures will lead to drought. And because more of this precipitation is expected to fall in winter months as rain instead of snow, there will be less snowpack to recharge aquifers in the spring.

Ms. Gambarini reported that nature based solutions to climate change are being encouraged in Massachusetts which means working with nature to tackle challenges such as planting trees in urban areas to cool down the urban heat. She noted that the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Sustainability Grants in 2011 advanced green infrastructure stormwater management practices throughout the region. Ms. Gambarini stated that the PVPC has a three-year Mass Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) grant as do the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to collaboratively perform watershed planning on a larger scale.

Although the MS4 Permit is not popular, Ms. Gambarini stated that it has advanced climate adaptation within the region with its regulatory review, new design standards for projects, and low impact development strategies which will help landscapes absorb more rainfall. Ms. Gambarini added that there are decision-making support tools to assist climate adaptation and interactive maps related to prioritizing and ranking the best locations for green infrastructure retrofits available.

Ms. Gambarini shared that she and PVPC Senior Planner Emily Slotnick, have been discussing developing a regional adaptation resilience steering group comprised of local municipalities. Ms. Gambarini stated that the adaptation resilience steering group that she and Ms. Slotnick want to explore correlates with what the Land Use Department is currently doing. Ms. Gambarini noted that such a regional steering group would add to the work that Ms. Rattè has been doing on climate mitigation with the Clean Energy and Climate Action Group over the years.

Mr. Gunn thanked Ms. Rattè and Ms. Gambarini saying that not only were their presentations outstanding but the presentations given by Ms. Moran, Mr. Roux and Mr. Hall were excellent as well.

6. Community Reports/Updates From PVPC Commission Members

This agenda was combined with agenda item #7, the Executive Director's Highlights.

7. Executive Director's Highlights

Kimberly Robinson, PVPC Executive Director, began by thanking the Commission members and PVPC staff members for the opportunity to work with them over the past year. Ms. Robinson stated that her first day working for the PVPC was exactly one year and a day ago, and she's just as excited to be part of the PVPC now as she was then. Ms. Robinson underscored that there were four impressive presentations given at today's meeting and she hopes to incorporate more presentations from PVPC departments in future Commission meetings.

Ms. Robinson reported that the \$400,000 EDA grant mentioned at the last Commission meeting affords an opportunity to look at public health infrastructure from a more regional perspective. Ms. Robinson indicated that other potential opportunities will include economic impact analysis that builds on the COVID-19 impact work that Douglas Hall shared in his presentation this evening. Ms. Robinson added that there is interest in economic resilience and scenario planning. She noted that there are several impressive partners who are willing to work with the PVPC on scenario planning for the future. Ms. Robinson reported that the state COVID-19 funding was utilized for social services, micro-enterprise business assistance and domestic violence prevention programs. She underscored that the PVPC will be receiving over \$2 million to provide micro-enterprise business programs and will partner in furnishing outreach and management with the Valley Community Development Corporation (CDC) and the Quabbin CDC.

Recently, the PVPC informed towns and cities of an opportunity to apply for funds to help support their elections work. Ms. Robinson reported that East Longmeadow immediately applied and received \$300 for election support work. Ms. Robinson announced that there are several upcoming trainings and events including Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) workshops; the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) scheduled for November 10th at 7:00 p.m.; and the East West Rail online public meeting scheduled for Thursday, October 22nd from 6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. Ms. Robinson stated that she will send out the dates and times of these trainings and events and other upcoming events.

8. Other Business

Tracey Plantier, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of Wilbraham, reported that the Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) will be sponsoring virtual webinars on October 28, November 5 and November 13.

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the Thursday, October 8, 2020 Commission meeting.

MOVED BY DANIEL LAVALLEY, SECONDED BY TRACEY PLANTIER, TO ADJOURN THE THURSDAY, OCTOBER 8TH COMMISSION MEETING. THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO CONDUCT, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 7:42 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda for the Thursday, October 8, 2020 Commission Meeting
- Minutes of the June 11, 2020 Commission meeting minutes