

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
of the
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Tuesday, January 18, 2022

Present: Committee Members: Henry Art (Chair); Joseph Nowak, Adams; Robert O'Connor, EEA; Whit Sanford, Shelburne

Other Board/staff members: Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Kate Conlin, MFA; Lisa Hayden, Admin. Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, Admin. Asst.

Guests: Glen Ayers; Marguerite Willis, Charlemont; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires

1. **Call to order at 2:01 p.m.**
2. **Approval of Minutes for Executive Committee meeting on 10/21/21:**
Joe motioned to approve and Bob seconded. All in favor.
3. **Schedule and set deadlines for the 2022 MTWP Plan Revision (due by end of February)**

Whit Sanford went through the 2016 Plan to rethink the chapters – to condense and reorder the text, to reflect the current thinking of the Standing Committees, and to make it more compelling and interesting to read.

Lisa Hayden, Sophie Argetsinger, and Hank Art will be focusing on revising the plan by the end of February to make it current and legal per state requirements. The goal is to have the draft Plan revision ready for Board review at the March 15 meeting, to gather feedback through the spring, and have the Board vote on the Plan update at the June annual meeting. The 2022 Plan will set the priorities for the next 10-years and the final Plan may include targets for a 10-year budget.

Joe Nowak suggested we draft letters to the towns to update them about the revised plan and begin to set up meetings to get their input about the plan.

Hank Art has been conversing with Indigenous Peoples about partnering with MTWP. He has been in contact with the Abenaki in NH, VT and MA who are interested in collaborating and has spoken with the Stockbridge Mohicans. The intention of the Partnership to collaborate with Indigenous Peoples should be included in the 2022 Plan. Rick noted that Double Edge Theatre in Ashfield has a strong relationship with the Abenaki and could be contacted. Kate mentioned a possible webinar in the spring about Abenaki collaboration with the US Forest Service on pollen core research.

4. Strategies for state and USFS funding of MTWP; state/federal legislator outreach (EOEEA 4th grant cycle?)

Bob O'Connor noted that Randy Moore is now Chief of Forest Service region. Joe Nowak commented that MTWP needs to partner with the US Forest Service. The Committee wants Chair Hank Art and Keith Ross, Budget Com. Chair, to send a letter to Chief Moore at the Forest Service about the MTWP, seeking clarity on ways to obtain funding for the Partnership, and building momentum from the Shared Stewardship Agreement. Is there a process or mechanism for applying or is funding on hold pending Congressional action?

It was noted that many towns were added to Cong. McGovern's district and MTWP should seek a meeting. The Committee asked Hank Art to follow up with letters and discussions with Senator McGovern and Representative Neal.

The committee also wants a similar letter to be sent to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The group wanted to know if EOEEA will have another round of funding for the Partnership. Bob O'Connor said the EOEEA grant program for MTWP towns and regional projects are usually posted in March.

5. Potential for a Municipality Vulnerability Action Grant for Forest Center (February deadline)

It was suggested that planning for this grant might detract from working on the Plan right now, but Bob noted that an Expression of Interest is a simple 2-page form and that the Proposal itself isn't due until June. A lead town would need to be identified to be involved for this program targeted to municipal climate change planning. Hank Art reported on the Forest Center Report that Williams College students completed this winter. The report was interesting and comprehensive in exploring its uses, spaces, and locations.

In response to Marguerite Willis of Charlemont, the Committee reported that no site had been chosen for the Forest Center, but there is general consensus that it be in Franklin County (as a complement to the Greylock Glen center in Berkshire County) and near Route 2. The process of getting to a physical Forest Center is years off and will require public outreach and involvement. In the meantime, Rick Chandler suggested the MTWP phase the creation of the Forest Center first via an internet site that would outline the scope of what the center could be and mean for the region.

There was discussion of applying to fund a new Forest Center website through an MVP grant. Hank Art will complete the form as a first step to apply for a grant. Also, Marguerite Willis thinks the towns need to be involved in the creation of the website and center. Towns like Charlemont are dealing with an overload of tourists while not having

the funds to support all fire, emergency, and ambulance services to control and protect the influx of people. The proposed site should deal with issues the towns are facing.

Joe Nowak is concerned that the existing website needs to be updated and operational as well for the Partnership.

6. Wood Waste Project

Hank Art reported he will be overseeing a research project that will conduct an inventory, analysis, and evaluation of the amounts of wood wastes (street trees, utility companies) that are being generated annually by public, private, and institutional entities in the region's municipalities, as well as current and possible future uses for wood waste. Williams College and MA College of Liberal Arts are funding the project which will be carried out this summer by interns.

6. Winter Riparian Forest Project with Conway School \$60,000 FS

The MTWP is working with NEFF and the Conway School on evaluating potential restoration sites for riparian forests with a \$60,000 grant from the Forest Service and a matching grant from EOEEA.

7. Budget Priorities – next year's budget

The Committee discussed a budget for 2022-23. Whit Sanford wondered if there would be direct funding of the Partnership or if MTWP could be an applicant for a \$60,000 Regional Grant with a nonprofit like the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. Standing Committees should be highlighting their top budget priorities. There was a brief discussion of a license plate for the Partnership or Berkshires to generate annual funding of the Partnership; Kate and Bob are researching this idea.

8. NEFF Evaluation

The Partnership should provide feedback to NEFF on its role as Administrative Agent for MTWP at some point this year.

9. Public Comment

Guest Glen Ayers recommended that the new MTWP Plan center on the climate crisis. He stated that the nation needs to create large contiguous forest and wildlands to combat global warming. He thinks the Partnership should refocus on economic development that "reforests" the towns which would in turn attract private funds to match state & federal funds, e.g., Land and Water Conservation Fund. He suggested that MTWP could be the entity to organize state funding expected for municipal reforestation projects.

10. Meeting Adjournment

Joe Nowak motioned and Whit Sanford seconded to adjourn the Executive Committee Meeting, and motion passed unanimously at 3:41 p.m.