

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Virtual Zoom PVPC Annual Meeting Held on Thursday, June 10, 2021
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Commission Members Present Were:

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
Isaac Bauer	Commissioner	Worthington
Joanna Brown	Commissioner	South Hadley
Lillian Camus	Commissioner	Granby
Joshua Carpenter	Alternate Commissioner	Ludlow
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Christopher Flory	Alternate Commissioner	Williamsburg
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Scott Hanson	Alternate Commissioner	Springfield
Richard Holzman	Commissioner	Chester
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Jack Jemsek	Commissioner	Amherst
Jay Joyce	Alternate Commissioner	Granby
George Kingston	Commissioner	East Longmeadow
Kate Kruckemeyer	Alternate Commissioner	Holyoke
Cynthia Labrie	Commissioner	Chicopee
Jay Moore	Commissioner	Wilbraham
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Mimi Panitch	Commissioner	Holyoke
Marcus Phelps	Commissioner	Southwick
Tracey Plantier	Alternate Commissioner	Wilbraham
David Whitehill	Alternate Commissioner	Northampton

Guests Present

Alvin Allen, Planner, City of Springfield
Chris Brewer, AECOM
Bianca Damiano, Town of Longmeadow
Dianne Doherty, Coordinating Council
Brooks Fitch, Coordinating Council
Stephen Gazillo, AECOM
Jeffrey Hayden, Holyoke Community College
Chris Kluchman, Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development
Kate Kruckemeyer, City of Holyoke
Kevin McCaffrey, Mt. Holyoke
Rick Sullivan, Economic Development Council of Western Massachusetts
Gregory Thomas, University of Massachusetts
David Woods, Coordinating Council
Lyle Wray, Capitol Region Council of Governments
Katie Allan Zobel, Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts

PVPC Staff Present:

Patrick Beaudry, Manager of Public Affairs
Ken Comia, Senior Planner
Jaime Duran, Senior Computer Specialist/Network
Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager
Mimi Kaplan, Senior Planner, Environment and Land Use Section
Indrani Kowlessar, Office Manager and Executive Assistant
Nick Peavy, Community Development Planner I

PVPC Staff Present continued:

Catherine Ratté, 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
Lori Tanner, Economic Development Manager
Eric Weiss, Manager of Regional and Municipal Programs
Jacinta Williams, Land Use Planner

Communities Not Represented at the June 10, 2021 Commission Meeting

Blandford	Huntington	Wales
Brimfield	Middlefield	Ware
Chesterfield	Montgomery	Tolland
Cummington	Palmer	West Springfield
Easthampton	Pelham	Westfield
Goshen	Plainfield	Westhampton
Granville	Russell	Worthington
Hampden	Southampton	
Holland	Tolland	

1. **Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Minutes of the Commission Meeting Held on April 8, 2021**

The June 10th virtual meeting of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's Annual Meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed all those present. Mr. Gunn welcomed two new Commission-members present at the meeting: Cynthia Labrie, new Commission member representing the City of Chicopee and Joshua Carpenter, Alternate Commissioner, representing the Town of Ludlow. 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, April 8, 2021 Commission meeting.

MOVED BY RICHARD HOLZMAN, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, APRIL 8, 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 FURTHER QUESTIONS, COMMENTS OR CORRECTIONS, THE MINUTES OF THE APRIL 8, 2021 COMMISSION MEETING WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED

Catherine Ratté, PVPC Principal Planner and Section Manager of the Environment and Land Use Section welcomed and introduced Mimi Kaplan, PVPC's new Senior Planner of the Environment and Land Use Section. PVPC Executive Director, Kimberly H. Robinson, then asked Brooks Fitch to speak about the Tim Brennan Exemplar Award which was initiated by Mr. Fitch, Rick Sullivan, Dianne Doherty and Larry Martin with input from the PVPC Executive Committee members.

2. **Presentation of the Inaugural Tim Brennan Exemplar Award**

Brooks Fitch explained that the annual Tim Brennan Exemplar Award alternately recognizes profit and non-profit organizations that possess the qualities exemplified by Tim Brennan. Rick Sullivan announced that a number of worthy, exemplary, nonprofit organizations were nominated for the 2021 inaugural Tim Brennan Exemplar Award but an outstanding leader in the region, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts led by Katie Allan Zobel, was selected because it has exemplified the leadership of Tim Brennan. Mr. Sullivan explained that the Community Foundation's Mission Statement speaks of its leadership as being collaborative, fair, equitable, having integrity and being strategic with an emphasis on diversity, inclusion and healing racism. Ms. Robinson then announced that as the current Executive Director of the PVPC and Tim Brennan's successor, it was her honor to bestow the first inaugural Tim

Brennan Exemplar Award to Katie Allan Zobel. Ms. Zobel expressed her gratitude saying that it's the 22 Community Foundation staff members, the 120 volunteers, and the donors that are deserving of this leadership award. Ms. Zobel underscored that she was honored on behalf of the Community Foundation to accept this Award in Tim Brennan's memory and on behalf of so many with whom the Community Foundation collaborates to make its work possible.

3. Presentation and Discussion of the New Simple Majority Zoning Rule Change for Housing Projects

Mr. Gunn introduced Chris Kluchman, Community Services Division Deputy Director of the Community Services Division at the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development, to present the new Simple Majority Vote for Certain Zoning Amendments rule change for housing projects. Ms. Kluchman explained that the Community Services Division is responsible for implementing the Community Development Block Grant Program and providing technical assistance. Ms. Kluchman reported that the Baker-Polito Administration began the Housing Choice Initiative in 2017 that has resulted in the changes to Chapter 40A known as the zoning statute. She noted that the goal of the legislation was to solve the housing crisis in Massachusetts by making it easier to zone for additional housing. Ms. Kluchman stated that between 1960 and 1990, Massachusetts communities permitted almost 900,000 new housing units; but since 1990, communities have permitted less than 470,000 new units.

The main thrust of this housing choice legislation, Ms. Kluchman stated, was to make it easier to pass zoning that promotes housing by changing the supermajority or two thirds voting threshold to a simple majority for certain zoning amendments. This legislation applies to all communities in Massachusetts except for Boston because Boston has its own zoning statute. Ms. Kluchman explained that allowing starter homes districts, accessory dwelling units or 40R Smart growth zoning now requires only a simple majority. She remarked that it's now easier for local governments to share revenue from a project that's adding revenue to one community but also affecting another community. Ms. Kluchman noted that the kinds of zoning amendments that qualify for the simple majority include multi-family or mixed use developments that allow for multi-family and mixed use in an eligible location. An eligible location is an area that's suitable for residential or mixed use, smart growth or starter homes or is near transit stations, commuter rail or bus lines or areas of concentrated development.

Ms. Kluchman noted that there is zoning that allows for certain kinds of housing developments by Special Permit and there is zoning that allows for certain kinds of housing developments "as of right." She explained that "as of right" means that there's no discretionary approval or special permit required. Ms. Kluchman then delineated several examples of zoning that qualifies for a simple majority rather than by the two thirds super majority and also, several examples of zoning changes that would not qualify for a simple majority vote. Ms. Kluchman underscored that if a zoning amendment is being initiated by a staff member or a planning board member, they need to explain why the amendment qualifies for a simple majority vote or a two-thirds majority. She cautioned that the Attorney General's Office has to review every bylaw and zoning amendment that is passed at a town meeting or a city council meeting.

Ms. Kluchman announced that guidance and supplemental information can be found at <https://www.mass.gov> which is continually updated and revised. Ms. Kluchman stated that this website was recently updated on May 20th, and she recommended checking it regularly for the latest guidance. Ms. Kluchman explained that if there is uncertainty about how a zoning proposal affects an eligible location, a municipality may request an advisory opinion on Chapter 40A eligible locations from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED), but the request must be made by a mayor or a member of a municipality's city council, town meeting, board of aldermen, planning board or select board. Upon receipt of a request, EOHED will provide a written advisory opinion within 30 days. Ms. Kluchman indicated that requesting guidance and supplemental information regarding obtaining an advisory opinion can be obtained by emailing housingchoice@mass.gov. Additionally, an online form to request an Advisory Opinion on Chapter 40A eligible locations can be found at: [Housing Choice and MBTA Communities Legislation | Mass.gov](#).

Ms. Kluchman noted that PVPC will email her presentation slides to the Commissioners and she responded to several questions. Mr. Gunn and Ms. Robinson then thanked Ms. Kluchman for her very informative presentation, and Mr. Gunn moved on to the next agenda item.

4. Review, Discussion and Final Endorsement of the Economic Impact of Regional Rail Development in the Metro Hartford-Springfield Region

Ms. Robinson announced that the Economic Impact of Regional Rail Development would be presented by a team comprised of Lyle Wray, Executive Director of the Capitol Region Council of Governments; Stephen Gazillo, Vice President, Transportation Planning, New England Region, AECOM; and Chris Brewer, Vice President, Greater Chicago Area, AECOM.

Mr. Wray noted that that over the years, the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the Capitol Region Council of Governments (CRCOG) have discussed the economic benefits of investing in rail improvements for the Metro Hartford-Springfield Region as it is the 40th largest Metro region in the country. Mr. Wray noted that *The Economic Benefits of Regional Rail Investment in Metro Hartford-Springfield* is a study prepared for CRCOG by AECOM. He explained that the study suggests that the completion of the bi-state Hartford Line and the implementation of the East-West Rail project in Massachusetts makes sense from an engineering, environmental, economic, and equity point of view in terms of transportation and access.

Mr. Gazillo remarked that the *Economic Benefits of Regional Rail Investment in Metro Hartford-Springfield* reveals that over the years, the City of Springfield has become disconnected from Boston and from Worcester. He pointed to a zoom slide illustrating existing rail lines overlaying a NASA photo of New England at night showing a dark area between Springfield and Worcester. Mr. Gazillo stated that the study analyzed the potential economic benefits of proposed rail improvements in Hampden and Hampshire Counties, as well as in the Hartford area. Mr. Gazillo then introduced Chris Brewer saying that Mr. Brewer, AECOM Vice President of the Greater Chicago Area, continues to bring his technical and economic expertise and objectivity to an analysis of the Metro-Hartford-Springfield Region.

Mr. Brewer explained that as AECOM began its study of the Metro-Hartford-Springfield Region with its declines in population, employment, and slow rate of growth, the degree to which it differs from the Northeast Corridor became apparent. Mr. Brewer stated that one reason is that information, finance and professional service jobs along with securities and commodities sectors are missing in the Metro-Hartford-Springfield Region whereas they are very concentrated along the Northeast Corridor. Mr. Brewer noted that these are jobs and sectors that are tied to transit and the Hartford-Springfield region has demonstrated an inability to offer adequate, regional, transit connections. Mr. Brewer underscored that the ability to get to work is an actual economic development benefit which reinforces the importance of transit as an economic development tool. He stated that the lack of transit in the Metro-Hartford-Springfield Region has fundamentally altered its regional economy. Mr. Brewer added that the more you shorten travel time, the more people can commute further away from where they live for jobs.

Mr. Brewer remarked that the study emphasizes equity as an economic benefit because without accessible, available transportation, impoverished populations do not have the ability to access jobs with reasonable incomes. There is in the Metro-Hartford-Springfield Region, he reported, the potential for more than 30,000 jobs connected to transit with the capacity for development over the next 20 – 40 years. Mr. Brewer underscored that the addition of regional rail will improve local resident access to higher quality jobs. Mr. Brewer explained that 30,000 new jobs will result in new housing construction and new housing will drive a significant amount of spending over the 30 – 50 year lifetimes of new residents resulting in fiscal benefits accruing to local and state governments. Mr. Brewer reported the cost of connecting Hartford and Springfield to the Northeast Corridor over the next five to ten years in current year dollars would be somewhere between \$6.7 and \$9.6 billion but the economic benefits such as labor market connectivity, new construction, new housing, tourism and entertainment venues far outweigh the costs.

Mr. Gunn thanked Mr. Wray, Mr. Gazillo and Mr. Brewer for their presentations and he moved on to the next agenda item.

5. Nomination and Election of 5 Commission Officers and 4 At-Large Executive Committee Members for 2021 - 2022

Mr. Gunn announced that every year, five Commission Officers and four At-Large Executive Committee members are nominated at PVPC's Annual Meeting, and he listed the individuals that the nominating committee selected as follows:

Executive Committee Members for July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022		and At-large Members
Chairman	Walter Gunn of Longmeadow	Marilyn Gorman Fil of Monson
Vice Chairman	Judy Terry of Chesterfield	Jack Jemsek of Amherst
Secretary/Clerk	Doug Albertson of Belchertown	Michael Marciniec of Palmer
Treasurer	George Kingston of East Longmeadow	Mark Paleologopoulos of Feeding Hills
Assistant Treasurer	T. J. Cousineau of Blandford	

Mr. Gunn asked the Commission Members if they wished to nominate a candidate for an Executive Committee member position or for an At-large Executive Committee member. There being no nominations, Mr. Gunn called for a vote by conducting a roll call. When the roll call was completed, Mr. Gunn stated that the slate for the Executive Committee was approved unanimously for another year commencing on July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022.

6. Community Reports/Updates From PVPC Commission Members

Joanna Brown, Commission member representing the Town of South Hadley, announced the upcoming retirement on July 10th of Richard Harris, who has been the Town Planner for South Hadley for 21 years. Ms. Brown added that Ann Capra, former Principal Planner for the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, has recently been appointed as South Hadley's Town Planner.

Mr. Gunn congratulated Jay Joyce, Alternate Commission member representing the Town of Granby, on his upcoming retirement, and he thanked Mr. Joyce for his service as a member of the Planning Commission and for his service as a Selectboard member and a Planning Board member for the Town of Granby.

Mr. Gunn announced that the PVPC recognizes staff members for their years of service at its Annual Meeting, and he asked Ms. Robinson to present PVPC's Award for 20 Years of Service to two outstanding staff members. Ms. Robinson replied that because both staff members had to leave the meeting early, she recommended that the awards be presented at the Commission's October meeting.

7. Other Business

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn this Thursday, June 10, 2021, Commission meeting.

MOVED BY RICHARD HOLZMAN, SECONDED BY JAY JOYCE, TO ADJOURN THIS THURSDAY, JUNE 10TH 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 June 10th Meeting:

- Agenda for the Thursday, June 10, 2021 Commission Meeting
- Minutes of the April 8, 2021 Commission meeting minutes