

**PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)**  
**Minutes of the Virtual Zoom Meeting Held on Thursday, April 13, 2023**

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Commission Members Present:

Doug Albertson	Alternate Commissioner	Belchertown
Joanna Brown	Commissioner	South Hadley
William Dwyer	Commissioner	Hadley
Judith Eiseman	Commissioner	Pelham
Marilyn Gorman Fil	Alternate Commissioner	Monson
Christopher Flory	Commissioner	Williamsburg
Walter Gunn	Commissioner	Longmeadow
Kate Kruckemeyer	Alternate Commissioner	Holyoke
Rosemary Morin	Commissioner	Springfield
Peggy O'Neal	Alternate Commissioner	Worthington
Mark Paleologopoulos	Commissioner	Agawam
Marcus Phelps	Commissioner	Southwick
Bruce Coldham	Commissioner	Amherst
Bob Daley	Alternate Commissioner	Chester

PVPC Staff Present:

Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director  
Catherine Ratte, Director of Land Use and Envr. Dept.  
Lisa Edinger, Director of Finance  
Karen Martin, Senior Planner  
Jakob Tilsch, Data Analyst  
Monique Shaw, Sr. Admin Assistant  
Yaitza Osorio, Office Manager

Guests:

Toby Barkman  
Peri Hall

Communities Not Represented at the April 13, 2023, Commission Meeting

Blandford	Hampden	Southampton
Brimfield	Hatfield	Tolland
Chicopee	Huntington	Ware
Chesterfield	Holland	West Springfield
Cummington	Ludlow	Wales
Easthampton	Middlefield	Westfield
East Longmeadow	Montgomery	Wilbraham
Granville	Palmer	Westhampton
Granby	Plainfield	
	Russell	

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1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome, and Minutes of the Commission held February 9, 2023

The April 13, 2023, virtual Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) meeting was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Planning Commission Chair Walter Gunn, who welcomed everyone in attendance. Mr. Gunn took roll call, and he noted there was a quorum. In addition, it was noted that the Hybrid Meeting Law was extended until March 2025.

MOVED BY JOANNA BROWN, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 9, 2023, COMMISSION MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

2. Introduction of New Staff Members

Jakob Tilsch introduced himself as the new Regional Information and Policy Center Data Analyst.

3. Presentation of the 2022 Highlights digital publication.

This item was tabled until the June meeting.

MOVED BY MARK PALEOLOGOPOULOS, SECONDED BY JOANNA BROWN, TO TABLE AGENDA ITEM 3 UNTIL THE JUNE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Possible Action on the Results of the Strategic Plan Scoping Work Done by the Consensus Building Institute

Catherine Ratte introduced Toby Berkman to present the Strategic Plan Scoping work. Toby Berkman presented the information. He stated he worked with CBI, which helps facilitate policy issues. An assessment was done to try to understand the scope of the project. During the February Commission meeting, feedback was received on the preliminary findings and recommendations from stakeholder outreach.

The goal of the current meeting was to share the final recommendations and discuss potential options. There were several overall observations: a general consensus on PVPC's broad areas of strength, opportunities to improve, and key strategic questions; overall enthusiasm for the idea of a cross-sector strategic plan for PVPC; interest and trust in PVPC as a regional convener; caution that it needs to be done right with a broadly inclusive consultation process; frequent suggestions around the connection between an effective strategic plan for PVPC and clarity on a strategic vision for the region and its stakeholders.

The goals for a successful plan included: a broader and improved stakeholder buy-in, strategic focus and clarity for PVPC, cross-sector coordination, budgetary alignment and flexibility, improvement and streamlining of specific practices, and effective implementation. The suggested key strategic planning questions from the February meeting surrounded the vision, needs, and opportunities, PVPC's role and partnerships, PVPC outreach services, coordination, and convening, and funding, operations, and staffing. Most of the questions surround how PVPC could improve on these items.

The general process recommendations included: convening a core team for drafting and advancing the plan; enlisting a professional facilitator or team for support; reviewing and consolidating relevant data and conclusions from existing plans; broad consultations on regional vision and challenges, municipal needs and opportunities, and roles for PVPC and partners; a core team and work groups to review feedback and develop a framework for a plan; continued vetting and outreach to communities and staff for additional input; a final draft that is developed and disseminated. Multiple options were presented. The first option was for PVPC to hire a consultant to help support the core planning team with ongoing development and internal workshops. An alternative approach was to leverage funding from the state through a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness grant program (MVP). These grants are for climate change

resiliency and implementing priority projects, and RPAs were recently granted the opportunity to apply for MVP grants. It would be a potential two-stage process: the first stage would be developing a regional vision for a resilient Pioneer Valley with the MVP regional planning grant, and the MVP program would not fund the second stage. It would involve some outreach for PVPC strategic planning. The potential benefits included additional resources, the opportunity to fund a more robust visioning process, and significant advances to PVPC's strategic planning once it began.

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Ms. Ratte presented on the MVP Program. It was created in 2017 and supports cities and towns in Massachusetts to plan for climate change resiliency and implement priority projects. Forty-one out of forty-three municipalities were MVP certified or working on certification. Catherine Ratte stated she had reviewed the MVP Planning reports, and there must be a specific mention of the activity that will be applied for in the action grant. She stated that water quality was one major issue that came up, as well as regional transit. Overall, there was justification for an MVP Action Grant. She reported that the Commonwealth was about to release MVP 2.0, which would continue to support communities in increasing resilience to climate change but focuses on addressing root causes of social vulnerability and moving from planning to implementation. MVP 2.0 also allows communities and regions to revisit their resilience priorities defined during their original planning process. It also helps to convene a Core Team and guarantees funds for the top recommendation in the planning process. Ms. Ratte recommended MVP 2.0, considering the MVP Action grant was due on May 4<sup>th</sup> and MVP 2.0 allows one regional application per region, and the deadline is later. She stated that letters of support would be needed, and there were template letters available.

Joanna Brown cautioned the PVPC not to follow the money but to consider both options equally, rather than immediately default to go one direction. Ms. Robinson stated that many foundations were doing vision processes, so there was a consistent need across the community. Ms. Ratte clarified that it had been ten years since the funding from the federal government was received to update the vision and planning. Mr. Dwyer asked if the MVP 2.0 would put PVPC in competition with the constituent communities, and Ms. Ratte reported it would not, but the action grants would. Concerns were raised that MVP 2.0 might impede what was already trying to be done. Mr. Berkman explained MVP 2.0 would fund a bigger vision in the first stage, and then it would funnel into the original vision. Ms. Robinson stated that more information should be available once MVP 2.0 is released. Mr. Gunn asked Ms. Ratte to bullet-point a list of how MVP 2.0 would meet the current goals of the community that Mr. Berkman presented. Concerns were raised about rural communities and the differences between rural and urban community needs. Mr. Gunn stated that there still was no involvement with some communities, even with the attempts to engage them. Ms. Eiseman stated that smaller communities needed to know that they were valued. Ms. Hall stated she was from Goshen, and they want to be more engaged and aware of the resources available, but they do not have the staffing and resources available. Ms. Robinson will reach out to Ms. Hall. Ms. Robinson stated she would love to share what is done at the June meeting.

MOVED BY JUDY EISEMAN, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO ACCEPT AGENDA ITEM 4, THE STRATEGIC PLAN SCOPING WORK. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

5. Discussion and Final Approval of the PVPC's Proposed Fiscal Year 2024 Budget, Presented in Draft Form at the February 9<sup>th</sup> Commission Meeting

Mr. Gunn noted that some revenue was lost and commented it was a conservative, well-done budget. It was prepared before the Governor's budget, which should allow for more income. Lisa Edinger reported that some of the revenue sources were reorganized to break it into individual agencies, so no money was lost for the Commonwealth. Health and dental were expecting a 3 to 5% increase. Last year, a lot of the money was used to make technology infrastructure changes, so that part of the budget was lower for 2024. The rent contract was going up for FY24. The overall budget went down by .68%. It was asked why the electricity went up so much. Ms. Edinger reported that the rates had gone up quite a bit in general. It was asked about the percentage change in miscellaneous. Ms. Edinger stated she believed it was a typo and would check. Ms. Morin asked if the annual meeting expenses decreased due to Zoom. Ms. Edinger confirmed that was correct. It was clarified that there was less in the miscellaneous line due to

assigning the items into categories to keep miscellaneous expenses to a minimum.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY JAY MOORE, TO ACCEPT AGENDA ITEM 5, THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2024. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

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6. Approval of the PVPC Borrowing Resolution for the Commission's Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024

Mr. Gunn stated that this approval had to be done every year. This was for the fiscal year 2024.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY JUDY EISEMAN, TO ACCEPT AGENDA ITEM 6 TO ALLOW THE CHAIRMAN AND THE TREASURER OF THE PLANNING COMMISSION TO AUTHORIZE BORROWING OF NECESSARY FUNDS. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

7. Community Reports/Updates from PVPC Commission Members

Ms. Robinson introduced Karen Martin. She is a new member of the team who is the new Senior Planner focused on housing. Karen Martin introduced herself. Monique Shaw introduced herself as the new Senior Administrative Assistant.

Mr. Phelps reported this would be his last commission meeting and stated he enjoyed participating.

Mr. Flory added that Zoom meetings, or at least hybrid meetings are beneficial for rural towns that are further away. He asked about getting reports from the rural caucus. Ms. Robinson stated she appreciated the reminder and would like to look into this.

8. Other Business

There being no further business to conduct, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the April 13, 2023, Commission meeting.

MOVED BY JOANNA BROWN, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO ADJOURN THE APRIL 13, 2023, COMMISSION MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 7:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk  
Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

List of Documents and Other items Distributed at this Meeting:

- April 13, 2023, Commission Meeting Agenda
- February 9, 2023, Meeting Minutes