

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)

Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting
Thursday, January 30, 2020
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)
60 Congress Street, Large Conference Room
Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Present were:

Walter Gunn, Chair – Longmeadow
Judith Terry, Vice-Chair – Chesterfield
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown
George Kingston, Treasurer – East Longmeadow
T.J. Cousineau, Assistant Treasurer – Blandford
Lynn Arnold – Holland
Marilyn Gorman Fil – Monson
Michael Marciniec – Palmer

PVPC Staff:

Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager
James Mazik, Deputy Director for Operations/Community Development Section Manager
Catherine Ratte, Principal Planner/Environment and Land Use Section Manager
Lynn Shell, Support Staff
Eric Weiss, Municipal Services Coordinator

Guest:

Patrice Squillante, CPA, Melanson Heath & Company, P.C.

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Approval of the Minutes of the December 19, 2019 Executive Committee Meeting

The January 30th Executive Committee meeting was called to order at 4:03 p.m. by Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed everyone in attendance and then called for a motion to approve the December 19, 2019 meeting minutes.

MOVED BY JUDY TERRY, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2019 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, THE MINUTES WERE APPROVED WITH THREE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS, LYNN ARNOLD, MARILYN GORMAN FIL AND GEORGE KINGSTON, ABSTAINING FROM THE VOTE.

2. Presentation of the PVPC's Fiscal Year 2019 Audit Reports as Prepared by the Commission's CPA Firm Melanson Heath & Company P.C.

Patrice Squillante, Certified Public Accountant, referred to PVPC's Annual Financial Statements that had been distributed. She first discussed the *Statement of Net Position* and the *Statement of Activities* which are the government-wide activities including all grants under the General Fund and PVPC's long-term liabilities. Ms. Squillante pointed out that PVPC does not have a lot of surplus to absorb the liabilities and she noted that there's not much that can be done about the negative Unrestricted Net Position however she commended the PVPC for continuing to put money away for the OPEB Trust.

Ms. Squillante next discussed the *Governmental Funds Balance Sheet* which resembles the PVPC's internal financial records. She stated that the General Fund Unassigned Fund Balance is very low however she noted that under Assigned Fund Balances, the Executive Committee has set aside almost \$60,000 which is money that the board has designated as a reserve fund. Mr. Gunn asked when this reserve fund was established. Mr. Kingston stated that he believes this fund is comprised of several items that Committee members voted on over time. Ms. Squillante suggested that the Executive Committee may want to set up a more formal process for the Board Designated Assigned General Fund.

Ms. Squillante then reviewed the *Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances*. She noted that if there is a surplus on a grant, the closeout would be a transfer into the General Fund and if there are deficits, there would be a transfer out of the General Fund. Ms. Squillante noted that the deficits are caused by the difference in billing rates of indirect versus actual costs due to a 2 year lag time to recover PVPC's costs. She stated that the goal is to figure out how to stabilize that indirect cost rate. Ms. Squillante remarked that MassDOT allows PVPC to transfer money to OPEB from July to December and have that count towards the indirect cost rate for that year which gives PVPC some flexibility. She stated that the indirect cost rate should be a factor when making purchasing decisions and she recommended monitoring to better manage this. In closing, Ms. Squillante reported that PVPC was not issued a Management Letter this year.

Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to accept Melanson Heath's Fiscal Year 2019 audit reports of the PVPC.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY LYNN ARNOLD, TO ACCEPT THE PVPC'S AUDIT REPORTS ENCOMPASSING THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S 2019 FISCAL YEAR (I.E. JULY 1, 2018 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2019) AS PREPARED BY THE PVPC'S CERTIFIED PUBLIC ACCOUNTANT (CPA), MELANSON, HEATH AND COMPANY, P.C. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

Mr. Gunn and Ms. Robinson thanked Ms. Squillante for her report and Mr. Gunn then moved to take up agenda item 3.

3. Warrant/Financial Reports

PVPC Accounting Manager Lisa Edinger first highlighted some of the payments on PVPC's December 2019 warrant and she next discussed PVPC's account balances as of January 30, 2020 as outlined in a report entitled *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Financial Summary Profile*. Ms. Edinger also reviewed PVPC's Six Month Budget Report as of July 1 through December 31, 2019 and she stated that the budget will need to be adjusted next quarter. Ms. Edinger noted that she and Ms. Robinson will soon begin working on the FY21 budget.

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement With the Town of Wilbraham to Facilitate an Update of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan

Ms. Robinson stated that item 4 is being removed from today's agenda because no action is needed at this time. She explained that the contract with the Town has been delayed by MEMA. As regards agenda items 5, 6 and 7, Ms. Robinson stated that if there are no questions, Executive Committee members could choose to create a block vote and move on all 3 items at the same time. The block vote was then moved by Doug Albertson and seconded by Lynn Arnold.

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Accept Funding from the City of Chicopee to Supplement the Central Hampden County Medical Reserve Account

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY LYNN ARNOLD, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO ACCEPT AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED TWELVE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$12,500.00), TO SUPPLEMENT THE CENTRAL HAMPDEN COUNTY MEDICAL RESERVE ACCOUNT. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Town of Palmer to Provide Continued Assistance and Facilitation Services on the 4-Town Regional Animal Control Facility Project

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY LYNN ARNOLD, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT NOT TO EXCEED SIX THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$6,400.00), WITH THE TOWN OF PALMER UNDER ITS DLS EFFICIENCY AND REGIONALIZATION GRANT TO PROVIDE CONTINUED PROJECT ASSISTANCE AND FACILITATION SERVICES.

Mr. Kingston asked for clarification about the DLS Efficiency and Regionalization Grant. Eric Weiss, PVPC's Municipal Services Coordinator, explained that the Efficiency and Regionalization Grant is awarded through the Division of Local Services (DLS) and this contract is for the Regional Animal Control Facility Project with the Towns of Palmer, Warren, Ware

and Monson. Mr. Weiss noted that the facilitation services will be in the Town of Warren, not Palmer. He also noted that the contract amount of \$6,400 comes out of Community Compact money which will allow him to continue to help guide and keep the process moving forward.

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

7. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Behavioral Health Network (BHN) at Valley Human Services (VHS) for Domestic Violence Prevention Services

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY LYNN ARNOLD, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT NOT TO EXCEED EIGHTEEN THOUSAND TEN DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$18,010.00), WITH THE BHN AT VHS TO PROVIDE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION SERVICES UNDER THE PVPC'S FY18 WARE/HARDWICK CDF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PREVENTION PROGRAM. THERE BEING NO FURTHER COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS, THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

8. PVPC Land Use & Environment Section Update on FY 2020 Grant Work

Catherine Ratte, Principal Planner, Environment and Land Use Section Manager stated that she and Ms. Robinson felt it would be useful to provide the Executive Committee with advance information about the 2020 grant work being done by PVPC's Land Use and Environment Section. Ms. Ratte distributed a handout that lists each project along with the funding agency, grant name and any relative deadlines, and she described the work being done by each staff member. Ms. Ratte stated that there have been conversations with the Valley Development Council about municipal, regional or sub-regional projects and she would welcome ideas from Executive Committee members. In response to a question about Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) assistance, Ms. Ratte explained that PVPC is eager to conduct the MVP work and has been assertive in reaching out to the communities. She noted, however, that the towns can hire any certified MVP provider and she pointed out that some of the engineering firms may have a more aggressive approach. As regards to PVPC's planning board assistance, Ms. Ratte noted that the Environment and Land Use Section doesn't have a lot of staff and they have been trying to figure out how to take on an additional community. She stated that one idea is to offer a smaller annual contract for planning board assistance on demand. Executive Committee members felt that was a good idea. Ms. Robinson stated that she talked with Ms. Ratte and Ms. Gambarini about the idea of having a group of back-up contract planners to call if PVPC has too much work, noting that this would allow PVPC to be more flexible and responsive.

9. Requested Approval of Amendments to the PVPC's Current Staff Salary Ranges Which Would Take Effect as of December 1, 2019

Ms. Robinson noted that PVPC staff are eligible for a certain percentage for salary increases which depends on the range of their salary and she reported that 2 staff members are in a situation where the percentage at their annual review takes them above the salary range for their position. Ms. Robinson noted that the Executive Committee is being asked to approve the salary increases for those individuals however she pointed out that there needs to be a commitment to a certain cycle of review and improvement of the salary ranges in PVPC's handbook. Ms. Robinson stated that MARPA is in the process of kicking off a salary survey noting that there are a couple of other agencies who have just recently done the same. Ms. Robinson noted that there are various questions regarding the salary ranges and she felt it would be beneficial to have this conversation with PVPC's Operations Subcommittee. Mr. Mazik acknowledged that the review of the salary ranges is overdue noting that this typically takes place every 2 years. He suggested waiting now until the salary study is done and in the meantime to take exception on individual cases and approve them as they come up. Mr. Mazik proposed that any staff member who will be adversely affected by going outside of their salary range at their review be exempted from the range until the new salary plan comes into effect. Ms. Robinson suggested amending the motion for agenda item 9 to reflect today's discussion. Mr. Mazik proposed approving a waiver on the salary range cap on a case by case basis until the salary overall plan has been adopted and approved by the Executive Committee.

Mr. Gunn then called for an amended motion to address agenda item 9.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY LYNN ARNOLD, TO APPROVE A WAIVER ON THE PVPC'S CURRENT STAFF SALARY RANGE CAP ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS UNTIL THE SALARY PLAN HAS BEEN ADOPTED AND APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

Mr. Marciniac noted that this motion is too open-ended and he asked that it include an end date. After a brief discussion, Executive Committee members agreed that the end date should be no later than June 30, 2020. Mr. Gunn then called for an amendment to the motion on the table to include the words: "or not later than June 30, 2020".

MOVED BY MICHAEL MARCINIEC, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO APPROVE A WAIVER ON THE PVPC'S CURRENT STAFF SALARY RANGE CAP ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS UNTIL THE SALARY PLAN HAS BEEN ADOPTED AND APPROVED BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OR NOT LATER THAN JUNE 30, 2020. THERE BEING NO FURTHER COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS, THE MOTION AS AMENDED WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

10. Personnel Items

Ms. Robinson reported that PVPC has received a few applications for a transit planner to replace former Senior Transit Planner Connie Englert. She explained that this position is funded by the PVTA and the transit planner works for the PVTA. Ms. Robinson next reported that PVPC's Manager of Public Affairs, Pat Beaudry, has announced that he is running for the 5th Hampden District seat currently held by State Representative Aaron Vega who has decided to step down. She stated that she and Mr. Mazik have reached out to PVPC's attorney and identified a list of questions regarding how this affects the PVPC, and she noted that she will report back to the Executive Committee. Finally, Ms. Robinson reported that Jim Mazik has retired as of January 10th however he will continue working for the PVPC on a part-time basis until June 30th to continue helping with transitioning with responsibilities to other staff.

11. Executive Director's Highlights & Updates

Ms. Robinson reported that the deadline for DLTA requests was extended until last Friday. She stated that we have received approximately 29 applications, noting that 4 are for regional projects and 25 would be specifically for the jurisdictions. Ms. Robinson added that the reviews will begin tomorrow. In regards to the DLTA funds, Ms. Robinson reported that additional internal staff approvals are required before the funds can be released to the RPAs. Ms. Robinson also reported that she went to the Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference this past weekend which was extremely worthwhile, noting that it was a great opportunity to meet people.

Ms. Robinson next stated that yesterday she attended the annual MassDOT MARPA meeting in Worcester and they received the target figures from MassDOT for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Ms. Robinson noted that the dollars for 2021 through 2024 are going to be held constant however the money is expected to drop in 2025. She stated that without a new federal highway bill at this point, it's difficult to put concrete numbers around this. Ms. Robinson remarked that there are some allocations that are based on our 2010 census numbers and MassDOT wants to revisit the formula for the allocations once the 2020 census numbers are in. Ms. Robinson underscored that there is a lot of uncertainty. In response to a question raised by Mr. Kingston, Ms. Robinson stated that she did not know what impact Governor Baker's Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) would have. She suggested that PVPC could invite someone to the April Commission meeting to provide more information and answer questions about the TCI.

Ms. Robinson stated that she expects the 2019 Major Accomplishments will be ready for the February 13th Commission meeting. She noted that there was a robust discussion about the 2020 Top Ten Resolves at the December Commission meeting and she asked Executive Committee members if they have any ideas about how to best approach a conversation about this at the February Commission meeting. Mr. Gunn felt that at this point the Resolves should not be entirely rewritten unless Ms. Robinson feels there is something that she would like to adjust. Mr. Mazik also suggested that there might be some minor tweaks in language. Executive Committee members pointed out that PVPC staff knows best about how the funding can be spent in terms of grants and initiatives and it was noted that Ms. Robinson has taken great strides to work with PVPC's sections on what is reasonable for PVPC to accomplish this year. For those who provided feedback regarding the Resolves, Ms. Arnold suggested that it would be good to let them know that their voices were heard and although PVPC may not be able to incorporate all the ideas this year, they may be considered for next year. Mr. Gunn reminded everyone that the February 13th Commission meeting will take place here at the PVPC.

Finally, Ms. Robinson noted that in November there was a discussion about some of the procedures for Executive Committee meetings such as contract approvals, etc. She stated that she has conducted a review of what other Regional Planning Agencies do and she has found opportunities for potential improvements that she would like to bring before the Operations Subcommittee. Ms. Robinson also stated that the pay equity audit work is underway and there are some questions that have come up, therefore this is another area where it would be helpful for her to meet with the Operations Subcommittee. Ms. Terry explained that she has been serving as the Chair of the Operations Subcommittee and she offered to work with Ms. Robinson to find a date to convene that group.

12. Committee Member Comments, Suggestions and Future Agenda Items

Judy Terry provided an update on the Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC), noting that the Rural Policy Plan can be viewed on PVPC's website, <http://www.pvpc.org/content/rural-policy-plan-available>. Ms. Terry also distributed a copy of a letter dated January 28, 2020 from the RPAC to State Senator Lesser and State Representative Ferrante requesting that the bills related to the RPAC be reported out favorably by the Joint Committee. Ms. Terry noted that 29 towns out of our 43 PVPC communities fall within the definition of a rural community and she stated that RPAC is striving to establish an Office of Rural Policy. Ms. Terry urged Executive Committee members to write a letter to get the bills out of Committee so they can be voted on. Mr. Gunn stated that he wrote his own letter based on the RPAC letter. Ms. Robinson also stated that she will write a letter on behalf of the PVPC. Ms. Terry reported that she will be going door-to-door to visit the legislators in February and Ms. Robinson suggested that someone from the PVPC assist Ms. Terry with the door-to-door conversations.

At this point, Mr. Gunn announced that Lynn Arnold will be moving out of the Pioneer Valley in February. He thanked Ms. Arnold for her involvement in the PVPC, noting that her interest and experience in regional and local planning have been invaluable. Mr. Gunn stated that he didn't think it would be necessary for the PVPC to have a special election to fill Ms. Arnold's vacancy before the June elections.

There being no further comments or suggestions, Chairman Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the January 30th Executive Committee meeting.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO ADJOURN THE JANUARY 30, 2020 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING; ALL THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION AND THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 5:30 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the January 30, 2020 Meeting

1. Executive Committee January 30, 2020 Meeting Agenda and Suggested Motions
2. Executive Committee December 19, 2019 Meeting Minutes
3. PVPC FY 2019 Auditors' Report and Annual Financial Statements prepared by CPA Firm, Melanson Heath
4. PVPC Warrant: December 1 through December 31, 2019
5. PVPC Financial Summary Profile as of January 30, 2020
6. PVPC 6 Month Budget (July 1, 2019 through December 31, 2019)
7. Land Use & Environment Section – Grant Work 2020
8. Letter dated January 28, 2020 from the RPAC to the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies