

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of Executive Committee Zoom Meeting
Thursday, March 25, 2021

Present were:

Walter Gunn, Chair – Longmeadow
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown
George Kingston, Treasurer – East Longmeadow
T.J. Cousineau, Assistant Treasurer – Blandford
Marilyn Gorman Fil – Monson
Jack Jemsek – Amherst
Mark Paleologopoulos – Agawam

PVPC Staff:

Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager
Erica Johnson, Community Development Principal Planner/Manager
Catherine Ratte, Principal Planner/Environment and Land Use Section Manager
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager
Lynn Shell, Administrative Assistant I Specialist
Eric Weiss, Manager of Municipal and Regional Programs
Todd Zukowski, GIS/Cartographic Section Manager

1. Chairman’s Call to Order, Welcome and Approval of the Minutes of the January 28, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

The March 25, 2021 Executive Committee Zoom meeting was called to order at 4:01 p.m. by Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed everyone in attendance. Mr. Gunn noted that unfortunately Judy Terry could not be here today and he asked Ms. Robinson for an update on her progress. Ms. Robinson stated that Ms. Terry has been recuperating at home and she is open to having visitors or phone calls. She is also looking forward to getting back to the Executive Committee meetings. Mr. Gunn then took roll call and the following Executive Committee members responded “present”: Doug Albertson, Mark Paleologopoulos, Jack Jemsek, George Kingston, and Walter Gunn.

Mr. Gunn next called for a motion to approve the January 28, 2021 Executive Committee Zoom Meeting minutes.

MOVED BY MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 28, 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS, COMMENTS, OR ABSTENTIONS, THE MINUTES WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED “AYE”, NAMELY, DOUG ALBERTSON, MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, JACK JEMSEK, GEORGE KINGSTON AND WALTER GUNN.

2. Warrant/Financial Reports

Ms. Edinger first referred to the January 2021 warrant. She highlighted some payments on the check listing including check #18596 payable to Leadership Pioneer Valley in the amount of \$3,500 which is tuition for PVPC’s Data Manager Doug Hall who was selected for the LPV program. Ms. Edinger next highlighted several payments on the February 2021 check listing including checks #18686 through #18718 payable to 33 PVPC communities which reflects additional COVID funding in the amount of \$237,755. She added that as of now, our total contract from the state for COVID is \$862,755. Ms. Edinger next turned to PVPC’s Financial Summary Profile as of March 18, 2021. She noted that the OPEB balance is great and cash flow has been good.

3. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for FY21 District Local Technical Assistance Services and for the PVPC to Provide a Required 5% Cash Match of the Contract Amount

Ms. Robinson stated that the dollar amount for the DLTA contract is the same as last year and she noted that PVPC provides the 5% cash match through the fees we receive from our 43 communities. Ms. Robinson reported that we solicited potential projects from all of our communities. Environment and Land Use Principal Planner Catherine Ratte briefly described each of the various projects which include regional and municipal services.

Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address agenda item 3.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$274,935, WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DHCD) FOR FY21 DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA) SERVICES AND FOR THE PVPC TO PROVIDE A REQUIRED 5% CASH MATCH IN THE AMOUNT OF \$13,747. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 3 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE": DOUG ALBERTSON, MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, JACK JEMSEK, GEORGE KINGSTON AND WALTER GUNN.

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) to Develop Local Rapid Recovery Plans for Downtowns and Other Commercial Areas Affected by COVID-19

Ms. Robinson announced that Marilyn Gorman Fil had now joined the meeting. Mr. Gunn stated that he would like the minutes to reflect that Ms. Gorman Fil arrived at 4:15 p.m.

As regards agenda item 4, Ms. Robinson remarked that Principal Planner Catherine Ratte and Eric Weiss, PVPC's Manager of Municipal and Regional Programs have been instrumental in being able to say that the PVPC could take on this project and they have both been providing leadership. She also noted there is a team of PVPC staff working on this project. Mr. Weiss stated that the team includes himself and Catherine Ratte as well as Executive Director, Kim Robinson; Data Manager/Analyst, Doug Hall; Community Development Principal Planner, Ted Harvey; and Economic Development Manager, Lori Tanner. Mr. Weiss stated that DHCD is providing funds to help downtowns and business areas affected by COVID and this is an effort to assign where the trouble spots are and to identify the biggest challenges. He noted that the PVPC applied to work with Belchertown, Blandford, Chester, Chicopee, East Longmeadow, Monson, Springfield and Ware. Mr. Weiss stated that the date for completion of the projects has been extended from June 30th to August 31st. He noted that PVPC receives a set amount of money per town which covers staff time and allows us to implement the work.

Mr. Jemsek asked what PVPC will be observing given that many businesses may not come back. Mr. Weiss stated that the program is trying to address the need on a town-by-town basis and the intent is to come up with a plan with action items. Ms. Ratte noted that the Commonwealth opened this opportunity to every municipality and 126 are taking advantage of it. She stated that a company called Street Sense has a formulaic planning process which includes Phase 1 – diagnostic; Phase 2 - identifying projects; and Phase 3 - building a plan. In addition, a business survey is going out to the target areas which will provide specific data that everyone can learn from. Ms. Robinson noted that when the municipalities decided to apply they selected a specific area to focus on. Mr. Paleologopoulos asked if there will be a focus on bringing original businesses back and helping those who were there before. Mr. Weiss stated that this grant is not for directly helping the businesses that were there before. It is identifying the challenges the area would face to get back on its feet.

Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address agenda item 4.

MOVED BY MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$330,000, WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (DHCD) TO DEVELOP LOCAL RAPID RECOVERY PLANS FOR DOWNTOWNS AND OTHER COMMERCIAL AREAS AFFECTED BY COVID-19. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 4 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE". MR. KINGSTON NOTED THAT HE IS VOTING 'AYE' WITH A DISCLOSURE THAT SOME FUNDS WILL GO TO EAST LONGMEADOW.

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Town of Hatfield to Complete an Update of the Town's Hazard Mitigation Plan

There being no discussion, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to address agenda item 5.

MOVED BY JACK JEMSEK, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$20,900, WITH THE TOWN OF HATFIELD TO COMPLETE AN UPDATE OF THE TOWN'S HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 5 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE".

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Town of Southwick to Assist with their Green Communities Certification

Ms. Ratte stated that funding from the Department of Energy Resources is about to be advertised but the Town of Southwick did not want to wait so they are hiring the PVPC directly. Ms. Ratte noted that the PVPC will soon be sending out an MOU where communities can choose what aspects of Green Communities Technical Assistance they would like. She stated that the PVPC can help with annual reporting, procurement and competitive grants and she noted that this is an opportunity for the Town of East Longmeadow to become certified if they would like to do so.

Mr. Gunn called for a motion to address agenda item 6.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$7,000, WITH THE TOWN OF SOUTHWICK TO ASSIST WITH THEIR GREEN COMMUNITIES CERTIFICATION.THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 6 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE".

7. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Department of Public Health for PVPC to Provide Pass-through Funding Provided Through a Legislative Earmark to the Town of Amherst to Support their COVID-19 Public Health Ambassador Program and Other Efforts to Protect Public Health During the Pandemic

Erica Johnson, Community Development Principal Planner/Manager stated that the Town of Amherst was successful in getting an earmark in the DPH budget to support their COVID 19 response efforts. She noted that because the PVPC is very adept at receiving and distributing funds, DPH contracted with us so we can contract with the Town of Amherst.

After a brief discussion, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to address agenda item 7.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FIFTY THOUSAND DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$50,000.00), WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO PROVIDE PASS-THROUGH FUNDING TO THE TOWN OF AMHERST PROVIDED THROUGH A LEGISLATIVE EARMARK TO SUPPORT THEIR COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH AMBASSADOR PROGRAM AND OTHER EFFORTS TO PROTECT PUBLIC HEALTH DURING THE PANDEMIC. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 7 WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE".

At this point, Ms. Robinson announced that T.J. Cousineau had now joined the meeting. Chairman Gunn noted for the record that Mr. Cousineau arrived at 4:33 p.m.

8. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement With the Town of Monson for a Local Pavement Management and Assessment Project as Requested by the Town

There being no discussion, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to address agenda item 8.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$15,400, WITH THE TOWN OF MONSON FOR A LOCAL PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT AND ASSESSMENT PROJECT AS REQUESTED BY THE TOWN. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE FOLLOWING EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS RESPONDED "AYE": DOUG ALBERTSON, MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, JACK JEMSEK, GEORGE KINGSTON, MARILYN GORMAN FIL AND WALTER GUNN; THE MOTION WAS APPROVED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FROM T.J. COUSINEAU.

9. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Collaborative for Education (CES) to Provide GIS-based Walking Routes Maps for the Town of Westhampton and One Additional Community to be Determined by the Collaborative

Todd Zukowski, GIS/Cartographic Section Manager stated that PVPC has previously worked with the Collaborative for Educational Services (CES) with funding through the Healthy Hampshire program. He noted that recent work included

Hilltown walking route maps that PVPC created as a component of a brochure that the communities put together. He noted that the CES provides a number of services for the school districts in the area. Ms. Ratte added that 6 years ago the City of Northampton applied for Mass in Motion funding from DPH on behalf of Northampton, Amherst, Belchertown and Williamsburg and when they received the funding the work was subcontracted to the staff at CES. She noted that when they were expanding their work, they created Healthy Hampshire. Mr. Zukowski stated that this funding is for the Town of Westhampton and one other community that is yet to be determined. He explained that the contract amount is based on staff hours required for the development of the specific map products for the two communities. He also noted that there was a need for people to have a product with them while walking on these routes that is not necessarily dependent on electronics. Mr. Gunn suggested it might also be helpful to integrate bar codes on the map to link to specific information. Mr. Zukowski stated that the ArcGIS mapping system is available online and we can host live maps that can be scaled in and out with linked information, PDF files, photos and videos. He added that it is definitely an application that PVPC can work with our communities to build. Mr. Paleologopoulos noted that the actual name for CES is Collaborative for Educational Services and not Collaborative for Education and he asked that this be amended in the motion.

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

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FIVE THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$5,565.00), WITH THE COLLABORATIVE FOR EDUCATIONAL SERVICES TO PROVIDE GIS-BASED WALKING ROUTES MAPS FOR THE TOWN OF WESTHAMPTON AND ONE ADDITIONAL COMMUNITY TO BE DETERMINED BY THE COLLABORATIVE. THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION FOR AGENDA ITEM 9 AS AMENDED WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT WHO IN TURN RESPONDED "AYE".

10. Personnel Items

Ms. Robinson reported that PVPC's Land Use and Environment Senior Planner, Emily Slotnick, tendered her resignation as of April 2nd. She noted that Ms. Slotnick has accepted a position with a consulting firm that will allow her to do the work she loves, regionally across a couple of states. Ms. Robinson announced that PVPC has hired Mimi Kaplan for this position, noting that Ms. Kaplan has been doing this type of work at another RPA in western Massachusetts, and she will begin working at the PVPC on April 22nd. Ms. Robinson next reported that Community Development Principal Planner/Manager Chris Dunphy will be resigning as of April 9th and he is moving to another RPA. Ms. Robinson noted that the Community Development Section will take the next 3 months to do an evaluation of their needs, adding that there have been a lot of changes in this section during the past 9 months. Ms. Robinson also announced that sadly PVPC's former Housing Rehabilitation Specialist/Consultant Rick Barus passed away this month. She noted that Rick had worked with the PVPC for over 25 years. Ms. Robinson stated that PVPC's full-time Housing Rehab Specialist, Keith Robitaille, is picking up the work that Rick was doing and an RFP has been written for potential part-time, Housing Rehab assistance, if needed.

11. Executive Director's Highlights and Updates

Ms. Robinson reported that the RPA retirement bill has been submitted to the State Legislature. She noted there is one on the House side and one on the Senate side that specifically speaks to RPAs and fixing the long term issue with regard to reimbursing the state and the Treasurer. Ms. Robinson stated that there are approximately 3300 bills on each side. She has been through about 2200 and she will continue moving through them to find out what people feel strongly about. Ms. Robinson offered to look up the RPA retirement bill number and send it to Executive Committee members.

Ms. Robinson next reported that People's United Bank is being taken over by M&T Bank. She noted that PVPC has been unhappy with the services at People's United and we are considering moving our accounts to a local bank where we believe we will get better service. She stated that PVPC's attorney, Paul Maleck, recommended Westfield Bank and Florence Bank. Ms. Gorman Fil also suggested talking to Paul Mokrzecki at Easthampton Savings Bank. Ms. Robinson stated that the goal is to have the transition completed in time for the start of the new fiscal year.

Ms. Robinson noted that as of today it has been a year since PVPC and almost everything in Massachusetts had to shut down due to COVID. She stated that she recently asked PVPC staff to volunteer for a Reopening Committee and about 10 individuals expressed interest in participating in the discussions. Ms. Robinson remarked that she is impressed with how well folks have been able to pivot and engage and continue to work under such different circumstances, which has been a test of resiliency and flexibility, and she noted that the PVPC staff has been great. Mr. Gunn felt that going forward there will be a hybrid work environment. He acknowledged that in-person works better especially with education but he

pointed out that Zoom has been very successful and it cuts the carbon footprint given that we haven't had to waste fuel driving to meetings. Mr. Gunn stated that he will be interested to hear what the PVPC team collaborates on. Ms. Robinson stated that she would be happy to share that information and she agreed that it will probably be hybrid, noting that it's easier to attend more meetings.

Ms. Robinson next reminded everyone that there will be a full Commission meeting on April 8th and she noted that the agenda will include taking action on the FY22 budget as well as final action on the Top Ten Resolves for 2021. She also noted that we will need to appoint the nominating committee for the June elections. Ms. Robinson stated that the April agenda will also include a workshop/presentation by Gary Roux who will talk about the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), how Transportation dollars flow into our communities and how priorities and choices are made. Mr. Gunn agreed that this would be a great forum and it would be good to make Commissioners aware of how this process works. Mr. Roux stated that he and Dana Roscoe and Ms. Robinson all agreed this was the right opportunity to provide that overview so that Commissioners are in tune with what the Joint Transportation Committee (JTC) is doing and how they interact with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO).

Finally, Ms. Robinson stated that we have finished writing the MOU for our federal government-relations individual Chris Giglio from CapitalEdge. She noted that they meet every other week and he just shared information that Congress today approved an extension until May 31st to apply for the Paycheck Protection Program Forgivable Loan and it is expected to be signed into law. Ms. Robinson stated that it is very helpful having Mr. Giglio in D.C. and connecting with the PVPC, FRCOG and the Capitol Region Council of Governments.

12. Committee Member Comments, Suggestions and Future Agenda Items

Mr. Jemsek stated that there is a petition for a building moratorium for Amherst's downtown area and he wondered if any Executive Committee members had experience with this and could offer any words of wisdom. He explained that a couple of projects are to be four-story buildings. He noted that Amherst doesn't have a commercial industrial zone. Mr. Gunn stated that he had not experienced this in the Town of Longmeadow and Mr. Kingston noted that East Longmeadow has also never had a building moratorium. Ms. Robinson added that in her experience, building moratoriums are rare. A brief discussion followed. Mr. Gunn suggested that this might be something to bring up at the Commission meeting.

Mr. Cousineau reported that the Town of Blandford just hired an Owner's Project Manager (OPM) and they are planning to build a new highway garage and convert the old one for the Fire Department to use. Mr. Cousineau also reported that Blandford expects to have a fiber optics network by June.

At this point, Ms. Robinson stated that she would like to re-connect with Mr. Jemsek offline to continue the conversation about Amherst's building moratorium and Mr. Jemsek stated that he would greatly appreciate it.

There being no further comments, Chairman Gunn called for a motion to adjourn today's Executive Committee Zoom meeting.

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY JACK JEMSEK, TO ADJOURN THE MARCH 25, 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ZOOM MEETING; ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION AND THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 5:13 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the March 25, 2021 Meeting

1. Executive Committee March 25, 2021 Meeting Agenda and Motions
2. Executive Committee January 28, 2021 Meeting Minutes
3. PVPC Warrants and Payment History: January and February 2021
4. PVPC Financial Summary Profile as of March 18, 2021