

**PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)  
Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, June 8, 2023**

Commission Members Present Were:

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Kate Kruckemeyer	Commissioner	Holyoke
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Elizabeth Pols	Commissioner	Belchertown
Michael Marciniac	Commissioner	Palmer
Brad Hutchison	Commissioner	South Hadley
Jessica Thorton	Commissioner	Southwick
Rosemary Morin	Commissioner	Springfield
James Moore	Commissioner	Wilbraham
Christopher Flory	Commissioner	Williamsburg
Jack Jemsek	Alternate Commissioner	Amherst
T.J. Cousineau	Alternate Commissioner	Blandford
George Kingston	Alternate Commissioner	East Longmeadow
Peri Hall	Alternate Commissioner	Goshen
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Rosanna Lopez	Alternate Commissioner	Holyoke

PVPC Staff Present:

Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director  
Patrick Beaudry, Manager of Public Affairs  
Ray Centeno, Graphic/Web Designer  
Kenneth Comia, Deputy Director of Land Use & Environment  
Carl E. Jackson, Principal Transit Planner  
Molly Jackson-Watts, Principal Planner/Manager of Regional Information & Policy Center (RIPC)  
Yaitza Osorio, Office Manager  
Catherine Ratté, Director of Land Use and Environment Department  
Dana Roscoe, Principal Planner/Transportation Manager  
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager  
Monique Shaw, Senior Executive Assistant

Guest Presenters:

Mark Melnik, Director of Economic & Public Policy Research, UMass Donohue Institute

Communities Not Represented at the June 8, 2023, Commission Meeting

Brimfield	Huntington	Tolland
Chicopee	Holland	Ware
Chester	Ludlow	West Springfield
Cummington	Middlefield	Wales
Easthampton	Montgomery	Westfield
Granville	Plainfield	Westhampton
Granby	Russell	
Hampden	Southampton	

1. Annual Meeting, Welcome, and Opening Remarks – Walter Gunn, Chair, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

The June 8, 2023, virtual Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn, who welcomed everyone in attendance. Mr. Gunn took roll call, and he noted there was a quorum. Carl Jackson, the new Senior Transit Planner, was introduced.

2. Minutes of the Commission Meeting of April 13, 2023

MOVED BY TJ COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY JOANNA BROWN, TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MINUTES OF THE APRIL 13, 2023, COMMISSION MEETING. FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE, THE MOTION PASSED WITH FIVE ABSTENTIONS.

3. Presentation by UMass Donohue Institute on the Current State of the Region and Massachusetts

PVPC Executive Director Kimberly Robinson introduced Mark Melnik, Director of Economic & Public Policy Research, UMass Donohue Institute to present on the region's current economic and overall state in Massachusetts. He introduced himself and discussed what they do, including creating a journal regarding the state's economic conditions. He reported that with a new governor, they are required to provide an updated economic development plan.

Mr. Melnik reported that Massachusetts had pre-pandemic growth, and the dominant sectors were related to knowledge-based industries. There were significant demographic headwinds that would limit economic growth. The labor force is smaller than in pre-pandemic times, largely due to domestic out-migration. The current unemployment was at 3.3%, which was the 28<sup>th</sup> lowest in the nation. The U-6 is a measure of people who are currently unemployed or part time but want to work full time, unemployment rate was currently at 6.3%. Annual population estimates show that the state has lost approximately 1% of the population. Job growth was at 2.7% in the past year. There were 17.6% of residents in Massachusetts that were foreign-born, the 7<sup>th</sup> highest in the nation. The below-poverty rate was 10.4%, but it did not consider cost-of-living. The median age was 39.9.

Mr. Melnik presented a graph of the unemployment rates over time. He presented the loss and recovery period and reported that there were now more jobs than pre-pandemic in the past two months. The size of the available labor force was the major challenge. The unemployment rate for individuals without a college degree was six to seven percent. The labor force in Massachusetts is projected to grow at a significantly slower rate over the next 30 years. There had been a dramatic increase in domestic out-migration. He stated he was unsure if this would continue. Franklin County experienced a dramatic uptick in death during the pandemic. Hampshire County had different patterns of migration due to students leaving and returning. Holyoke and Springfield had notably higher deaths during the pandemic. Massachusetts has the fourth-highest rate of remote work in the nation, with nearly 24% of workers working from home. The per capita income reached \$82,475, 30% higher than the national average. Massachusetts ranks in the top five for most expensive childcare and fourth most expensive for electricity. The Pioneer Valley's unemployment rate was 2.8%, but the job difference compared to February 2020 was -4,200. Health care and social assistance is the largest industry in the state. Pioneer Valley had a 5% labor growth, significantly lower than the rest of the state.

Mr. Gunn asked about the reasons for domestic out-migration. Mr. Melnik discussed that some individuals come to Massachusetts for college and leave afterward. The most significant age group leaving was the 25–34-year-old population. Peri Hall, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of Goshen, asked about the aging population. Mr. Melnik stated that by 2050 it was projected that over a quarter of the state would be 65 or older. Jack Jemsek, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of Amherst, asked about housing. Mr. Melnik reported that the state is way under in housing production. He stated he would share with Ms. Robinson the regional housing studies done with Way Finders. He stated that there were significant housing burdens, particularly for communities of color. Kate Kruckemeyer, Commissioner representing the Town of Holyoke, asked for clarification on the remote job and

whether they included individuals living in other states. Mr. Melnik reported that the remote statistics were for residents of Massachusetts, not for jobs. Christopher Flory, Commissioner representing the Town of Williamsburg, asked about income and the cost of living. Mr. Melnik agreed and reiterated that childcare and energy are significant costs in the state.

4. Presentation of the PVPC 2022 Accomplishments

Ms. Robinson shared the story map of the 2022 Highlights. There were many different pieces of work done around resiliency. Planners from Belchertown, Ware, and Wilbraham drafted a battery energy storage system document. There was work done on hazard mitigation plans. A Pine Hill Road Improvement Project was to put in 1,300 feet of new drainage and road surface in Russell. There was work done to prevent Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) overflow into the Connecticut River. The Connecticut River Stormwater Committee worked on the Butt Out Campaign. Livability was also focused on ensuring that the area is livable and accessible. Work was done with the Pelham Planning Board and anti-racism committee to revise bylaws to identify where changes were needed. There was also work done with the City of Springfield, including a full update on the Springfield Data Atlas. PVPC worked with Southwick on their comprehensive plan, and they received a \$50,000 grant. Mobility was a focus during 2022. There were many conversations surrounding the Passenger Rail Service. Work was done on e-bikes for environmental justice communities, and sixty bikes will be distributed using community-based organizations to identify recipients. The Regional Transportation Plan had significant community outreach, including a Farmers Market Tour.

5. Nomination and Election of Five (5) Commission Officers and Four (4) At-Large Executive Committee Members for 2023-2024; Report of the Nominating Committee Presented by Walter Gunn

Mr. Gunn presented the slate. The Chair was Walter Gunn; Vice Chair was George Kingston; Clerk was Douglas Albertson; Treasurer was Marilyn Gorman Fil, and Assistant Treasurer was TJ Cousineau. The nominated At-large members were Jack Jemsek, Michael Marciniak, Mark Paleologopoulos, and Joanna Brown. The floor was opened for nominations, and no one was nominated.

The slate was accepted as presented unanimously. The Executive Committee was nominated as presented.

6. Community Reports/Updates from PVPC Commission Members

There were no reports.

7. Other Business

It was discussed that the next meeting will be on October 12, 2023, and it will likely be in person. Ms. Robinson will do a poll to receive feedback regarding in-person versus via Zoom. It was discussed if individuals could approve minutes if they were not in attendance.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY BILL DWYER, TO ADJOURN THE JUNE 8, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 7:07 p.m.

8. Action Items

- Mark Melnik with the UMass Donahue Institute will send Ms. Robinson the slide deck on MA Economic Growth and Challenges presentation.
- Mr. Melnik will send Ms. Robinson the link to UMASS Donahue Institute's unveiled new version of population projections that go out 2050.

- Mr. Melnik will share with Ms. Robinson the Springfield Regional Housing Analysis with Way Finders and Springfield Pioneer Valley Phase II Housing Report.
- Mr. Melnik offered to come back to present the data on Regional Housing.
- Ms. Robinson will send the PVPC 2022 Highlights link to Commissioners and Alternates.
- Mr. Gunn suggested a poll amongst Commissioner and Alternates on whether to meet in person or via Zoom on October 26th.
- Ms. Robinson will look into the annual meeting dates listed on the calendar invite.
- Ms. Robinson will follow up on outstanding request from the Commission about having a conversation on battery energy systems.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents and Other items Distributed at this meeting:

- June 8, 2023 Commission Meeting Agenda
- April 13, 2023 Meeting Minutes