

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of Executive Committee Zoom Meeting
Thursday, May 27, 2021

Present were:

Walter Gunn, Chair – Longmeadow
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown
T.J. Cousineau, Assistant Treasurer – Blandford
Jack Jemsek – Amherst
Michael Marciniac - Palmer
Mark Paleologopoulos – Agawam

PVPC Staff:

Kimberly H. Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
Lisa Edinger, Accounting Manager
Patty Gambarini, Principal Environmental Planner/Section Manager
Indrani Kowlessar, Executive Assistant/Office Manager
Erica Johnson, Director, Community Development
Catherine Ratte, Principal Planner/Environment and Land Use Section Manager
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager
Lynn Shell, Administrative Assistant I Specialist

Guest:

Patti D'Amaddio, EANE Strategic HR and Compensation Services Consultant

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Approval of the Minutes of the April 22, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting

The May 27, 2021 Executive Committee Zoom meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Commission Chair Walter Gunn who welcomed everyone and then took roll call. All Executive Committee members in attendance responded "present" and Mr. Gunn noted there was a quorum. Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to approve the April 22, 2021 Executive Committee Zoom meeting minutes.

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, TO APPROVE THE APRIL 22, 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES. THE MINUTES WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED BY ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT.

2. Presentation; Discussion and Acceptance of Report on the Pay Equity Audit by Patti D'Amaddio from the Employers Association of the Northeast

EANE Consultant Patti D'Amaddio gave a presentation on the PVPC's pay equity assessment. She stated that she provided managers with guidelines for making compensation recommendations and developing competitive salary ranges; she involved them in the evaluation of positions and she noted they succeeded in substantially reducing the number of planner titles, adding that her goal was to have a grid that constitutes the skill sets for Planner 1, 2 and 3. Mr. Gunn asked what happens if someone is stripped of their title. Ms. D'Amaddio explained that it doesn't diminish their role and that the organization needs consistency, continuity and clarity. She pointed out that titles were given to PVPC staff for various reasons over the years but as the organization grows, it's good to have a more solid, well defined infrastructure. Ms. D'Amaddio talked about the ratio analysis which compared each person's salary to the recommended grade midpoint and she noted that the PVPC is doing very well based on the market. She stated that she, along with Ms. Robinson and Ms. Kowlessar, determined what kind of adjustment would be appropriate. Ms. Robinson underscored that no one's salary will be reduced. Results indicated 11 employees need a market adjustment up and most of those positions are paid through working grants. In addition, 5 employees are at the top of their range or nearing that range. Ms. Robinson noted that PVPC needs to adjust those salary ranges every year to keep pace with the cost of living.

Mr. Gunn asked if the PVPC Employee Handbook will need updating. Ms. Robinson stated that the Operations Manual is currently in the process of being updated and the idea is to have both an Employees Handbook and an Operations Manual. Mr. Cousineau asked if PVPC will be affected by Proposition 2.5 noting that in Blandford, all town employees get a 2.5% raise. Mr. Gunn stated that's in line with state taxation regulations but he did not think it impacts the PVPC, adding that a lot of the adjustments would come from grants. Ms. Robinson noted that depending on the salary range, PVPC staff members are eligible for a certain percentage increase. Ms. D'Amaddio suggested implementing a merit matrix so

there's a correlation between performance and placement in range. Mr. Gunn asked Principal Planner Catherine Ratte to speak to this as a Section Head. Ms. Ratte stated that on the review sheet there is a numerical calculation that we use now, noting there is a maximum number of points one can get for merit based on well-defined criteria. Ms. Robinson stated she is recommending that in the fall, PVPC undertake improving the process of performance evaluations.

Ms. Robinson noted that the salary modifications will be part of the updated budget and any adjustments that need to be done this year will be presented at the June Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Gunn asked about the FY 2022 budget that has already been put together. Ms. Robinson stated that she and Ms. Edinger will review the FY 2022 budget and, if needed, will bring that back to the Executive Committee. Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address agenda item 2.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO ACCEPT THE RESULTS OF THE PAY EQUITY AUDIT CONDUCTED BY PATTI D'AMADDIO FROM THE EMPLOYERS ASSOCIATION OF THE NORTHEAST. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

3. Warrant/Financial Reports Including Review of the PVPC's Current FY21 Actual Budget Through March 31, 2021

Accounting Manager Lisa Edinger noted that the total amount on the first page of the April 2021 warrant doesn't include all 3 payrolls in April so she will update that page. She next highlighted several checks on the April check listing and then reviewed PVPC's May Financial Summary Profile. Finally, Ms. Edinger discussed the PVPC's 9 Month Actual Budget for the period encompassing July 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021.

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with Health Care Without Harm to Facilitate Development of a Climate Resilient Playbook for Hospital/Community Use, in Collaboration with the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts and Baystate Hospital

Ms. Ratte explained that the PVPC will help develop a playbook on how hospitals can collaborate with their communities in climate disasters and they would like to identify a suburban and a rural community in Hampden County to participate in a tabletop exercise. In response to a question from Mr. Gunn, Ms. Ratte stated that a memo would go to the Board of Health, the Council on Aging and Town Administrator, with a copy to PVPC's Commissioners. Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address agenda item 4.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY JACK JEMSEK, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$50,000, WITH HEALTH CARE WITHOUT HARM TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT OF A CLIMATE RESILIENT PLAYBOOK FOR HOSPITAL/COMMUNITY USE, IN COLLABORATION WITH THE PUBLIC HEALTH INSTITUTE OF WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS AND BAYSTATE HOSPITAL. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to Continue to Facilitate Mass in Motion Work in Palmer and West Springfield to Improve Access to Healthy Food and Physical Activity for Residents

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$40,000, WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH TO CONTINUE TO FACILITATE MASS IN MOTION WORK IN PALMER AND WEST SPRINGFIELD TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY FOR RESIDENTS. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Sign a Contract Amendment for the Current Contract Between the PVPC and the City of Springfield adding \$12,922 to the Contract Funded by an EOEEA MVP Action Grant to Improve Communications Between the City and Residents Before, During and After Disasters to Enhance Community Resilience

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO SIGN A CONTRACT AMENDMENT FOR THE CURRENT CONTRACT BETWEEN THE PVPC AND THE CITY OF SPRINGFIELD ADDING \$12,922 TO THE CONTRACT FUNDED BY AN EOEEA MVP ACTION GRANT TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS BETWEEN THE CITY AND RESIDENTS BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER DISASTERS TO ENHANCE COMMUNITY RESILIENCE. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

7. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Springfield Food Policy Council as Part of PVPC's Hampden County Health Improvement Plan (H-CHIP) Work to Improve Access to Healthy Food by Advancing the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP).

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$9,000, WITH THE SPRINGFIELD FOOD POLICY COUNCIL AS PART OF PVPC'S HAMPDEN COUNTY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN (H-CHIP) WORK TO IMPROVE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD BY ADVANCING THE HEALTHY INCENTIVES PROGRAM (HIP). MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

8. Update, Discussion and Potential Decisions on Recommendations from Melanson in the Management Letter of the FY2020 Audit

Ms. Robinson stated that of the 5 issues presented in Melanson's Management Letter, 3 have been taken care of and 2 will be discussed today. One item is a recommendation from Melanson to increase the threshold for approving contracts from \$5,000 to \$50,000. Ms. Robinson recommended that the Executive Committee consider starting at \$25,000 and this could be adjusted in the future. Mr. Gunn stated that \$25,000 seems conservative but he felt that it's good for the Executive Committee to hear from PVPC staff and to have discussions about the projects. Mr. Albertson suggested that staff could still attend and discuss notable projects that don't need to be voted on. Executive Committee members agreed and Mr. Gunn then made a motion to increase the contract approval threshold to \$25,000.

MOVED BY WALTER GUNN, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON TO RAISE THE THRESHOLD FOR AUTHORIZING AGENDA ITEMS BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO \$25,000 WITH THE UNDERSTANDING THAT THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MAY SHARE AT HER DISCRETION OTHER PROJECTS BELOW THAT THRESHOLD IF SHE FEELS THEY REQUIRE SCRUTINY BY THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

Ms. Robinson noted that the Executive Committee is currently responsible for approving the Commission's line item budget. In addition, all line item budget transfers require Executive Committee approval. She stated that Melanson recommends that the Commission consider allowing the Executive Director the flexibility to make line item budget transfers and report those updates on a monthly basis. For example, if there is more money in salaries but not enough in health insurance, the Executive Director can move money from salaries to health insurance. Mr. Gunn noted that the Commission as a whole approves the budget, but the Executive Committee has the ability at the moment to move money around within that budget as long as it doesn't exceed the budget. Ms. Robinson stated that is correct according to the Management Letter. Mr. Jemsek asked about the threshold and Mr. Gunn stated there is none because we can't expand beyond the budget that's approved. It is really only to reallocate money within the budget. He noted that Ms. Robinson will provide a monthly report to the Executive Committee. Mr. Gunn then called for a motion to address this item.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO ALLOW THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THE FLEXIBILITY TO MAKE LINE ITEM BUDGET TRANSFERS AND REPORT UPDATES TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON A MONTHLY BASIS. MR. GUNN TOOK A ROLL CALL VOTE AND THE MOTION WAS UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

9. Personnel Items

Ms. Robinson stated that she did not have any personnel updates to report.

10. Executive Director's Highlights and Updates

Ms. Robinson noted that the Annual Meeting will take place via Zoom on June 10th. She pointed out that the State of Emergency will be lifted on June 15th and there is a possibility that the Executive Committee will need to meet with a quorum in person on June 24th however Governor Baker has submitted legislation regarding the Open Meeting Law and she will provide an update as soon as she hears more. Mr. Gunn felt that participation has been much better with Zoom. Ms. Robinson also noted that PVPC is investigating a piece of equipment called an Owl which allows for a smoother approach to a hybrid meeting. Mr. Gunn also noted that the Executive Committee does not traditionally meet in July.

As regards reopening the PVPC office, Ms. Robinson stated that as of June 1st everyone can work in the office if they wish and the Reopening Committee will have conversations around structuring a potential hybrid workplace. She did not anticipate seeing everyone fully back in the office until at least August 1st. Ms. Robinson also noted that last July, Massachusetts proclaimed Juneteenth to be a state holiday and it will now be officially added to PVPC's list of holidays

which will bring that number to 12. Finally, Ms. Robinson reported that Chris Giglio is providing helpful information from DC and more information will be available once the infrastructure bill passes.

In response to a question from Mr. Gunn, Ms. Kowlessar stated that official business to be conducted at the Annual Meeting includes approval of minutes and election of 5 Executive Committee officers and 4 at-large members. Mr. Gunn noted that Judy Terry will remain as Vice Chair. At the request of Mr. Gunn, Mr. Albertson agreed to run the meeting if there is a situation where the Chair and Vice Chair are not available. Mr. Gunn then asked if any Committee members object to being nominated for next year. Mr. Cousineau stated he would like to continue as Assistant Treasurer but asked if it would be a conflict of interest if he is also elected selectman for Blandford, noting that he is the PVPC Alternate. Mr. Gunn stated it would not be a problem. Mr. Gunn will talk to Marilyn Gorman Fil and George Kingston and he will send Ms. Kowlessar the ballot. Mr. Jemsek asked if he can continue as PVPC Commissioner for Amherst when his term on the Planning Board ends in July 2022. Mr. Gunn explained that if he is not a Planning Board member, he would have to be appointed Alternate Commissioner. Mr. Albertson added that any registered voter in the town can be the Alternate.

11. Committee Member Comments, Suggestions and Future Agenda Items

Mr. Gunn commended Ms. Robinson and PVPC staff on putting together presentational information and handouts for the press conference at Union Station with U.S. Reps. Neal and Larson on the east-west and north-south rail service. Ms. Robinson noted that there will be a presentation at the June 10th Annual Meeting by a consultant from AECOM on the *Economic Impact of Regional Rail Development in the Metro Hartford-Springfield Region*. Ms. Robinson also reported that following the press conference, PVPC provided Senator Markey's office with a briefing. She stated that he plans to come to western Massachusetts next week and they asked for potential ideas about PVPC projects to highlight.

Mr. Paleologopoulos stated that Agawam is looking into getting numbers for the homeless and he asked if PVPC has those numbers for western Massachusetts. Ms. Robinson stated that she will talk to PVPC Data Manager/Analyst Doug Hall about this. She also offered to talk to someone from the Western Massachusetts Network to End Homelessness and she will connect Mr. Paleologopoulos with the appropriate person within that organization.

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 MAY 27, 2021 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ZOOM MEETING; ALL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED THE MOTION AND THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 5:28 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the May 27, 2021 Meeting

1. Executive Committee May 27, 2021 Meeting Agenda and Motions
2. Executive Committee April 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes
3. PVPC Warrants and Payment History April 2021
4. PVPC Financial Summary Profile May 2021
5. PVPC 9 Month Actual Budget (July 1, 2020 through March 31, 2021)