

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)

Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting  
Thursday, June 22, 2017  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC)  
60 Congress Street, Large Conference Room  
Springfield, Massachusetts 01104

Present were:

Judith Terry, Vice-Chair – Chesterfield  
George Kingston, Treasurer – East Longmeadow  
Mark Cavanaugh, Assistant Treasurer – South Hadley  
Lynn Arnold – Holland  
T.J. Cousineau – Blandford  
Marilyn Gorman Fil - Monson

PVPC Staff:

Tim Brennan, Executive Director  
Lisa Edinger, Accountant  
James Mazik, Deputy Director for Operations/Community Development Section Manager  
Lynn Shell, Support Staff

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome and Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting Held on May 25, 2017

The June 22<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee meeting was called to order at 4:05 p.m. by Commission Vice-Chair Judy Terry. Ms. Terry welcomed everyone in attendance and she called for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 25, 2017 Executive Committee meeting.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 25, 2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AS PRESENTED.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any comments, corrections or questions concerning the minutes of the May 25, 2017 Executive Committee meeting but none were forthcoming.

THERE BEING NO QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS, THE MINUTES OF THE MAY 25, 2017 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING WERE UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.

2. Warrant/Financial Reports

Ms. Terry asked PVPC Accountant Lisa Edinger to comment on the May 2017 warrant. Ms. Edinger stated that she would like to highlight two checks that are payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts/GIC, namely check #15757 in the amount of \$45,000 and check #15788 in the amount of \$20,716.35. Ms. Edinger explained that these two payments are for the PVPC's quarterly employer share for GIC employee health insurance coverage encompassing the January through March time period. Ms. Edinger next noted that check #15769, payable to the University of Massachusetts' Department of Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning (LARP), is the initial payment for the UMass Center for Resilient Metro Regions and for Professor Elisabeth Hamin to assist the PVPC in preparing a Climate Action Resiliency Plan for the City of Springfield. There being no questions or comments regarding the May warrant, Ms. Edinger then referred to a staff report that had been distributed, entitled *Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Financial Summary Profile*, which outlines the PVPC's account balances through June 22, 2017. Following Ms. Edinger's overview of this report, Mr. Brennan reported that PVPC's FY 2018 local assessment invoices are in the

process of being prepared and he noted that they will be sent out to the PVPC's 43 member communities on June 30<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Terry then moved to take up the next agenda item.

3. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable FY 2018 Contractual Agreement With the Town of Southampton Planning Board in Order for the PVPC to Undertake a Planning Board Assistance Program

Mr. Brennan stated that he will be addressing agenda item 3, as well as agenda items 4 and 5, on behalf of Environment and Land Use Senior Planner Larry Smith who was unable to attend today's Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Brennan explained that the background for each of these contracts is the same but the dollar amounts are somewhat different depending on the specific community. Mr. Brennan stated that a number of PVPC's member communities have now gotten into the practice of setting aside, at the planning board level, monies for the PVPC staff to provide technical assistance to local planning boards through the course of the fiscal year. Mr. Brennan noted that the PVPC has been providing the Town of Hadley with planning board assistance for over a dozen years and, more recently, we are also assisting the Towns of Granby and Southampton. Mr. Brennan stated that each of the municipalities has a separate contractual arrangement for the new fiscal year beginning on July 1<sup>st</sup> and he pointed out that there will need to be a separate motion for each of these contracts.

Ms. Terry then called for a motion to address agenda item 3.

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FY 2018 CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, NOT TO EXCEED \$9,500, WITH THE TOWN OF SOUTHAMPTON PLANNING BOARD IN ORDER FOR THE PVPC TO UNDERTAKE A PLANNING BOARD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any questions regarding the motion for agenda item 3 but none were forthcoming.

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

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable FY 2018 Contractual Agreement With the Town of Hadley Planning Board in Order for the PVPC to Undertake a Planning Board Assistance Program

Ms. Terry called for a motion to address agenda item 4.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FY 2018 CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, NOT TO EXCEED \$7,500, WITH THE TOWN OF HADLEY PLANNING BOARD IN ORDER FOR THE PVPC TO UNDERTAKE A PLANNING BOARD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any questions regarding the subject motion but none were forthcoming.

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

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable FY 2018 Contractual Agreement With the Town of Granby Planning Board in Order for the PVPC to Undertake a Planning Board Assistance Program

Ms. Terry called for a motion to address agenda item 5.

MOVED BY LYNN ARNOLD, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE FY 2018 CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT, NOT TO EXCEED \$7,500, WITH THE TOWN OF GRANBY PLANNING BOARD IN ORDER FOR THE PVPC TO UNDERTAKE A PLANNING BOARD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any questions regarding the subject motion but none were forthcoming.

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

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement With the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County in Order for the PVPC to Develop an Online Employment and Occupation Data Profile and to Then Maintain it for Two Additional Years

Mr. Brennan explained that he is reporting on behalf of Molly Goren Watts, PVPC's Principal Planner and Manager of Regional Information and Policy Center. Mr. Brennan stated that in the past year, there has been much activity in the Baker Administration focusing on workforce issues and he noted that at the state level, the Governor has instructed his Secretaries of Labor, Education, and Economic Development to work together. Mr. Brennan remarked that it is becoming increasingly difficult for our region to find qualified and experienced people to fill employment positions, particularly in the higher and middle skills ranks, and he stated that more recently each of the Commonwealth's designated regions, led by their regional employment boards, has been asked to develop a more specific action agenda based on the facts and particular labor circumstances prevalent in these distinct regions including the Pioneer Valley. Mr. Brennan noted that the contract that the Executive Committee is being asked to authorize is for the PVPC to develop data sets working with the representative from the Regional Employment Board of Hampden County. He explained that the PVPC would post the information online and then maintain the website during the two following years. Mr. Brennan stated that the contract amount is \$25,000. He noted that in year one, PVPC expects that the work would consume about \$14,000 and for the two subsequent years, \$5,500 would be set aside for ongoing data updates and ongoing website maintenance. Mr. Brennan added that this project needs to get underway quickly in order to satisfy federal and state requirements.

There being no questions for Mr. Brennan, Ms. Terry then called for a motion to address this agenda item.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE \$25,000 CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE REGIONAL EMPLOYMENT BOARD OF HAMPDEN COUNTY IN ORDER FOR THE PVPC TO DEVELOP AN ONLINE EMPLOYMENT AND OCCUPATION DATA PROFILE AND TO THEN MAINTAIN IT FOR TWO ADDITIONAL YEARS.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any questions regarding the subject motion but none were forthcoming.

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

7. Authorization to Commit an Initial \$38,000 of PVPC Local Funds to the Planning Commission's Special Projects Funding Pool for the Fiscal Year 2018 Time Period

Mr. Brennan stated that this is a housekeeping item. He noted that the PVPC's practice is to receive local assessment funds from our region's cities and towns in order to establish an annual *PVPC Special Projects* account. Mr. Brennan stated that PVPC uses these funds to respond to Local Technical Assistance requests from our member communities which essentially provides, at no cost, three person days of staff time for communities that have no planning or administrative staff and two days per request for those that have some local staff in place to rely on. Mr. Brennan noted that the funds are divided by functional areas, including the Environment and Land Use Section, the Data Section, and the Community Development Section and so on. Mr. Brennan remarked that, as in the past, it will probably be necessary to revisit this matter sometime after the mid-point of the new fiscal year which begins on July 1, 2017.

Ms. Terry called for a motion to address this agenda item.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO COMMIT AN INITIAL \$38,000 OF PVPC LOCAL FUNDS TO THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S SPECIAL PROJECTS FUNDING POOL FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2018 TIME PERIOD ENCOMPASSING JULY 1, 2017 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2018.

Ms. Terry asked if there were any questions regarding the motion for agenda item 7 but none were forthcoming.

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

8. Personnel Issues Including an Update on Current Staff Recruitment Efforts

Mr. Brennan reminded Executive Committee members that PVPC's Environment and Land Use Senior Planner Jaimye Bartak has submitted her resignation from the PVPC staff. Mr. Brennan stated that Ms. Bartak will be taking a position with the Springfield Water and Sewer Commission and he noted that her last day working at the PVPC is June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Mr. Brennan stated that he and Principal Planner Catherine Ratte have interviewed three candidates to fill Ms. Bartak's position and we are in the midst of making an offer of employment to our preferred applicant.

Mr. Brennan next reported that PVPC has accepted a summer intern, Zach Levitt, who will work in the Planning Commission's GIS/Cartographic Section and he noted that Zach will be entering his second year at Middlebury College in Vermont in the fall.

9. Executive Director's Highlights Including an Update on Ongoing Efforts to Address and Resolve Significant Costs Imposed on Select RPAs Enrolled in the Massachusetts State Retirement Plan

Mr. Brennan stated that PVPC, as well as the 12 other Massachusetts RPAs, are focused on advocacy to keep the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) program funding category in place for FY 2018. Mr. Brennan noted that this is our only significant source of money to provide assistance to cities and towns and he pointed out that it will be difficult this year given that there is a shortfall of federal assistance funds which will be coming to the states. Mr. Brennan stated that the DLTA program was included in the Governor's budget and it was in the House version of the budget level funded at \$2.8 million statewide but it was not in the Senate's budget. Mr. Brennan remarked that this is now a Conference Committee item and he noted that PVPC's Manager of Public Affairs Pat Beaudry is asking PVPC Commissioners to add their voice to our DLTA advocacy campaign. Mr. Brennan stated that PVPC is also advocating for funding to stay in place for the Community Compact Program and the Efficiency and Regionalization Grants Program. Mr. Brennan commented that, assuming DLTA funds continue, one of the first things we are trying to figure out is how to help cities and towns with the Recreational Marijuana issue. Mr. Brennan stated that the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) is trying to work together to create a workgroup here in the Pioneer Valley and in the other RPA districts across Massachusetts to address this pressing issue.

Mr. Brennan then announced that PVPC's Municipal Services Coordinator Joshua Garcia has arranged a Regional Roundtable Luncheon focusing on municipal IT issues and he noted that this event will take place beginning at 12:00 Noon on July 13<sup>th</sup> at the PVPC. Municipal staff and elected officials are strongly encouraged to attend this session which is being offered free of charge.

Mr. Brennan next announced that Springfield Union Station will open to the public on Sunday, June 25<sup>th</sup> with a gala event on Saturday evening, June 24<sup>th</sup>. He also reported that he is in the midst of organizing the New England Knowledge Corridor 2017 "State of the Region" Conference which will take place at Union Station on October 18<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brennan noted that 5 members of Congress will be participating as well as Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack and Connecticut Department of Transportation Commissioner James Redeker. Mr. Brennan stated that the keynote speaker is from the Eno Foundation for Transportation which is based in Washington, DC and he added that there will be a variety of other speakers.

Mr. Brennan reported that the PVPC is trying to help the Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority (PVTA) which in FY 2018 will be facing a budget shortfall of as much as \$1.2 million. Mr. Brennan stated that there had been legislation that promised a gradual escalation of state funding support but that is not going to happen in this fiscal year. Mr. Brennan reported that PVPC staff members have come up with a way to possibly get \$500,000 from a federal funding category to support one or select PVTA bus routes through the course of FY 18 which could conceivably bring the PVTA's deficit down to \$700,000. Mr. Brennan pointed out that there will, nevertheless, still need to be PVTA transit service cuts and he noted that there will be a variety of upcoming public hearings on this issue.

Mr. Brennan next talked about a serious issue affecting communities served by the Barnes Aquifer including the Cities

of Westfield, Easthampton and Holyoke and the Town of Southampton. Mr. Brennan stated that for a number of years, the Air National Guard Unit has been using aircraft de-icing agents and it has been discovered that toxins from those agents have entered into the ground water in the City of Westfield. Mr. Brennan noted that Westfield has lost two wells and they will need to build a treatment plant to remove the contaminants. Mr. Brennan stated that thus far, the Air National Guard Unit has not conducted testing beyond their actual Barnes base footprint, however, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has been proactive and has been testing private wells and some of the testing has turned up contaminants off site. Mr. Brennan stated that the PVPC is attempting to work on this problem through our region's Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee.

Mr. Brennan next provided an update on the Pioneer Valley Bike Share Project. Mr. Brennan reminded Executive Committee members that we were awarded a \$1.3 million capital grant for the program equipment costs and he noted that the City of Northampton became the lead recipient of that grant award. Mr. Brennan stated that the PVPC was expecting to receive a Northampton contract in the amount of approximately \$83,000 which had been previously authorized by Executive Committee members, however, PVPC was recently informed that the City of Northampton decided they did not want the PVPC to conduct all of the work tasks that had previously been agreed to. Instead, they wanted the PVPC to amend the budget and scope of work and agree to hire former PVPC Environment and Land Use Chief Planner Chris Curtis to continue working beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brennan stated that he refused to do this and there is now a revised agreement in which the scope and budget for the PVPC has been significantly reduced to a new contract amount of approximately \$43,000. Mr. Brennan added that the remainder of the funds will be maintained under the custody of the City of Northampton who will hire Chris Curtis to continue beyond June 30<sup>th</sup>. Mr. Brennan stated that PVPC staff has encouraged Northampton officials to check with the State Ethics Commission about their proposed arrangement with Mr. Curtis to ensure it complies with all applicable state regulations.

Mr. Brennan reported that Attorney General Maura Healey has released proposed changes to the Open Meeting Law regulations. Mr. Brennan stated that the proposed changes have been posted on the PVPC website and he noted that the deadline for comments is 5:00 p.m. on August 3<sup>rd</sup>. As regards the *Notice Posting Requirements*, Mr. Brennan pointed out that a website can be used as an alternative method for posting notices for public meetings. PVPC Deputy Director James Mazik added that if the option chosen is to solely use a website for posting, it could present a problem should the website go down prior to the meeting. He noted that if the website cannot be restored within a certain time period, the meeting must be cancelled. Mr. Mazik underscored that this is something that needs to be considered if a website posting is the only source of information.

Mr. Brennan then provided an update on the PVPC's 2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Annual Report which was recently voted on by Executive Committee members. Mr. Brennan stated that the comment period has ended and PVPC Senior Economic Development and Policy Analyst Lori Tanner has completed the 2017 CEDS Annual Report. Mr. Brennan noted that copies of the subject report have been provided for Executive Committee members at today's meeting and they were also distributed at the June 21<sup>st</sup> Plan for Progress Coordinating Council meeting.

Mr. Brennan next reported that PVPC has purchased a drone and he noted that two PVPC staff members are being trained and certified to use it. Mr. Brennan stated that the PVPC has identified a variety of potential uses for the drone including traffic management, surveillance, and emergency response.

Finally, Mr. Brennan reported that there was a recent meeting of the working group regarding the issues involving the Massachusetts State Retirement Board (MSRB). Mr. Brennan stated that our representative on the working group, Janet Pierce, Executive Director of the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, was unable to attend this most recent meeting, however, the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) sent two other RPA Directors to the meeting to try to deliver the message that there is no financial wherewithal for the affected RPAs to pay the costs that are being imposed on them by the MSRB. As regards the obligation through 2016 of the affected RPAs that received bills from the MSRB, Mr. Brennan stated that we looked at the existing overhead rate and what would happen to the indirect rate with this debt. Mr. Brennan noted that the rule is that we cannot exceed 150% and he pointed out that PVPC would go from 118% to 151% while some of the other RPAs increases would be even higher. Mr. Brennan stated that based on what transpired at the meeting, the RPA Directors believe that the MSRB is beginning to understand that the RPAs cannot possibly meet this obligation. The RPA Directors also recommended arranging a special face-to-face presentation which would involve the affected or potentially affected RPAs directly talking to the key representatives from the Executive Office of Administration and Finance (A&F) and MSRB. Mr. Brennan stated

that we have requested that this meeting take place in July along with a backup date in August. Mr. Brennan noted that seven RPAs have received a bill and there are three RPAs that have not been billed but they agreed that they should be in the room when this discussion takes place. Mr. Brennan stated that it appears the MSRB may be interested in exploring a compromise and he noted that any compromise would need to be subject to a written agreement outlining the specific terms. Mr. Brennan then responded to a series of questions raised by Executive Committee members. Mr. Brennan noted that there will not be an Executive Committee meeting in July but he hoped that by the time the Executive Committee convenes again in August, the affected RPAs will have met with the key officials from state government.

10. Other Business Including PVPC Meetings Schedule Through the Remainder of Calendar Year 2017

Ms. Terry asked if anyone had other business to bring before the Executive Committee. Mr. Brennan referred to the PVPC meetings schedule that had been distributed which lists Commission meetings through the remainder of calendar year 2017 and he noted that the next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, August 17<sup>th</sup> at 4:00 p.m.

Ms. Terry reported that the Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) is planning to meet on June 23<sup>rd</sup> in Franklin County. Ms. Terry stated that there are various issues that the Commission members are concerned about and she hoped that some of their concerns will be resolved at tomorrow's RPAC meeting. Ms. Terry added that she will provide another update at the August 17<sup>th</sup> Executive Committee meeting. Mr. Brennan stated that for the first full PVPC Commission meeting in the fall, he may put together an agenda item focusing on the demographic report. He added that perhaps by then, the individual who is being hired through the Hilltown Collaborative will be on board and can provide some examples of the stress that the rural Commonwealth's municipalities are increasingly under.

At this point, Mr. Cousineau talked about efforts being made by the Town of Blandford to obtain high speed broadband internet service. He noted that to get the Hilltown Collaborative off the ground, communication is mostly email which makes it difficult for a lot of the towns that don't even have digital subscriber line (DSL) internet access. Mr. Cousineau stated that the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) has not been very cooperative and he asked if there is some way that the Rural Policy Advisory Commission could help. Ms. Terry stated that the Rural Policy Advisory Commission Infrastructure Subcommittee was very involved in broadband and created a dialogue between the Commission Chair and the executive office for MBI and as a result of the work that was done, the funds for MBI were released to the individual communities if they so desired. Ms. Terry noted that previously MBI would not release the funds to individual communities and they only wanted the funds to go through businesses that could demonstrate that they would be able to fulfil the requirements for installing and taking care of the fiber within the community. Ms. Terry stated that she believes that the Wired West representative for the communities is now working with the Boards of Selectmen of the communities in an effort to get the communities involved. Mr. Cousineau stated that Westfield Gas and Electric gave a presentation in Blandford with regard to stringing the fiber and the Matrix Design Group also recently gave a presentation, however he noted that although there are companies willing to string the fiber, the availability of the fiber optic cable has been restricted by Verizon and he expressed concern that nothing is moving forward. In response to a question from Mr. Brennan, Mr. Cousineau stated that the lead person for Blandford is Peter Langmore, a volunteer who was the representative with Wired West. Mr. Cousineau offered to send both Ms. Terry and Mr. Brennan an informational handout he received from the Matrix Design Group. Ms. Terry stated that she would see what she could find out at tomorrow's Rural Policy Advisory Commission meeting.

Ms. Terry then asked if there was any other business to conduct before adjourning today's meeting. There being no further business for the Executive Committee to conduct, Vice-Chair Judy Terry adjourned the June 22<sup>nd</sup> Executive Committee meeting at 5:05 p.m. without objection.

Respectfully Submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the June 22, 2017 Meeting

1. Executive Committee June 22, 2017 Meeting Agenda and Suggested Motions
2. Executive Committee May 25, 2017 Meeting Minutes
3. PVPC Warrant: May 1, 2017 through May 31, 2017
4. PVPC Financial Summary Profile as of June 22, 2017
5. Final Version of the 2017 CEDS Annual Report
6. Staff Letter of Resignation May 30, 2017
7. PVPC Meeting Schedule Through the Remainder of Calendar Year 2017