

MINUTES
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts*
Executive Committee Meeting – December 6, 2022

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

Guests/ staff in attendance: Whit Sanford; Lisa Hayden, NEFF, MTWP Admin. Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, MTWP Assistant; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires.

1. **Call to Order** at 2:04 pm by H. Art, with Land Acknowledgement.

2. **Approval of minutes from September 19, 2022 Executive Committee meeting.**

R. Chandler motioned to approve the minutes and K. Ross seconded. The minutes were unanimously approved.

3. **Board succession: finding new Board chair and vice chair to start in early 2023.**

H. Art will not be running for the position of Board Chair again, both because he feels that new leadership is important periodically and because he has accepted a position at the Clark Art Museum as the Sustainability Projects Manager. He will continue to serve as the Williamstown representative on the Board. Additionally, R. Chandler will not be running for the position of Vice Chair, but will remain on the Board as the representative for Ashfield.

H. Art will write a letter to the Board soliciting self-nominations for the positions of Board Chair and Vice Chair, specifically from municipal representatives (to maintain compliance with the Bylaws). Nominations should be turned in before the January 31 full Board meeting so they can be voted on at the meeting. If there are no self-nominations from municipal reps, then the bylaws will likely need to be amended to allow non-municipal reps to serve as Chair or Vice Chair. K. Ross said that if there are no self-nominations, the Partnership should find someone that could be a municipal rep. who is not currently on the Board who could take on the position (and appoint them to the Board). R. Chandler emphasized that the Partnership will need someone in leadership that is willing and able to pursue stable funding for the Partnership and who can deal with applying for grants or other funding (a specific skill set). A description of what the job will require, including funding responsibilities, will be important to share.

A discussion of Partnership funding followed. H. Art noted that he is sending a letter to Gov.-elect Maura Healey in order to get the Partnership on her radar. W. Sanford suggested putting together a white paper—a brief, synthesized outline for policy makers and legislators that emphasizes immediate objectives of the Partnership and goals for the year. L. Hayden added that Jon Gould had suggested a white paper as an effective strategy, and noted the Agent is considering hiring a PR person to help with outreach and funding issues. B. O'Connor suggested the possibility of hiring a fundraising expert.

4. **Partnership Plan update.**

S. Argetsinger noted that the Partnership Plan in its final format is now up on the website at <http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandpartnership.org/partnership-plan.html>. L. Hayden may conduct

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a final readthrough before it is shared more broadly with the public. It can be downloaded in full or by section.

5. Website updates: bundling new website design with Virtual Forest Center site, domain names, use of .gov, etc.

The Rowe MVP grant is getting underway, with planning for the Virtual Forest Center (VFC) to start soon. A stakeholder group is being formed that will focus on the VFC—reach out to L. Hayden if you are interested in participating in the group. It is likely that one web designer will be hired for both the VFC and the updated Partnership website, in order to maintain continuity between the two sites and simplify the process. An interview with a potential web designer will be held next week. A working group focused on the updated Partnership website is also going to be formed—reach out to L. Hayden or S. Argetsinger if you would like to be part of the working group.

There was a discussion of the relative merits of various domain names for the Partnership website. H. Art advocated for the use of .gov, since the Partnership is a public body. K. Conlin said that .org has a friendlier feel and that .gov may repel some people. B. O'Connor and W. Sanford agreed. K. Ross motioned to use .org for the domain name and B. O'Connor seconded. The motion passed 4-1.

6. Funding updates and how to prioritize spending in the coming year.

L. Hayden noted that there is room in the Agent budget for new spending this year, and asked for suggestions of projects that the Partnership would like to pursue, or ideas for other staff roles to add on such as a part-time PR position to help with webinars, marketing, and branding. K. Conlin suggested hiring a person to focus on fundraising—grant writing, pursuing more permanent funding, etc. H. Art suggested hiring an executive director. W. Sanford thought a development director position and an executive director position would work well. R. Chandler noted that a job description and clear, reasonable expectations for an executive director will be necessary.

7. Planning for virtual full Board meeting in January.

The next Board meeting will be held virtually and is tentatively scheduled for January 31. Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship at the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), has agreed to come give a brief overview of DCR and how its goals line up with the Partnership's goals, with time for discussion and questions. Other DCR employees may also join (i.e., Jennifer Fish, Tom Brule). H. Art noted that the goal of inviting DCR to the meeting is to develop more of a working relationship. The panel should take up about an hour of the meeting. Other items to discuss at the January meeting: Chair and Vice Chair succession, website update, logo discussion, sharing the final Partnership Plan.

The Education, Outreach, and Research Committee has two upcoming events:

A webinar with Alexandra Kosiba, a forest ecophysiologicalist and Assistant Professor of Forestry at UVM on January 25 at noon.

A panel discussion focused on wood residue with Ben Kargere (Williams College student who conducted a wood residue research project for the Partnership), Sean Mahoney (Director of Wood Utilization at DCR), Jay Healey (owner of Hall Tavern Farm), and a forester (TBD) on February 1 or 2.

MINUTES
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts*
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8. **Public Comment.** None.

9. **Adjournment.** B. O'Connor motioned to adjourn and R. Chandler seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:41pm.

***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” in its bylaws to Doing Business As the “Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts” and requested the state legislature and USDA Forest Service to officially establish and recognize the new name.**