

MINUTES
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Fall Board Meeting – October 11, 2022
Franklin Land Trust, Shelburne Falls and Online (Hybrid Meeting)

Board members in attendance (in person): Henry Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust (clerk); Art Schwenger, Heath; Colin Mettey, Conway; Dicken Crane, Windsor; Elayne Murphy, Hoosic River Watershed Association; Jay Healy, Charlemont; Larry Flaccus, Shelburne; Mark Phelps, New Ashford; Paul O’Neil, Leyden.

Board members in attendance (online): Amy Shapiro, Franklin County Community Development Corporation; Bob O’Connor, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs; Hannah Poplawski, Rowe; Jeffrey Thomas, Lever, Inc.; Joe Nowak, Adams; Kate Lindroos Conlin, Massachusetts Forest Alliance; Keith Ross, Society of American Foresters, MA Chapter; Marybeth Chichester, Franklin Regional Council of Governments; Rick Chandler (Vice Chair), Ashfield; Sheila Kelliher, Deerfield River Watershed Association; Zachary Feury, North Adams.

Staff/partners in attendance: Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Administrative Agent (online); Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Assistant (in person).

Guests: Gregory Cox (in person); Whit Sanford (in person); Paul & Denise Pouliot, Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki (online); Glen Ayers (online); Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires (online); Brett Willard, 22 News (online); Emma Van Slyck, Berkshire Eagle (online).

Board members absent: Alice Houghtaling, Monroe; Doug Brown, Berkshire Natural Resources Council; Keith Nislow, U.S. Forest Service; Kyle Hanlon, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission; Paul Catanzaro, UMass; Rick Peltier, UMass.

1. **Call to Order** at 6:02 p.m. by Hank Art. Roll Call of Board Members and Land Acknowledgement.
2. **Public Comment.** Paul and Denise Pouliot of the Cowasuck Band of the Pennacook-Abenaki announced an upcoming meeting of a forestry special interest group that might be of interest to members of the Board. The group focuses on ways to improve forest conservation and management using Indigenous knowledge and is planning a project similar to the [Hubbard Brook Ecosystem Study](#), hoping to reproduce a forest ecosystem similar to a forest managed by Indigenous practices in the 1600s. The planning meeting will take place on Monday, October 17 at 3 p.m. via Zoom. Contact: cowasuck@tds.net.
3. **Discussion of MTWP name change; Board vote to approve name change.**
Proposed change: Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts.
H. Art outlined the reasons for the proposed name change, including: The change would respond to feedback from some local Indigenous Peoples representatives that the “Mohawk Trail” name could be considered cultural appropriation; while the name of the Mohawk Trail highway may have been chosen as a way to connect Berkshire and Franklin Counties as the Partnership was forming, the highway only runs through about 2/3 of member municipalities; if the Partnership region is expanded further south in the future, these towns will be even further from the Mohawk Trail.

H. Art stated the full, official motion as:

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"The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership", a public body established by Massachusetts House Bill No. 4835 filed on 26 July 2018 and signed into law on 31 October 2018, will conduct its work known as "The Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts," and change its bylaws to reflect said change in name. We furthermore request that the legislature of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the U.S Department of Agriculture - U.S. Forest Service officially establish and recognize the name of the public body formerly known as "The Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership" as being henceforth "The Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts."

M. Phelps moved to approve the name change motion. L. Flaccus seconded, opening discussion.

Art Schwenger noted that a name change can cause a lot of confusion and difficulties and suggested that all documents put out by the Partnership note "formerly the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership" after stating the new name for a period.

Greg Cox suggested that the Partnership should check with the Secretary of State to see if the new name or a similar name is in use elsewhere.

Jay Healy wondered if the new name would imply the inclusion of other towns in the region. H. Art noted that it is up to the Board to expand membership, which must be confirmed through 2/3 majority vote.

Jeffery Thomas supported moving away from the misappropriation of the Mohawk name, but emphasized that he is not happy with the name "Woodlands Partnership of Western Massachusetts" because it is much less geographically specific and he is concerned about the scope implied by "Western Massachusetts." He suggested an alternative name, "Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts," to avoid dilution of effort and resources in the region.

K. Conlin noted that the Partnership could colloquially be known as the "Woodlands Partnership" for ease.

J. Thomas moved for an amendment of the originally proposed name to "Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts." Mark Phelps seconded. The amended name change motion was unanimously approved 19-0 by roll call vote.

4. **Discussion of final draft of Partnership Plan; Board vote to approve 10-year plan, with annual review.** Lisa Hayden noted that the final draft is on the Partnership website at <http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org/partnership-plan.html>. Statistics and maps have been updated throughout, more depth has been added, and some rearrangement has occurred in the final chapters. In addition, a new chapter focused on climate change has been added in response to public feedback.

H. Art said he was looking for a yes or no vote tonight to approve the plan rather than further comment or feedback and reminded the Board that it is mandated by state law that the plan be reviewed annually. Suggestions for improvement can next be made during that review.

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M. Phelps motioned to approve the final draft of the plan. A. Schwenger seconded. The motion was approved unanimously by a 20-0 roll call vote.

5. **Discussion of bylaws change to allow for Board alternates; Board vote to approve bylaws change.** The discussion and vote were tabled until a later date.

6. **Brief updates from Committee Chairs.**

a. Natural Resource Based Economic Development. Jay Healy gave a brief update on funding that has been provided to Hall Tavern Farm through a Partnership grant distributed by Lever, Inc. Hall Tavern Farm in Charlemont is the oldest privately owned tree farm in Massachusetts and is part of the Buy Local Wood movement, with an emphasis on sustainable forestry practices and a sawmill, planer, and kiln on site. The sawmill unfortunately burned to the ground recently. J. Thomas said the grant is intended to help with planning for preserving an old dairy barn on the farm for use as a local woodcraft collaboration space. The space would provide opportunity for local wood-based businesses such as timber framers or furniture makers to share equipment and promote their products, with potential educational components.

b. Education, Outreach, and Research. K. Conlin noted that she and Whit Sanford recently visited the Buckland Select Board, and that Buckland will vote again on whether to join the Partnership in May. The EOR Committee has had one meeting since the last Board meeting and is working on several potential public webinars, including one featuring Ben Kargere, a Williams College student who conducted a wood residue study for the Partnership. Hannah Poplawski has been compiling a list of partner agencies to potentially collaborate with for the forest center and to link to on the new Partnership website. If any Board members would like to part of a website working group, please reach out the Kate, Lisa, or Sophie. Jay Healy is interested in being a part of a wood bank discussion, if this topic is taken back up by the Committee.

c. Finance and Budgeting. The Committee has not met recently but would find it useful to receive budget proposals that note estimated costs of projects that each Committee would like to undertake in the future. L. Hayden said that insurance has now been secured for the Board through September 2025 at a cost of \$4560 from the Agent budget. J. Thomas urged that the Agent should check if there is a per-member deductible on this insurance.

d. Forest Land Conservation. The Committee has not met recently, but there was brief discussion of future focus, such as a potential Forest Legacy proposal if the pending designation to make the 21-town region eligible for that federal program is approved. A. Peteroy noted that a question to consider is if the Partnership wants to learn what other conservation organizations are doing around the region and how the Partnership might support those efforts.

e. Municipal Financial Sustainability. The Committee has not met recently and is in need of a Chair.

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7. Funding updates. L. Hayden reported that the bulk of the state \$60,000 tree-planting and climate forest stewardship planning grant has been completed, with forest plans for properties in Rowe, Heath, Conway, North Adams and Shelburne complete, but about \$15,000 will be extended to the next fiscal year to fund an additional planting site, care for trees already planted in Conway, and to complete outreach activities and walks at some of the town forests. Three more tree-planting sites will be selected in the Hoosic and Deerfield watersheds over the last two years of the matching federal USFS grant. Meanwhile, proposals are pending for Partnership activities through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program that would be matched by another USFS grant to the Partnership, this one for \$100,000.

Dicken Crane hoped that the Partnership will follow the science on what “climate-smart forestry” is, and do its best to understand and promote its benefits to both the climate and to local economies.

8. 2023 Partnership leadership roles. H. Art noted that his term as Board Chair is coming to an end in 2023. The Partnership will need to elect a new Chair and Vice Chair. He is hoping for self-nominations this winter. He may be willing to serve again, but thinks it would benefit the Partnership to rotate leadership. Several other Board member appointments are expiring soon—be on the lookout for an email from the Agent about renewing appointments.

L. Flaccus suggested that the Board should consider adding a seat on the Board for a member of an Indigenous Peoples group. H. Art said a seat can be added to the Board with Board approval and an official vote. L. Flaccus suggested that this topic be added to the next Executive Committee meeting agenda.

9. Review and Approval of June 7, 2022 MTWP Board Minutes. A. Schwenger moved to approve the minutes and J. Healy seconded. Approved unanimously.

Additional Public Comment: Glen Ayers, not present at earlier comment period, was invited to offer public comment before the close of the meeting. He noted appreciation for adding Section 3, a climate-focused chapter to the Partnership Plan, and while a work in progress, stated that the revised Plan is much different and better than the earlier one.

10. Adjournment. M. Phelps moved to adjourn the meeting and A. Schwenger seconded. H. Art adjourned the meeting at 8:11 p.m.