

APPROVED MINUTES
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts*
Executive Committee Meeting - January 17, 2023

Committee members in attendance: Henry Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Alain Peteroy (clerk); Bob O'Connor, EOEEA; Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Kate Lindroos Conlin, Massachusetts Forest Alliance; Keith Ross, Society of American Foresters

Guests/staff in attendance: Connie Carpenter, USFS; Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Woodlands Partnership Admin. Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Woodlands Partnership Assistant; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires.

1. **Call to Order** at 2:03 pm by H. Art, with Land Acknowledgement.

2. **Approval of minutes from December 6, 2022, Executive Committee meeting.**

H. Art motioned to approve the minutes and K. Ross seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved with one abstention.

3. **Status of Board Officers recruitment.**

H. Art recently sent out a second plea to the Board for leadership role nominations. Joe Nowak (Adams), Jay Healy (Charlemont), and Dicken Crane (Windsor) have been suggested for the Chair and Vice Chair positions. If any other Board members who are municipal representatives would like to nominate themselves, they should do so soon. A nomination for Treasurer is still needed—this can be a municipal or non-municipal Board member. The election for Chair, Vice Chair, and Treasurer will take place at the Annual Board meeting in the spring.

If no municipal representatives are willing or able to take on the Chair or Vice Chair positions, a change to the bylaws may be needed (currently, these roles must be filled by representatives of municipalities). A. Peteroy noted that the reason for this stipulation was originally to prevent the Partnership from becoming too similar to a land trust or other non-profit, but to maintain it as a community-run organization with support from professionals in the region. R. Chandler asserted that stable funding would help with drawing people to leadership roles from the municipalities and noted that it's hard to get volunteers from small towns that are already stretched thin. K. Conlin noted that she would be interested in the Chair position if the bylaws were expanded to include non-municipal representatives.

4. **Funding updates.**

L. Hayden gave an update on the Congressionally Directed Spending proposal, titled "Action on Forest Climate Resilience," submitted by the Partnership, which was partially approved in the omnibus spending bill, for \$540,000. It is unclear whether or not this funding will be limited to the "implementing climate forestry practices on private family woodlands and town forests" part of the proposal, or if the money could be used for other parts of the proposal as well. The understanding is that a state match is required for this funding, which could also be used for some of the other actions, including the next generation climate forestry crew, the conservation due diligence grant fund and circuit rider, and the forest climate fellowship.

In other updates, the USDA grant recently awarded to NEFF for climate-smart commodities will encompass the Woodlands Partnership region, particularly for outreach to woodland owners regarding their options to implement climate-smart forestry practices. And regarding the Administrative Agent contract with NEFF, there is room in the current budget to hire additional staff

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for public relations, events, fundraising, and/or grant work, or possibly an executive director. Next steps should include putting together a job description for an executive director, or additional support staff.

5. Legislative discussions on formalizing Partnership name change.

H. Art has been in communication with Rep. Natalie Blais about the Partnership name change, who is enthusiastic about the change. She said the Partnership is on the right track, but wants to be sure before filing a bill that the change will not disband the Partnership. She will draft a bill with Rep. Mark, Sen. Comerford, and other members of the delegation.

6. Selection of Partnership website design consultant – next steps on Virtual Forest Center.

L. Hayden shared that Cider House Media has been selected to design the website for the Virtual Forest Center (VFC) through the Rowe MVP grant as well as the new Woodlands Partnership website. A VFC stakeholder group will meet periodically. The first meeting (virtual) is on February 27, 2023, at 7 p.m. and is open to the public. Contact Lisa Hayden at lhayden@newenglandforestry.org if you would like to attend. A Board member working group should be formed to create content for and give direction to the new Woodlands Partnership website.

7. Jan. 31 Board meeting via Zoom – agenda topics & speakers.

a) Guest speakers will include Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship, and Jennifer Fish, Director of Service Forestry Program, for a DCR forestry discussion. The hope is for the Partnership to develop a working relationship with DCR reflective of the 2020 State Forest Action Plan. Other topics for the Board meeting include:

b) Board Officers recruitment updates and discussion

c) Standing Committee updates and next steps re: 10-year Partnership Plan

d) Working group for Woodlands Partnership website; joining the VFC stakeholder group

8. Outreach Committee-hosted webinars.

The Education, Outreach, and Research Committee are hosting two upcoming webinars:

- January 25, 2023, 12pm: “Climate Change and Forest Management 101” with Alexandra Kosiba, University of Vermont Extension.
- February 2, 2023, 12pm: “Waste or Resource? A Panel Discussion on Wood Residue” with Ben Kargère. Williams College; Sean Mahoney, DCR; Emily Boss, Massachusetts Woodlands Institute; Jay Healy, Hall Tavern Farm; and Andre Strong Bear Heart Gaines, Jr., a citizen of the Nipmuc people.

[Register on the Woodlands Partnership website.](#)

9. Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours.

B. O’Connor said that the USDA grant that the Partnership had applied for did not go through.

C. Carpenter shared a grant program that the Partnership may be interested in: the EPA’s [Recreation Economy for Rural Communities](#) planning assistance program, which helps communities identify strategies to grow their outdoor recreation economy and revitalize their Main Streets.

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10. **Adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 3:37pm.

***On Oct. 11, 2022, the Board of the public body created in 2018 voted unanimously to change its name from the “Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership” (MTWP) in its bylaws to operating as the “Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts” and requested the state legislature and USDA Forest Service to officially establish and recognize the new name.**