

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, October 12, 2023

Commission Members Present

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Kate Kruckemeyer	Commissioner	Holyoke
Elizabeth Pols	Commissioner	Belchertown
Michael Marciniac	Commissioner	Palmer
Brad Hutchison	Commissioner	South Hadley
Jessica Thornton	Commissioner	Southwick
Rosemary Morin	Commissioner	Springfield
James Moore	Commissioner	Wilbraham
Christopher Flory	Commissioner	Williamsburg
T.J. Cousineau	Alternate Commissioner	Blandford
Peri Hall	Alternate Commissioner	Goshen
Edmund Jaworski	Alternate Commissioner	Hatfield
Robert Daley	Alternate Commissioner	Chester
Jesse Belcher-Timme	Commissioner	Easthampton
James Whalen	Alternate Commissioner	Holland
Stacey Dakai	Commissioner	Northampton
Joanna Brown	Alternate Commissioner	South Hadley
Holly Hendricks	Alternate Commissioner	Williamsburg

PVPC Staff Present

Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director
Rana Al-Jammal, Senior Planner Specialist
Liam Gude, Planner
Joseph Hagopian, Planner
Yaitza Osorio, Office Manager
Angela Panaccione, Planner II Land Use & Environment
Dana Roscoe, Principal Planner/Transportation Manager
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager
Monique Shaw, Senior Administrative Assistant
Derek Strahan, Planner
Shannon Walsh, Historic Preservation Planner

Communities Not Represented at the October 12, 2023, Commission Meeting

Agawam	Huntington	Tolland
Brimfield	Ludlow	Wales
Chesterfield	Middlefield	Ware
Chicopee	Montgomery	Westfield
Cummington	Pelham	Westhampton
East Longmeadow	Plainfield	West Springfield
Granville	Russell	
Granby	Southampton	

1. Chairman's Call to order, Welcome, and Opening Remarks – Walter Gunn, Chair, Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

The October 12, 2023, virtual Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) meeting was called to order at 5:30 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. The Chair announced the new Commissioners and Alternates who have joined the Commission since the last meeting. Three new members Liam Gude, Derek Strahan, and Angela Panaccione were introduced, and they each shared a bit about themselves and their roles within the organization.

2. Minutes of the Commission Meeting on June 8, 2023

Jessica Thornton requested that her last name be corrected. It was noted that Northampton was not represented at the June 8, 2023, Commission meeting.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY JAMES MOORE, TO APPROVE THE AMENDED MINUTES OF THE JUNE 8, 2023, COMMISSION MEETING. FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE, THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.

3. Presentation on the \$750,000 Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant

Historic Preservation Planner Shannon Walsh presented the Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant that was awarded to the Pioneer Valley Regional Ventures Center. She discussed the purpose of the grant and its potential impact on historic properties in rural communities. The application process for the grant was explained, including letters of support received from various organizations. The proposal for the Preservation Works in Western Mass grant subgrant program includes no funding match and a preservation restriction of five to ten years based on the funding amount. The Pioneer Valley Regional Ventures Center (PVRVC) will hold the restriction and the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Historic Preservation Planner will monitor it annually. A sample preservation restriction agreement and letter to property owners were provided as part of the application process.

Project goals include preserving underutilized or endangered community anchor buildings, promoting economic development, placemaking, and documenting historic resources. Eligible owner applicants can be private, public, or nonprofit organizations. The grants will cover activities such as pre-planning roof repair, exterior rehabilitation, structural repairs, window restoration, door restoration, life safety improvements (fire suppression and ADA compliance), and more. Outreach has begun to eligible communities through press releases and articles in local publications. Existing National Register properties within these communities have been identified, but not all population-eligible communities are listed on the state database yet due to ongoing inventory work. The grant program will run from September 2023 to August 2026, with a potential for a second round of funding if viable projects demonstrate enough interest.

Ms. Walsh shared that anyone could apply for the Bruhn Grant; however, the State Historic Preservation Office typically applies for this grant, which would be the Mass Historical Commission or the statewide nonprofit Preservation Mass Historical Commission. Applications or expressions of interest are expected by the end of the 2023 calendar year, with decisions made early in 2024 at the latest. The process of obtaining determination eligibilities for communities and the time it takes to get through the state review process was noted. Mr. Gunn inquired how Worcester County was involved in the grant. Ms. Walsh explained that PVPC was asked whether they were willing to apply for the funds, and statewide preservation nonprofits do not divide the state into all the regions. Therefore, more comprehensive outreach increases competitiveness for funding.

4. Presentation on the 2024 Update to the Regional Transportation Plan for the Pioneer Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

Principal Planner Gary Roux shared a presentation about the 2024 update to the Regional Transportation Plan for the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Pioneer Valley. It highlights federal requirements, long-range planning goals, financial constraints, and environmental consultation processes. Demographics and population projections were also discussed, with dissatisfaction expressed over projected population numbers. The development of regional projections for population and employment, as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on traffic volumes and transit trips, were pointed out. The need for sufficient funding for transportation projects was highlighted, including visionary projects that require additional funding sources. Safety concerns, particularly regarding increasing rates of fatalities in the region, were also addressed. The importance of expanding passenger rail service, both east-west and to Boston, was emphasized along with the need for innovative intermodal connections in rural areas.

James Whalen, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of Holland questioned whether the conversations at the federal or state level showed some urgency regarding population job growth and economic development in the East. Mr. Roux noted that they do have a good presence in the area and are working beyond their borders. However, the East might not see the importance due to their self-serving interests. Joanna Brown, Alternate Commissioner representing the Town of South Hadley inquired about an extra train going from Springfield to Boston on the existing tracks and whether there was a way to address the lack of pooled transportation to renowned medical centers from Springfield. Mr. Roux explained that it might take several years for infrastructure improvements to advance. He added that a community transit grant program in Massachusetts can be a potential startup for new transit-type services.

Mr. Benjamin Spencer, an observer from the City of Northampton, asked what the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission does to help support communities that are trying to build these projects to make streets safer for pedestrians and cyclists. In addition, he asked whether ValleyBike will be online, as they have been a great resource. Mr. Roux replied that they have been advocating and advancing for improvements to serve all models of transportation, and they track that with communities providing bicycle and pedestrian safety as part of their improvements. He added that the vendor of ValleyBike went bankrupt. Therefore, there is nobody available to operate and maintain the system at this point. The City of Northampton is the lead community on the ValleyBike in terms of the partnership between several regional communities that have ValleyBike service.

5. Nomination and Anticipated Election of PVPC Commissioner/Alternate Commissioner

Executive Director Kimberly Robinson shared the criteria for a member joining the Executive Committee. The Planning Commission Chair announced the need to fill the ninth commissioner position on the Executive Committee. The Chair nominated Peri Hall Alternate Commissioner for the Town of Goshen to fill the position. The Chair called for other nominations for the vacant position on the Executive Committee. No additional nominations were made.

MOVED BY ELIZABETH POLS, SECONDED BY JESSE BELCHER-TIMME, TO APPROVE PERI HALL AS THE NINTH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBER. FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE, THE MOTION PASSED WITH TWO ABSTENTIONS.

6. Community Reports/Updates from the PVPC Commission Members

Ms. Robinson mentioned the upcoming event for Commissioners to meet on November 28, 2023 at 5:30 p.m. and requested attendees to save the date. Ms. Brown reminded attendees of the Regional Conservation

Partnership in-person conference at UMASS. It is called Embracing Complexity through Partnership on November 9, 2023 at 8:00 a.m.

7. Other Business

Commission Chair Walter Gunn confirmed that there will be a meeting on December 14, 2023 and reminded attendees to mark their calendars.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY WILLIAM DWYER, TO ADJOURN THE OCTOBER 12, 2023 COMMISSION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 7:13 PM.

8. Action Items

- Ms. Robinson will ensure that the formal invitation for the commissioners' in-person event on November 28, 2023 is sent out to all attendees.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents and Other items Distributed at this meeting:

- a. October 12, 2023 Commission Meeting Agenda
- b. June 8, 2023 Meeting Minutes
- c. RTP Presentation to October 2023 Commissioner Meeting
- d. Bruhn Grant PVRVC Presentation OCT23