

MINUTES
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts*
Natural Resource Based Economic Development Committee Meeting
January 11, 2023

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

Staff/Others in Attendance: Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Administrative Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Assistant; Hank Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Marybeth Chichester (FRCOG); Greg Cox, Hawley.

1. **Call to Order** at 5:08 p.m. by J. Thomas, followed by a brief round of introductions.
2. **Approval of Minutes from Natural Resource Based Economic Development committee meeting on 11/30/22.**
 - A. Shapiro motioned to approve the minutes and Jay Healy seconded. Unanimously approved.
3. **Draft metrics to recommend to the Board at the January 31 Board meeting.**

J. Thomas led a further discussion (continued from previous meetings) on metrics that could be used to reflect economic activity in Northwest MA, and on ways to allocate resources from the Partnership to do this tracking. In 5-10 years, what information do we wish we had or wish we would have tracked? As a starting point, J. Thomas shared a spreadsheet with the following basic categories: Economic Development, Climate Change Mitigation, Education, Tourism, Engagement/Marketing, Funding. He emphasized that the chosen metrics should align with the values and goals of the Partnership.

Suggestions for metrics to track included:

- Information on local wood processing—how much that is harvested locally is processed locally vs. shipped outside of the region for processing. DCR’s Wood Utilization and Markets Program may be collecting information on this, or local harvesters and businesses could be surveyed.
- Total forest, total acres under Chapter 61; cutting plan data from DCR; land under Chapter 61; harvest information from cutting plans at DCR; forest-related businesses and jobs. Much of this information can be found in the Partnership Plan (Section 2, Section 4, and Appendix A).
- Carbon sequestration and storage: number of acres utilizing carbon-focused forestry. DCR has a Climate Forestry program that may be tracking this.
- Tourism: track visitors and what draws them to the area; revenues at regional destinations; employment (see Section 4 of Plan for recent tracking in Berkshire and Franklin Counties).
- Education: Programs offered by the Partnership and number of participants.
- Engagement/Marketing: Partnership website and social media visits; use storytelling focused on the region to draw people in.
- Funding: Grant dollars received and distributed by the Partnership.

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- Weather: Tracking weather patterns in region and changes over time due to climate change; economic impacts of inclement weather.
- 4. Discuss possibility of hosting a summer intern to help advance NRBED objectives.**

J. Thomas noted that Williams College has a summer internship program with stipends available for students who intern at non-profits or with other organizations. An opportunity with the Partnership focused on metric tracking could be offered, but would need to be posted soon, and the student would need an advisor from the Partnership who could work with them. No one present at the meeting is available this summer to fill the advisor role—J. Thomas will write up a brief description of the role that can be shared with the full Board to see if anyone might be interested in advising a student. The role could also potentially be shared by more than one person. A. Shapiro can also check with Elena Traister, Environmental Studies professor at MCLA, who may be available to advise a student.
 - 5. Discussion of ways for the NRBED Committee to prioritize elements of the approved Partnership Plan**

H. Art is hoping that each Committee will return to the sections of the Plan that are relevant to that Committee in order to formulate next action steps and concrete ways to accomplish the long-term goals of the Plan. Discuss next meeting. Visit:
<http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandspartnership.org/partnership-plan.html>
 - 6. Suggestions for a quick facts sheet about the region**

The fact sheet should be aimed at people unfamiliar with the region to provide a snapshot of the region. An infographic or one-pager was suggested. The sheet could synthesize the Plan into a more digestible document and could be available on Partnership website. Discuss more next meeting.
 - 7. Update on grant-funded Forest Center planning activities**

Rowe MVP grant: work is underway on the Virtual Forest Center and Partnership website update; the grant partners will be pulling together a VFC stakeholder group soon.
Andre Gaines, a member of the Nipmuc people who is involved with the Ohketeau Cultural Center, will be joining the February 2 panel on wood residue that the Partnership is presenting.
 - 8. Next meeting:** Tuesday, March 7, 5pm
 - 9. Adjournment.**

J. Thomas adjourned the meeting at 6:30pm.

***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.**