

MINUTES
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts*
Natural Resource Based Economic Development Committee Meeting
November 30, 2022

Committee Members in Attendance: Jeffrey Thomas, Lever (chair); Amy Shapiro, Franklin County Community Development Corporation (notetaker); Jay Healy, Charlemont.

Staff in Attendance: Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Administrative Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Assistant.

Others in Attendance: Hank Art, Williamstown (Board chair); Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires.

1. **Call to Order** at 5:06 p.m. by J. Thomas.
2. **Approval of Minutes from Natural Resource Based Economic Development committee meeting on 10/19/22.**

A. Shapiro motioned to approve the minutes and J. Thomas seconded. Unanimously approved.

3. **Discussion of Baseline Statistics to Track in Northwest MA to Reflect Economic Activity.**

- i. A. Shapiro shared links to resources she has gathered on different ways to track economic metrics, noting that a lot of the data available is connected to housing issues, racial diversity, or zoning regulation impacts on rural areas. The Aspen Institute is also using local storytelling to record impacts on communities over time. Links shared included:

[Durham, NC Neighborhood Compass](#): Interactive map tool. Measurements are identified through local strategic planning, resident input, research, and best practices to provide data that allows local stakeholders to track quality of life and provision of services.

[Northern Forest Center Annual Reports](#): Reports highlight ways the Northern Forest Center strengthens communities, advances the rural economy, and provides leadership to benefit its region.

[United Nations World Tourism Organization](#): Provides standards for measuring tourism impacts and guidelines for sustainable tourism development.

[Aspen Institute](#): Blog sharing themes, ideas, and resources from over 50 rural community practitioners and allies about rural environmental justice.

Appalachian Regional Commission – Tourism:

<https://repository.uncc.edu/islandora/object/etd%3A864/datastream/PDF/download/citation.pdf>

Maine – Forest Opportunity Road Map: <https://formaine.org/>

- ii. J. Thomas asked for suggestions of key metrics that would be useful to monitor in the Partnership region. J. Healy said it would be helpful to **track rural jobs** in a more detailed way—rural jobs are sometimes missed by urban-oriented statistics, i.e.,

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firewood operations. Another suggestion was to track how much **economic value is transported out of state** every year, i.e., logs shipped to Maine or Canada for processing. What are the reasons so much is leaving the state? This information may be difficult to winnow out, and data is not always available.

H. Art suggested measuring: growth in the **sustainable recreation industry and number of people employed in it**; tracking **where harvested forest products are going** (in region or leaving?); number of forest acres under different kinds of **forest management**; number of forest acres that have **Conservation Restrictions** in place; number of **carbon sequestration sites** in the region; and using CFI plots to measure **forest productivity and carbon uptake** in the region.

- iii. J. Thomas suggested bringing specific metric measurement recommendations to the full Board, then figuring out a way forward to collect data as a next step; H. Art agreed that this should be presented to the full Board. J. Thomas suggested putting together a metrics spreadsheet to bring to the Board and collectively ranking or prioritizing metrics to focus on.
- iv. J. Healy noted that it would be helpful to gather a series of “quick facts” about the region, such as “only 2% of logs harvest in the region were processed in the region,” or an executive summary that could be shared effectively with legislators, stakeholders or potential funders.

4. Update from Agent on Virtual Forest Center Stakeholder Group (L. Hayden).

The Virtual Forest Center (VFC) is a project being funded by the Rowe MVP grant to create a website with resources such as climate-smart forestry practices. It will be linked with the Woodlands Partnership’s new website. A couple of bids from web designers have been received and interviews will take place soon. A VFC stakeholder group is being formed—if anyone would like to be a part of the group, let L. Hayden know; it will probably meet every couple of months. A. Shapiro volunteered to join the stakeholder group.

5. Update on Hall Tavern Farm Project.

J. Thomas shared that an open house at the old dairy barn was held recently to gather ideas from the public on how the barn can be reactivated as an economic driver for the region, with forest products as a focus. There was good turnout, with about 30 people in attendance. Ideas included: using the space for education and training, as a space to sell local lumber, or as an artisanal wood products retail space. Lever will serve as the charitable umbrella for a new 501c3: Wood Craft Collaborative at Hall Tavern Farm. The EOR Committee and Partnership could consider co-hosting a spring event there, perhaps with school children from Hawlemont District.

6. Important Upcoming Dates.

- i. Next Board meeting: January 17 or 31, 2023.

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ii. The Education, Outreach, and Research Committee is working on putting together some public educational events this winter: a webinar in mid-January with Alexandra Kosiba, forest ecologist, Vermont Agency of Natural Resources: <https://www.uvm.edu/femc/person/alexandra-kosiba>; and a panel discussion on February 1st or 2nd with Ben Kargère (a Williams College student who conducted a wood residue study for the Partnership), Sean Mahony (Director of Wood Utilization at DCR), Jay Healy, and a forester (TBD).

7. Scheduling Next Committee Meeting.

The next NRBED Committee meeting will take place on January 11, 2023 at 5pm.

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

- I. J. Thomas said it would be helpful to connect with other Committees on some topics, i.e., informing the Education Committee and the VFC group about projects at Hall Tavern Farm.

- II. J. Healy noted that Buckland recently got a grant to start a wood bank and suggested that representatives from the Woodlands Partnership could meet with them to discuss the project and possibilities of expanding to multiple towns. Hall Tavern Farm may be able to volunteer equipment to help with processing wood.

9. Adjournment.

J. Thomas motioned to adjourn and A. Shapiro seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

*Formerly the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership: 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.