

## MINUTES

Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts

Executive Committee Meeting, July 24, 2023, 12:30-2:00pm

**Committee Members in attendance:** Dicken Crane, Windsor (Board Chair); Art Schwenger, Heath (Vice Chair); Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust (Clerk); Jeffrey Thomas, Lever, Inc. (Treasurer); Bob O'Connor, MA EOEEA; Connie Carpenter, USFS liaison

**Board Members in attendance:** Hank Art, Williamstown; Russ Richardson, MA Forest Alliance

**Staff/Partners in Attendance:** Lisa Hayden, NEFF/Admin. Agent; Kate Conlin, NEFF/Coordinator

1. **Welcome by D. Crane and Land Acknowledgement read by K. Conlin**
2. **Approval of minutes from April 25, 2023, Executive Committee meeting** A. Schwenger moved to approve, B. O'Connor seconded, unanimous approval.
3. **Filling vacant Regional Representative seat on the Executive Committee**
  - A. Schwenger suggests sending a memo to the full board sharing the current interest for the position and inviting others to consider.
  - No vote needed from Exec Com to move to full Board for consideration.
  - Russ Richardson, MFA and Rhonda Anderson, Ohketeau Cultural Center, have expressed interest in filling the position. Hank suggests the Partnership accumulate names and wait for the fall full board meeting to vote.
4. **Standing Committees restructuring – Memo & interest form sent to Board members due Aug. 15<sup>th</sup>.**
5. **Stockbridge-Munsee outreach and communication**
  - There was discussion regarding reviving conversations that H. Art began with Bonney Hartley of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans. –Hank suggests passing the ball to D. Crane to continue. Dicken will send a draft to Lisa and communication can be sent to contacts suggested by Bonney.
  - J. Thomas suggested contacting other tribes represented by Ohketeau to ask if they consent to being represented by the center or if they prefer direct representation;
  - Noting that Ohketeau is “Nipmuc-centered,” L. Hayden will communicate with R. Anderson, who is in touch with many of the local tribes (Rhonda serves as Western MA Commissioner on Indian Affairs).
  - B. O'Connor clarified that the Nipmuc is the only tribe listed in a MA Executive Order. The Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans are a federally recognized tribe now based in Wisconsin, but in the course of history were dispossessed of their ancestral lands in MA.
  - H. Art noted that in the Partnership's formation, municipal Board members must outnumber non-governmental entities. As a federally recognized tribe, he is wondering if the Munsee might be invited to join the Partnership under the municipal or governmental category.

- Partnership looking forward to continued communication. Dicken may reach out and there is suggestion for it to be a formal process of contact for each Indigenous group/tribe in the region.
- C. Carpenter noted that competitive federal funding is becoming available from the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), and as usual the Landscape Scale Restoration Act (LSR) grant. The USFS tribal liaisons are notifying Federally Recognized Tribes of some competitive opportunities unique to them. Please note that Indigenous organizations that are not federally recognized tribes but who have a non-profit status are eligible to compete for projects along with other state, federal, and municipal government, and non-profit organizations. Every opportunity will list eligibility criteria.
- Discussion turned to the Partnership's mission focus and that conservation and rural economic development should be seen as partners 50/50. As a new Board member, R. Richardson observed more emphasis on conservation. Consensus centered on featuring more at upcoming meetings about economic development opportunities, local wood and interacting with local businesses, etc.

**6. Legislative name change update**

- D. Crane reports that Paul Mark and Natalie Blais are planning to get to us as soon as the legislative session is finished (early August).
- B. O'Connor confirmed that the draft legislative language prepared by EOEEA addresses and clarifies trust fund issues. He mentioned the Open Space Bond may be being worked on, and the Partnership may want to try that route for funding.

**7. Agent update: EEA grant application, Auditor's PILOT meeting, filling town vacancies, Hancock potential interest in joining, scheduling next meeting(s)**

- NEFF submitted proposal to EOEEA to support the CDS \$540,000 to implement climate-smart practices and expects to partner with Mass Audubon to coordinate parcel-level practices.
- PILOT meeting update- K. Conlin and Sam Haupt attended a public meeting with State Auditor Diana DiZolgio in Williamsburg where she spoke on PILOT reform. The Board will follow up to see if she can meet with us separately to discuss the Partnership region.
- Town updates: Ashfield, Rick Chandler retiring from Partnership; Hancock, resident expressed interest in joining; Clarksburg, reached out to town again; Conway, Deb Donaldson, new rep.; Leyden, Paul O'Neil stepped down; Monroe, working on reconnecting.

**8. Plan for November Full Board Meeting – potential focus on rural municipalities**

**9. Public Comment: None**

**10. The meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.**