

**PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)**  
**Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, April 8, 2021**  
**Pioneer Valley Planning Commission**  
**Springfield, Massachusetts 01104**

Commission Members Present Were:

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
Isaac Bauer	Commissioner	Worthington
Jesse Belcher-Timme	Commissioner	Easthampton
Joanna Brown	Commissioner	South Hadley
Mark Dunn	Alternate Commissioner	Hadley
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Judith Eiseman	Commissioner	Pelham
Dori-Ann Ference	Alternate Commissioner	Holland
Christopher Flory	Alternate Commissioner	Williamsburg
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Michael Hutchins	Commissioner	Blandford
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Jack Jemsek	Commissioner	Amherst
Jay Joyce	Alternate Commissioner	Granby
George Kingston	Commissioner	East Longmeadow
Alice Knittel	Commissioner	Belchertown
Cynthia Labrie	Commissioner	Chicopee
Jay Moore	Commissioner	Wilbraham
Peggy O'Neal	Alternate Commissioner	Worthington
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Mimi Panitch	Commissioner	Holyoke
Marcus Phelps	Commissioner	Southwick
Tracy Plantier	Alternate Commissioner	Wilbraham
Stephen Snow	Commissioner	Williamsburg
David Whitehill	Alternate Commissioner	Northampton

Guests Present

Kate Kruckemeyer, Planning Board, City of Holyoke

PVPC Staff Present:

Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager  
 Patty Gambarini, Principal Planner and Section Manager, Environment and Land Use Section  
 Indrani Kowlessar, Office Manager and Executive Assistant  
 Kate Kruckemeyer, Planning Board, City of Holyoke  
 Jeff McCollough, Senior Transportation Planner  
 Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager, Environment and Land Use Section  
 Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director  
 Dana Roscoe, Principal Planner/Transportation Manager  
 Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Transit Manager  
 Louise Sullivan, Administrative Assistant I Specialist

Communities Not Represented at the April 8, 2021 Commission Meeting

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

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held on February 11, 2021

The April 8<sup>th</sup> virtual meeting of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed all those present. Mr. Gunn announced there was a quorum and he asked for a roll call. After the roll call, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to approve the minutes of the Thursday, February 11, 2021 Commission meeting.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 2021.

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.

THERE BEING NO FURTHER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING WERE APPROVED

PVPC Executive Director Kimberly Robinson welcomed everyone; and she remarked that in early January, Governor Charlie Baker signed an economic development bill that included some changes in housing choice legislation. Ms. Robinson introduced Catherine Rattè, Principal Planner and Section Manager of the Environment and Land Use Section, to discuss the housing choice changes and answer any questions the Commissioners may have.

2. "Housing Choice" New Economic Development Bill — What Does It Mean for the Pioneer Valley

Catherine Rattè stated that the whole point of this legislation is to expand housing options in the Commonwealth. Ms. Rattè reported that the new economic development bill requires several amendments to Chapter 40A of the General Laws, commonly known as the Zoning Act. Ms. Rattè indicated that the most significant policy change reduces the number of votes or vote threshold needed to enact certain zoning changes from a two-thirds majority to a simple majority. Ms. Rattè noted that this includes changes to Section 9 of the Zoning Act in the voting thresholds required for the issuance of certain kinds of special permits.

Ms. Rattè remarked that the Zoning Act applies to all municipalities in Massachusetts except the City of Boston because it has its own zoning enabling act. She explained that Section 5 of the Zoning Act states that a zoning ordinance or bylaw can be enacted by a simple majority vote rather than by the two thirds super majority if that bylaw meets the following nine criteria:

1. Allows for multi-family housing or mixed-use developments in an eligible location "as of right" or according to what's legally correct
2. Allows for open space residential development "as of right"
3. Allows accessory dwelling units, either within the principal dwelling or within a detached structure on the same lot, "as of right"
4. Allows dwelling units by special permit in detached structures on the same lot
5. Reduces the parking requirements for residential or mixed-use development under a special permit
6. Allows an increase in the permissible density of population or intensity of a particular use in a proposed multi-family or mixed-use development that requires a special permit

7. Changes the dimensional standards such as lot coverage or floor area or changes ratio, height, setbacks minimum open space coverage, parking or building coverage to allow for the construction of additional residential units on a particular parcel or parcels of land.
8. Provides for natural resource protection zoning or transfer of development rights zoning where the adoption of such zoning promotes concentration of development in areas that the municipality deems most appropriate for such development but that will not result in a reduction in the size or extent of the maximum number of housing units that could be developed within the municipality
9. Adopts a Smart Growth or Starter Home Zoning District in accordance with Section 3 of Chapter 40R of the General Laws.

Ms. Rattè explained that someone who is proposing a zoning ordinance or a bylaw for the development of new housing needs to include a statement in the petition explaining which of the nine criteria allows it to be enacted by a simple majority vote. Ms. Rattè noted that a municipality's planning board or city council needs to hold a public hearing on the proposed bylaw. Then unless 21 days have elapsed since the public hearing, the planning board needs to submit a report to the city council or town meeting. Ms. Rattè indicated that a planning board should first consult with municipal legal counsel then include in its report whether a simple majority vote applies to the bylaw being proposed. At this point, Ms. Rattè said, a vote can be taken to approve the bylaw, but the Zoning Act requires that all zoning bylaws adopted by a municipality must be submitted to the Attorney General for approval along with proof that the municipality has complied with all requirements. She underscored that the bylaw or portions of it won't be granted approval if the Attorney General finds an inconsistency.

Ms. Rattè explained that Section 1A of the Zoning Act defines eligible locations as being locations that are suitable for residential or mixed use Smart Growth zoning districts or are locations that are located in a zoning district for starter homes. Also deemed eligible are commercial districts, rural village districts and areas with transportation access such as transit stations, rapid transit, or commuter rail. Ms. Rattè noted, however, that the Zoning Act doesn't specify who determines whether a location is an eligible location so it's recommended that a municipality's planning board include a determination of whether the subject location is eligible in its report.

Ms. Rattè cautioned the Commissioners that Section 5, as amended, provides that any amendment that requires a simple majority vote shouldn't be combined with amendments that require a two thirds majority. She noted that proposals encouraging new housing will get the benefit of the simple majority threshold. Ms. Rattè underscored that combining proposals with different voting thresholds will require conferring with their municipality's legal counsel. She added that additional guidance can be found on the website of the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and on <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/housing-choice-initiative>. After responding to a few questions, Ms. Rattè suggested that before there are problems, it would be helpful if planners could obtain more information about the housing choice legislation. Ms. Rattè stated that she's willing to present a two-hour workshop on the new legislation. Ms. Robinson suggested providing a roundtable for Pioneer Valley planners to discuss the new legislation's implementation. Mr. Gunn thanked Ms. Rattè for her presentation and Ms. Robinson for her roundtable suggestion; and after a few more comments, he moved on to the next agenda item.

### 3. Overview of the Regional Transportation Planning Process

Mr. Gunn asked Dana Roscoe, Principal Planner/Transportation Manager and Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Transit Manager to present an overview of the regional transportation process. Mr. Roscoe explained that a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) is a required, federally funded, transportation policy-making organization that represents municipalities in an urbanized area with a population over 50,000. Mr. Roscoe remarked that the federal funding received by the MPO is authorized by the *Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act* which is a six-year allocation that will expire on September 30, 2021. He explained that there are two possible outcomes upon the FAST Act's expiration: a six-year reauthorization of the FAST Act or a Biden Administration appropriation of an additional \$2 trillion over and above a six-year reauthorization of the FAST Act. Mr. Roscoe stated that the Pioneer Valley MPO has

the authority to spend federal dollars and is comprised of state and regional representatives. He then delineated the Pioneer Valley MPO membership by region as follows:

- The core cities of Chicopee, Holyoke and Springfield
  - MPO Representative, Mayor of Springfield: Domenic Sarno
  - MPO Representative, Mayor of Chicopee: John Vieau
  - Alternate MPO Representative in absence of above two Representatives, Mayor of Holyoke: to be determined
- The Agawam, Southwick, West Springfield and Westfield region
  - MPO Representative, Mayor of West Springfield: William Reichelt
- The Northampton, Amherst, Easthampton, Hadley and South Hadley region
  - MPO Representative, Mayor of Easthampton: Nicole LaChapelle
- The eastern communities of Pelham, Belchertown, Granby, Ware, Palmer, Wilbraham, Monson, Longmeadow, East Longmeadow, Hampden, Brimfield, Wales, Holland and Ludlow
  - MPO Representative, currently vacant – invitation letter being mailed
- The western communities of Blandford, Granville, Russell, Southampton, Williamsburg, Chesterfield, Hatfield, Huntington, Worthington, Cummington, Goshen, Middlefield, Plainfield, Montgomery, Westhampton and Chester
  - MPO Representative, Roger Fuller, Select Board member in Chesterfield

Additional MPO representatives as reported by Mr. Roscoe: Jamey Tesler, Acting Secretary and CEO of MassDOT; Jonathan Gulliver, Administrator of MassDOT Highway Division; Walter Gunn, Chairman of the PVPC Executive Committee; David Narkewicz, Chairman of the PVTA Advisory Board and Mayor of Northampton; and Richard Sullivan, CEO and President, Economic Development Council (EDC) of Western Massachusetts.

Mr. Roscoe explained that the Pioneer Valley Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) serves as a regional transportation, advisory committee for the MPO and is responsible for the coordination of all regional transportation-related plans and programs. The JTC meets on a monthly basis and is comprised of city and town highway engineers, Department of Public Works (DPW) personnel and town administrators among others. Mr. Roscoe reported that the JTC members are responsible for the implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP); the development of the annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP); and the preparation of the annual Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP). Mr. Roscoe explained that the TIP is a five year schedule of federally funded transportation projects that are prioritized based on readiness, cost and their Transportation Evaluation Criteria (TEC) score. Mr. Roscoe noted that the TEC evaluates a TIP project on its efficiency, preservation, modernization, livability, mobility, smart growth, economic development, safety, security, environmental climate change, quality of life, environmental justice and Title VI. Mr. Roscoe underscored that for the approved TIP projects proposed by the 43 cities and towns in the Pioneer Valley region valued in excess of \$300 million, the Pioneer Valley JTC has an annual TIP budget of approximately 27 million.

Gary Roux, Principal Planner and Transit Manager, stated that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is a long range planning document that identifies existing and future regional transportation needs for the TIP along with state and federal funding for TIP projects. He noted that the RTP includes the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) which describes the regional planning activities, planning objectives and specific work tasks anticipated to be completed in a given federal fiscal year. Mr. Roux underscored that any task to be considered for the UPWP requires a request in writing from a municipality's chief local elected official addressed to PVPC Executive Director Kimberly H. Robinson. Mr. Roux reported that transportation planning includes congestion studies, safety planning, rail and freight planning, pavement management, and assisting municipalities in the implementation of their Massachusetts Complete Streets Programs. Mr. Roux explained that the Complete Streets Program provides technical assistance and construction funding to eligible municipalities. He explained that pavement management is the study of the condition of pavement and the implementation of a maintenance plan that can slow down its deterioration. Mr. Roux emphasized the importance of being equitable and fair in all transportation planning activities including a strict adherence to environmental justice and Title VI planning.

Mr. Roux reported that data collection plays a significant role in transportation planning. He explained that traffic counting of vehicles and pedestrians includes daily traffic counts, vehicle classification counts, speed studies, and peak

hour counts. Mr. Roux announced that member municipalities can request two free traffic counts per year by submitting a form filled out by their chief elected official. Mr. Roux remarked that a special type of infrared counter is used that counts bicycles and pedestrian on regional trails. Data is also collected on passenger rail ridership and from ridership surveys that are conducted on Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA) transit routes.

Mr. Roux announced the imminent distribution of the *Pioneer Valley Safety Compass* which includes the PVPC's *Top 100 High Crash Intersection* report along with photos, interactive maps with detailed crash data for each location, and drone videos. The regional *Top 100 High Crash Intersections* report, he said, identifies the intersections, roadway segments, and rotaries with the highest number of crashes. Mr. Roux explained that the *Safety Compass* helps cities and towns classify their individual problem locations by providing a detailed individual profile for each of the Pioneer Valley's 43 municipalities. Referring to the City of Holyoke page of the *Safety Compass* displayed on the zoom screen, Mr. Roux noted that there are two pages for every municipality illustrating pertinent maps, charts, crash locations, type of crashes, roadway classifications along with regional data for comparison of non-motorist crashes, fatal crashes and other key findings in detail.

Another study resulting in a recently completed report is the *Pioneer Valley At-Grade Shared Use Path Crossings Study*. Mr. Roux explained that a shared-use path is an off road, bicycle, pedestrian or rail trail. He indicated that the *Pioneer Valley At-Grade Shared Use Path Crossings Study* report provides an information to each municipality which identifies path crossings that can be dangerous due to a lack of roadway warning signs, shared-use path signs, or inadequate pavement markings on the crosswalks. Mr. Roux reported that all regional path crossings have been visited and recommendations have been made for low cost improvements that a municipality can undertake such as clearing out debris; trimming back bushes; painting pavement markings; and improving signs.

Mr. Roux announced that the first *Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Transportation Plan* was completed last year. He explained that the Massachusetts Freight Plan was used as a guide but the *Pioneer Valley Regional Freight Transportation Plan* specifically identifies the needs of the Pioneer Valley freight carriers. Mr. Roux underscored that the most significant need is for more rest areas. He reported that the *Freight Transportation Plan* includes an inventory of the regional, low-clearance railroad underpasses ensuring that there are appropriate detour and warning signs for all locations.

Next, Mr. Roux spoke about ValleyBike, the regional bike share program, which had only a partial operation in 2020 due to the pandemic. He displayed a slide entitled *2020 Valley Bike Usage Data* illustrating total monthly rides in 2018, 2019 and 2020, and he stated that the numbers were encouraging. Mr. Roux reported that the PVPC is working to make more people aware of the opportunities inherent in the bike share program.

Indicating his last slide, *Passenger Rail*, Mr. Roux commented that there are reasons to be optimistic about the future of east-west and north-south rail. He remarked that U. S. Representative Richard Neal and State Senator Eric Lesser are strongly advocating for east-west passenger rail through Springfield, and there is a possibility for funding from President Biden's \$2 trillion infrastructure plan. Regarding north-south rail, Mr. Roux reported that service from Springfield to Greenfield and back had strong ridership until the service was reduced to one round-trip train a day because of the pandemic; however, Massachusetts Senator Jo Comerford has secured marketing funds to enable a marketing program that will improve ridership on that service.

Mr. Gunn thanked Mr. Roscoe and Mr. Roux for their presentation and he moved on to the next agenda item.

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

Mr. Gunn announced that several improvements have been made to the *Top Ten Resolves for 2021* and he asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Joanna Brown, Commissioner representing the Town of South Hadley, praised the updated *Top Ten Resolves* saying it was greatly improved, and she thanked Ms. Robinson and the PVPC staff for its transformation.

There being no further comments or questions, Mr. Gunn called for a vote to endorse the final, revised version of the PVPC's *Top Ten Resolves for 2021*.

MOVED BY JOANNA BROWN, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO APPROVE AND ADOPT IN FINAL FORM, THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDED TOP TEN RESOLVES FOR CALENDAR YEAR 2021 WHICH WERE INITIALLY PROPOSED TO AND DISCUSSED BY THE COMMISSION AT ITS DECEMBER 10, 2020 MEETING.

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 FINAL VERSION OF THE COMMISSION'S RECOMMENDED TOP TEN RESOLVES FOR 2021 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

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

5. Review, Discussion and Final Approval of the PVPC's Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Which Was Presented in Draft Form at the February 11th Commission Meeting

Mr. Gunn announced that the PVPC's Proposed Fiscal Year 2022 Budget was presented at the February 11<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting, and he asked the Commission Members if they had any questions for PVPC Accounting Manager, Lisa Edinger. There being none, Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address this agenda item.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO ADOPT THE RECOMMENDED FINAL VERSION OF THE PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC) FISCAL YEAR 2022 BUDGET (I.E. JULY 1, 2021 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2022) AS WAS OUTLINED AT THE FEBRUARY 11<sup>TH</sup> COMMISSION MEETING. IT IS ALSO UNDERSTOOD AND MADE KNOWN THAT THE COMMISSION'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE IS HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO FURTHER REVISE THE PVPC'S ADOPTED FY 2022 BUDGET AS THE AGENCY'S NEEDS AND CIRCUMSTANCES DICTATE.

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. Approval of the PVPC Borrowing Resolution for the Commission's Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022

Mr. Gunn remarked that this is a borrowing resolution for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2021. He explained that this resolution is hardly every used but it's available if it's ever needed. Mr. Gunn called for a motion to address this agenda item

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, THAT THE DULY ELECTED CHAIRMAN AND TREASURER OF THE PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION FOR 2021–2022 ARE HEREBY AUTHORIZED TO BORROW NECESSARY FUNDS IN ANTICIPATION OF REVENUES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE RELEVANT PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 40B M.G.L. FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$500,000 TO COVER OPERATING EXPENSES OF THE COMMISSION DURING THE PERIOD JULY 1, 2021 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2022 (I.E. FISCAL YEAR 2022). IT IS ALSO UNDERSTOOD AND MADE KNOWN THAT THE PVPC CHAIRMAN, TREASURER, ASSISTANT TREASURER, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SHALL BE AUTHORIZED TO EXECUTE ALL NECESSARY LOAN/BORROWING DOCUMENTS ON THE COMMISSION'S BEHALF.

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.

7. Community Reports/Updates From PVPC Commission Members

There being no community reports or updates, Mr. Gunn moved on to the next agenda item.

8. Other Business

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the Thursday, April 8, 2021, Commission meeting.

MOVED BY JACK JEMSEK, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO ADJOURN THE THURSDAY, APRIL 8<sup>TH</sup> COMMISSION MEETING. THERE BEING NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO CONDUCT, THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 7:00 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents Distributed for this Meeting:

- Agenda for the Thursday, April 8, 2021 Commission Meeting
- Minutes of the February 11, 2021 Commission meeting minutes
- *Top Ten Resolves for 2021.*
- Proposed FY 2022 PVPC Budget