

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, February 11, 2021
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Commission Members Present Were:

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
Jesse Belcher-Timme	Commissioner	Easthampton
Joanna Brown	Commissioner	South Hadley
Lillian Camus	Commissioner	Granby
Mark Dunn	Alternate Commissioner	Hadley
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Judith Eiseman	Commissioner	Pelham
Michael Hutchins	Commissioner	Blandford
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Jack Jemsek	Commissioner	Amherst
Jay Joyce	Alternate Commissioner	Granby
George Kingston	Commissioner	East Longmeadow
Linda LeDuc	Alternate Commissioner	Palmer
Michael Marciniac	Commissioner	Palmer
Jay Moore	Commissioner	Wilbraham
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Mimi Panitch	Commissioner	Holyoke
Stephen Snow	Commissioner	Williamsburg

PVPC Staff Present:

Patrick Beaudry, Manager of Public Affairs
 Ray Centeno, Graphic/Web Designer
 Jacob Dolinger, Senior Planner/GIS Specialist
 Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager
 Patty Gambarini, Principal Planner and Section Manager, Environment and Land Use Section
 Indrani Kowlessar, Office Manager and Executive Assistant
 Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager, Environment and Land Use Section
 Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
 Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Transit Manager
 Louise Sullivan, Administrative Assistant I Specialist
 Jacinta Williams, Planner, Environment and Land Use Section
 Todd Zukowski, Cartographic Section Manager

Communities Not Represented at the February 11, 2021 Commission Meeting

Brimfield	Ludlow	Wales
Chester	Middlefield	Ware
Chesterfield	Montgomery	West Springfield
Chicopee	Northampton	Westfield
Cummington	Plainfield	Westhampton
Goshen	Russell	Worthington
Granville	Southampton	
Hampden	Springfield	
Huntington	Tolland	

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held on December 10, 2020

The February 11th virtual meeting of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed all those present. Mr. Gunn asked for a roll call saying that there was a quorum. After the roll call, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Thursday, December 10, 2020 Commission meeting.

MOVED BY DOUGLAS ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY STEPHEN SNOW, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, DECEMBER 10, 2020.

Mr. Gunn asked if there were any questions, comments or corrections regarding the subject meeting minutes. Joanna Brown had a question about a statement made by Patrick Beaudry during his presentation of "The Work of the Massachusetts Legislature" to which he quickly responded.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 10, 2020 COMMISSION MEETING WERE APPROVED

2. Pioneer Valley Planning Commission 2020 Highlights

PVPC Executive Director Kimberly Robinson announced that a new employee was attending tonight's Commission meeting, and she asked Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager of the Environment and Land Use Section, to welcome the new member of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC). Ms. Rattè introduced Jacinta Williams as the Environment and Land Use Section's new Planner. Ms. Rattè stated that Ms. Williams has a Master's in Urban and Regional Planning from UCLA and a Master of Fine Arts degree (MFA) from the University of Southern California, and her focus at the PVPC will be on technical assistance for green communities. Ms. Robinson thanked and welcomed Ms. Williams, and then called everyone's attention to the new PVPC document entitled *2020 Highlights* which has replaced the document entitled *Major Accomplishments*.

As the two-page *2020 Highlights* document was scrolled on the Zoom screen, Ms. Robinson explained that the left-hand side of the first page displays the seven PVPC departments or sections serving 43 cities and towns in Hampden and Hampshire Counties: Community Development, Data and Mapping, Economic Development, Health and Human Services, Land Use and Environment, Municipal and Regional Services, and Transportation. Ms. Robinson remarked that she was excited to share three 2020 statistics delineated on the first page:

- \$2.7 Million received by the PVPC to use for COVID-19 response, support, relief and recovery in its 43 communities in the areas of public health, economic development, social services and microenterprise business support.
- 115 families able to stay in their homes because of the PVPC's Housing Rehabilitation and Home Modification Loan Programs which assist low to moderate income families, seniors and individuals with disabilities.
- 79% of PVPC's cities and towns have been certified in the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program which is helping them understand and build community resilience for the future.

Ms. Robinson explained that the second page of the *2020 Highlights* provides a brief summary of the work being done in each of the 7 sections of the PVPC. Ms. Robinson reported that \$606,500 was distributed for social services including food banks, elder services, adult education and community health services, and \$3.3 million was delivered in grant money for infrastructure projects in PVPC's 43 communities along with assistance provided for grant applications. Ms. Robinson remarked that the PVPC assisted the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority with an ongoing monitoring analysis of ridership and also initiated a work share, fire services program between Chesterfield, Goshen, Plainfield and Worthington to increase capacity and reduce costs. Ms. Robinson indicated the website link at the bottom of page 2, to PVPC's multi-page, story map website: <https://tinyurl.com/PVPC-2020-HIGHLIGHTS> which was selected and her presentation moved to the website.

Ms. Robinson referred to the website as a story map comprised of screens of information that scroll over photographs. At the top is a navigation bar consisting of *Introduction, Regional Relief & Recovery, Shared Experiences, and A Valley for Everyone*. As the screens were scrolled, Ms. Robinson provided explanations of work that has been and is being done by PVPC staff. Some of her comments were that the PVPC offers planning board assistance and conservation assistance for communities along with providing assistance with various projects such as the Chester-Blandford State Forest, the Connecticut River Cleanup, the Abbey Brook Project in Chicopee, and historic preservation work. Ms. Robinson added that the PVPC continues to work in collaboration with communities regarding solar land use regulations; high crash clusters and intersections; roadway and bridge improvements; the 2020 Regional Freight Plan; quality housing; racial equity; access to healthy food through LiveWell; the Health Equity Network; the Network to End Homelessness; and access to recreation sites. Ms. Robinson concluded her presentation by thanking the PVPC staff members who contributed to the creation and completion of the PVPC's *2020 Highlights* website: Patrick Beaudry, Ray Centeno, Jacob Dolinger and Todd Zukowski.

3. Review, Discussion and Final Endorsement of the Commission's Top Ten Resolves for 2021

PVPC Executive Director Kimberly Robinson announced that at the last Commission meeting held on December 10th, there was a discussion of the Top Ten Resolves. Ms. Robinson explained that the draft *Top Ten Resolves for 2021* has evolved after input from the comments made during that discussion and from all the communities over the last several months. She stated that there is now the opportunity to re-envision how we see our region and ourselves; how we communicate; and how we work together. Ms. Robinson began the discussion by reading the first of the ten 2021 resolves: "Partner with our communities to advance the work of regional economic recovery, using the new grants and programs available to address this issue." Ms. Robinson explained that this resolve references the ongoing PVPC grants and programs and anticipates more funding and programs to come in the future.

Ms. Robinson remarked that the second resolve concerns engaging in support work around identifying potential efficiencies and improvements for providing for public health needs. She indicated that in support of this resolve, both the Hampden County Health Coalition and the Medical Reserve Corps for Hampden County are being staffed in PVPV's office. Ms. Robinson reported that the third resolve of prioritizing PVPC's work regarding racial equity, diversity and inclusion supports the belief that the Pioneer Valley is a valley for all. Ms. Robinson noted that the PVPC is already fulfilling the fourth resolve of working with legislators and public administrators at the state and federal levels to advocate for beneficial policies and programs for its communities. A significant resolve that the PVPC will continue to support, she said, is championing the need for public multiple modes of transportation in the Pioneer Valley. Ms. Robinson indicated that the next resolve concerns advancing climate action strategies and countering the adverse effects of climate change.

Ms. Robinson announced that the PVPC is engaged in a housing study task force with Way Finders which supports the seventh resolve of working with member communities in addressing on-going diverse housing needs including housing rehabilitation; housing improvements which will allow seniors to remain in their homes; and an analysis of future housing needs. Ms. Robinson emphasized that the eighth resolve regarding the PVPC engaging in a strategic planning process recognizes what the Commissioners said in their December meeting about wanting a voice in the process. She underscored that this resolve stipulates that PVPC's strategic planning process will include engaging the 43 communities' planning commissioners, PVPC staff and other community stakeholders. Furthermore, it will promote diversity in the PVPC; communication between the 43 communities; and ensure the creation of appropriate places where PVPC staff and commissioners can engage in discussion and problem solving. Ms. Robinson explained that the 9th resolve is to collaborate with the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and the final resolve is to promote regional collaboration with all 43 member communities on projects of common interest, necessity and efficiency.

Ms. Robinson concluded her overview of the *Top Ten Resolves for 2021* by emphasizing that the PVPC will continue its focus on obtaining increased funding for transportation, economic and community development, sustainability, and resiliency work. She then asked if there were any questions or comments on the *Top Ten Resolves for 2021*.

Jack Jemsek, Commission member representing the Town of Amherst, commented that he was pleased to see the inclusion statement in the Top Ten Resolves. Joanna Brown remarked that the 2021 Top Ten are wonderful and she asked if there was a timeline for the document to be finalized. Ms. Robinson replied that the Top Ten Resolves have been approved at this February meeting in the past but there is nothing in the Commission's bylaws that indicates approval is necessary at this meeting. She added that whether you want to approve the Ten Resolves tonight or take some more time is up to you. George Kingston, Commission member representing the Town of East Longmeadow, stated that he would like more time to internalize the Top Ten. He said they were well thought out but he wants time to think about how the 2021 Resolves apply to his constituency in East Longmeadow. Mr. Gunn asked whether the Commissioners wanted to vote to approve the Top Ten Resolves for 2021 or wait until the April meeting. By a show of hands, the majority of Commissioners indicated that they wished to approve the Resolves at their April meeting.

Mr. Gunn moved on to the next agenda item.

4. Annual Budget Estimates – Fiscal Year 2022 (in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 40B M.G.L., the PVPC's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2022 will be introduced at the February 11, 2021 Commission meeting. Final approval will not be sought until the April Commission meeting to allow ample time for budget review and feedback – PVPC's FY 2022 budget proposal to be distributed)

Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager reported that the most significant change in the revenues in the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) FY 2022 Budget is the \$1.5 million received from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) which has been allocated to the Connecticut River Clean Up Committee (CRCC). Ms. Edinger stated that it's easier to budget for expenses because there so many are fixed expenses except for consultants within Professional Services because some of PVPC's projects might be multiple-year projects and not use a consultant until the third year of a project. Ms. Edinger noted that the OPEB (Other Post-Employment Benefits) amount has been slightly lowered and a change can be made until December 31, 2021. She explained that the Retirees' Health Insurance was separated out from the amount that the PVPC funds for Health/Dental/Group Insurance and the amount allocated for the Retirees' Health Insurance has been slightly increased in case one or two PVPC staff members retire this year. Ms. Robinson interjected that budget calculations for Health/Dental/Group Insurance are allowing for the potential hiring of additional staff.

Ms. Edinger reported that the budget for travel and conferences has been lowered due to COVID-19. Ms. Edinger remarked that Ms. Robinson slightly increased the amount budgeted for training seminars because she believes that new training opportunities for PVPC staff members will prove beneficial. Ms. Edinger indicated that overall, the budget has been increased only by .4% and it will be revisited again. She added that if there are any changes made, it will be reported to the Commissioners. Ms. Edinger asked if anyone had any questions or comments.

Mr. Kingston asked if the amount budgeted for technology and infrastructure was adequate and whether the amount budgeted anticipated any specific grant possibilities. Ms. Edinger replied that the PVPC will not be able to fund technology, infrastructure and the NOVUS survey in this fiscal year. She stated that a guesstimate line item was placed in the budget for this fiscal year but probably it will take three to five years for complete funding. Ms. Edinger added that there's hope that grants will be able to share the cost.

Mr. Gunn asked the Commissioners to contact or email Ms. Robinson or Ms. Edinger if they have any questions or comments regarding PVPC's FY 2022 Budget.

Mr. Gunn then moved on to the next agenda item.

5. Certification of Local Assessment Payments at a Proposed, Per Capita Rate of \$.17377 for Fiscal Year 2022 Which Would be Applicable to the PVPC's 43 Member Communities

Mr. Gunn announced that each year the Commissioners are asked to certify the local assessment payments. He explained that a few years ago, PVPC's auditors advised the PVPC to slightly increase the assessment amounts contributed by municipalities annually; however, state statute allows an increase of only two and a half percent. Mr. Gunn asked if

anyone had any questions about the local assessment payments as proposed. There being none, Mr. Gunn asked for a motion to accept the proposed local assessment figures for fiscal year 2022.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY JOANNA BROWN, TO APPROVE AND CERTIFY THE ANNUAL ASSESSMENTS OF THE PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION'S 43 MEMBER COMMUNITIES FOR FISCAL YEAR 2022, AS OUTLINED IN A REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR DATED FEBRUARY 5, 2021, AT A PER CAPITA RATE OF \$.17377 AND WHICH HAVE BEEN CALCULATED BASED ON U.S. CENSUS 2010 POPULATION FIGURES AND ALL RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S STATE ENABLING LAW (I.E. CHAPTER 40B M.G.L.)

Mr. Gunn asked if there were any questions, comments or abstentions from Commission members. There being none, Mr. Gunn called for a vote and asked the Commissioners for a show of hands to show approval of the motion.

THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

6. Community Reports/Updates From PVPC Commission Members

Jay Moore, Commissioner representing the Town of Wilbraham, thanked Ms. Robinson for her extremely enlightening and comprehensive presentation made at a recent Wilbraham Planning Board meeting. Ms. Robinson replied that she is available to speak at any of the Commissioners' planning board meetings and to send her an email with a request.

Jack Jemsek, Commissioner representing the Town of Amherst, expressed his appreciation for a presentation done in Amherst by Doug Hall who delivered a presentation on Covid-19 and its effects on the economy. Ms. Robinson stated that Doug Hall is also available to speak to the Commissioners' planning boards.

7. Other Business

Mr. Gunn reminded the Commissioners that their next meeting is scheduled for April 8, 2021 at 5:30 p.m.

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the Thursday, February 11, 2021, Commission meeting.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY JAY MOORE, TO ADJOURN THE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH COMMISSION MEETING. THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO CONDUCT, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 6:40 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda for the Thursday, February 11, 2021 Commission Meeting
- Minutes of the December 10, 2020 Commission meeting minutes
- the Proposed PVPC Local Assessment Figures for Fiscal Year 2020.
- Proposed Annual Assessment of PVPC Member Municipalities for Fiscal Year 2022 memorandum