

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
of the
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Tuesday, May 24, 2022, via Zoom

MINUTES

Present: Committee Members: Henry Art (Chair); Joseph Nowak, Adams; Robert O'Connor, EEA; Mark Buccowich (ex-officio)

Other Board/staff members: Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Lisa Hayden, Admin. Agent

Guests: Whit Sanford, Shelburne

1. Call to order at 2:07 p.m. Chair Hank Art opened the meeting with a land acknowledgement:
It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking, working, and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Mohican, Pocumtuc, and Abenaki people, who are the indigenous peoples of this land. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

2. Approval of Minutes for April 4 Executive Committee meeting.

Joe moved and Bob seconded. All in favor (noting that the anticipated next meeting date of May 8 or 9 ended up being May 24).

3. Public Comment – none requested.

4. Update on meetings with select boards and feedback so far.

Admin. Agent Lisa Hayden gave an update on meetings with member town Select Boards, which Asst. Sophie Argetsinger has been working to schedule. Several have been held in May (Williamstown, Peru and Monroe), with either the town MTWP Board representative, or Agent or Board Chair giving an update on the Partnership with key grants and projects shared, as well as the Plan update in progress over the past year, and allowing time for questions and discussion, much of which has been positive. Next scheduled meetings include Adams, in which Hank Art will speak with Joe Nowak, a selectman, also attending. Outreach is needed with Clarksburg, where there are current Select Board vacancies, and Whit has been in touch with Buckland. Hank based his Williamstown Select Board visit on a Green Living seminar he gave in the spring. Many other town meetings remain to be scheduled.

5. Draft 2022-2032 MTWP Plan revision and proposal to move Board adoption to a fall meeting in order to facilitate greater public input.

As many of the municipal check-in meetings have yet to occur and it is a process to coordinate them with Town Clerks and Board members, a revised schedule was proposed to get the full revised draft Plan posted on the MTWP web site for comment, to allow remaining Select meetings to be held over the summer and early fall, and to reach out to Indigenous peoples representatives to provide review of the plan. Hank Art reported that he and the Agent had a productive meeting with State Forester Peter Church and Tom Brule of DCR to discuss current projects, and it was agreed that a DCR forum at a future MTWP event could be useful, perhaps in winter. Oct. 11 has been targeted as the next full Board meeting for a vote on the revised 10-year Plan, with listening sessions scheduled in Aug. and Sept. to gather additional public feedback.

6. By-Law Revision Proposal for June Annual Meeting – Ex. Com. membership; Board alternates; and use of teleconferencing.

a. By-laws: Hank Art invited Ex. Com. members to revisit the issue of alternates being appointed. Several comments supported having alternate Board members as a way to allow more participation and provide more coverage at meetings, though one consideration is that there might be an alternate appointed who doesn't agree with the mission. Other bylaw proposals to be considered are adding the Vice Chair and Treasurer to the Ex. Committee so all the officers would be involved, and continuing to offer hybrid meetings after the pandemic (in-person with a virtual option) as long as allowed by the open meeting law. One possible option noted was to allow alternates to serve on Committees rather than the Board. On a motion from Bob O'Connor and second by Joe Nowak, the Committee voted unanimously to present the three proposals to the full Board for discussion and consideration.

b. Review Agenda items, arrangements for June 7 Board/Annual Meeting: Berkshire East in Charlemont was reserved for the June 7 annual meeting, with a light dinner in advance. NEFF as Agent purchased hybrid meeting equipment to allow a Zoom set-up with some attendees in the room, and Hank has a large-screen, so the June Board will be the first in-person meeting since the pandemic.

7. Updates on Standing Committee assignments and leadership. Hank Art said he will be sending out a list of proposed Committee memberships based on interest forms received from Board members.

8. Grant applications and requests for MTWP funding.

a. Review/vote on Franklin County Community Development Corporation Board \$5M application to USDA Climate-Smart Commodities grant, due June 10: Bob O'Connor reported on a proposal for which Franklin CDC has agreed to be the applicant to USDA that connects climate-smart forestry programs to wood products in the region. Components include low-carbon emissions tree nurseries for planting projects, hiring community college STEM graduates from underserved populations to be trained in climate-smart forestry practices, with some coordination salary roles included. The Committee endorsed the proposal.

b. Report on applications for one-year funding through State Sen. Hinds & U.S. Sens. Warren and Markey: Agent Lisa Hayden reported that NEFF coordinated submitting a \$1.11 million Congressional spending request to Sens. Warren and Markey focused on incentives to implement climate-smart stewardship practices in town and privately owned forests, a USFS climate research fellowship based in the MTWP and workforce development program, and funding to help coordinate and complete conservation projects across town lines within the partnership region. A smaller \$200,000 proposal invited by Sen. Hinds office in Feb. included proposed funding for a Director role and a municipal liaison, development of a Partnership educational program of walks, webinars and conferences, and regional trails program.

9. Thanks to Mark Buccowich! – USFS Liaison on retirement at end of May.

Hank Art and Committee members thanked Mark Buccowich for his years of participation on the Ex. Committee as a non-voting representative on behalf of the Forest Service, as the MTWP has evolved. Bob O'Connor thanked Mark for always sending along news of funding opportunities and grant ideas for the Partnership: "Your advocacy has been important, Mark!" Mark said it has been a pleasure to be in the room and watch how the Partnership works and he is pleased that a \$100,000 USFS grant is expected this year. He also expects a FS replacement for his MTWP role to be designated.

10. **Upcoming events.** A reminder was shared about the grant-funded Conway South River Meadows Tree-planting May 26, 1 pm, when volunteers are invited to help plant climate-adapted trees along the South River.

11. **Meeting Adjournment. Bob O'Connor moved and Hank Art seconded, and the Committee adjourned at 3:39 p.m.**

Committee members: Henry Art (chair), Joseph Nowak, Robert O'Connor, Mark Buccowich (ex-officio)