

MINUTES

Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts

Executive Committee Meeting, April 25, 2023, 3 – 4:30 p.m.

Committee Members in attendance: Henry Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Alain Peteroy, Franklin Land Trust (Clerk); Bob O'Connor, MA EOEAA; Keith Ross, New England Society of American Foresters; Kate Lindroos Conlin, MA Forest Alliance.

Board Members in attendance: Jeffrey Thomas, Lever Inc., Dicken Crane, Windsor; Art Schwenger, Heath

Staff/Partners in Attendance: Lisa Hayden, NEFF/Admin. Agent

Guests: Rhonda Anderson, Ohketeau Cultural Center

1. Welcome by H. Art and Land Acknowledgement
2. **K. Conlin moved and K. Ross seconded to approve the minutes from 3/23/23 (meeting was rescheduled from March 14 due to snowstorm).** Approved unanimously.
3. **Introduction of guest, Rhonda Anderson:** H. Art noted that the Partnership Board has expressed interest in developing relationships with, and having official representation of local Indigenous Peoples on the board, and invited Rhonda to discuss this opportunity. Rhonda stated that the Ohketeau Cultural Center, based in Ashfield, is interested in exploring this opportunity. Rhonda gave her background: she is Iñupiaq - Athabascan from Alaska, grew up in Plainfield, MA, and lives in Colrain. The Center started in 2017, when Rhonda met the owners of Double Edge Theater who wanted to include Indigenous perspectives at a performance, but were told by a local historian that there were no Indigenous peoples here, which is not accurate. Rhonda co-founded the Ohketeau Cultural Center with Larry Spotted Crow Mann (Nipmuc) to provide a multi-tribal space to reflect the contemporary presence of Indigenous Peoples, and educate the wider community about repatriation and traditional knowledge.

K. Conlin inquired about who the Board should consider inviting to fill a seat. Rhonda stated she hopes the Board would also consider inviting a representative from the MA Humanities but suggests it should be an organizational seat not a specific tribal seat and she would be happy to serve in the role. Creating an Indigenous organization representative would help to “lift the veil of invisibility” of Indigenous People who still live in the region. B. O'Connor thanked Rhonda for sharing and K. Ross supported the added diversity this new board seat would bring. R. Chandler also stated his support.

H. Art asked if there was a motion to recommend at the Annual Board Meeting to add a representative of Ohketeau Cultural Center to the Woodlands Partnership Board. K. Ross made the motion, R. Chandler seconded. The Committee voted unanimously to make the recommendation.

4. **Agenda for Annual Meeting:** A Doodle poll will be sent to confirm date and guest speakers. Ideas for meeting themes include: Forest Legacy Program – historical example, anatomy of a successful project; could include foresters, town contacts and ask Lindsay Nystrom, (MA FL program) to speak. Rick would like a land protection story. K. Ross called for educating planning boards and D. Crane said presentation to towns is part of the process.
5. **Board and officer recruitment:** H. Art reviewed the process of encouraging members to run for officer slots. A. Peteroy supports idea of towns having alternate representatives to address continuing issues with recruiting and retaining town representatives. K. Conlin stated – the more voices, the better. Dicken Crane self-nominated for Chair, Art Schwenger self-nominated for Vice Chair and Jeffrey Thomas is being asked to consider Treasurer. Jeffrey feels the board should be more diverse and have younger leadership and more gender diversity.
6. **Bylaw updates:** The by-laws should be updated to incorporate latest changes.
7. **Name Change:** H. Art sent an email to Rep. Natalie Blais with a copy of potential legislative language prepared by EOEEA Legal that could address the name change, and will check in with her this weekend. No news so far. D. Crane talked to Sen. Paul Mark and hopes he can keep momentum going from the Senate side, and also talked with Rep. Smitty Pignatelli's chief of staff. D. Crane will resend them the draft bill.
8. **Municipal updates:** Buckland's May 6th Town Meeting will have a warrant article to vote if the town should join the Partnership and have a representative on the Board. L. Hayden met recently with the Colrain Select Board, which has concerns about the Partnership not doing enough for the forestry industry, so additional information will be shared. A resident of Savoy has asked for information about the Partnership and the Agent will follow up, and also seek to reach out to Florida.
9. **Tree Planting:** L. Hayden reported that approximately 53 trees and shrubs were planted in Williamstown, 12 at a housing authority property, with the support of about a dozen volunteers. There are two more sites to select as part of the USFS Urban & Community Forestry grant.
10. **Agent report:** L. Hayden is working on the USFS application to operationalize the \$540,000 Congressionally Directed Spending project, and is interviewing for a full-time Coordinator to replace the part-time Assistant role. Two great candidates are being interviewed.
11. **Any items occurring within 48 hours:** J. Thomas asked if a draft "expression of interest" letter could be sent by the Partnership to support a Mass Development grant for up to \$1M to restore the barn for Hall Tavern Farm, for potential space for the Partnership as part of a Woodcraft Collaborative. H. Art agreed to do so. This is a grant for underutilized buildings.

B. O'Connor also asked for a letter of support for an NRCS USDA Equity in Conservation grant being submitted in a couple days by Franklin County CDC and Eagle Eye Institute to increase outreach and education for minority groups and focus on native forest management and food production. It would include two demonstration forests and activities overlapping climate-smart

management and native management and encouraging people from under-served communities to go into forestry and conservation fields.

12. Public Comment: None.

13. The meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.