

**Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES
March 30, 2021**

Call to order 1:03 by Hank Art.

Present: Hank Art, Joe Novak, Whit Sanford, Lisa Hayden, Bob O'Connor, Mark Buccowich.

1. Minutes of February 10, 2021

Joe Novak moved, and Whit Sanford seconded, a motion to accept the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting held on February 10, 2021. The motion was accepted unanimously.

2. Update on Standing Committee meetings

The Education, Outreach, & Research, and the Natural Resource-Based Economic Development Committees had good first meetings and Budget & Finance is to meet tomorrow. Their meetings went well but most committees are having difficulty coming up with their mission statements.

3. Update on towns with vacant board representatives needing to be filled

Three town representatives have stepped aside, including Cheshire (Paul Jayco), Rowe (Walt Quist), and New Ashford (Mark Phelps, Treasurer), though Hank is following up with Mark to confirm whether he will participate.

Joe was complimentary of the energy and eagerness of the Committees that met and noted there is good cross fertilization between committees.

The Executive Committee thinks resignations should be put in writing and those stepping aside should be asked to recommend a new trustee for the Board.

Joe Novak, Hank Art, and Lisa Hayden will follow up on new representatives.

4. MTWP Grants

Towns like Hawley, Rowe, Florida, and Savoy, which are non-members towns, will have to vote to join the Partnership before they can qualify for any MTWP grants. Once the towns have voted to be a part of the Partnership, they will be able to qualify for grants and can become full members of the MTWP in about two and a half years from the town vote.

4. USFS Representation

Hank Art will be sending a letter to Vicki Christensen, Chief of the Forest Service, to say we are looking forward to working with them on the shared stewardship of Mohawk Trail forestlands and to the appointment of a representative to help us with the Partnership. Also, he will suggest to the FS that the Forest Center is a top priority, because in the long term this will be the cornerstone of the Partnership.

5. USFS or other means of Federal funding

Bob O'Connor noted that the pending Infrastructure Bill might possibly fund the Forest Center with the help of Senator Neal.

Art Hank thinks the Budget & Finance Committee and Lisa (NEFF) should meet with Senator Neal and/or his aide Mark Russert to discuss the Forest Center, possible funding sources to plan and build the center – its site, spaces, exhibits, and educational components.

This led to a lengthy discussion of what needs to be funded and who and what is being done by others relative to the planning and development for the Partnership. The FRCOG and BRPC received a \$65,000 grant to do a recreation assessment and to inventory infrastructure in both counties.

Hank Art and Lisa Hayden noted that the Education, Outreach & Research Committee (EOR) should develop a list of projects for the region's community colleges and universities. Their environmental planning students could conduct "bite-sized" research projects at low or no cost.

Whit Sanford observed that the Partnership should identify comparable list of funders (foundations, corporations, and federal and state agencies) for large and small projects, so the MTWP could take advantage of grant opportunities as they come up.

6. Admin. Agent Update – prioritizing next steps

Lisa reported she has applied for a Terra Corp research assistant to work with NEFF on the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership and if the position is approved, wants to recruit a local student.

Mass Audubon and NEFF are leading a Climate Forestry Project in Adams and Williamston through state Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program grants to the towns. The pilot program will identify climate-resilient forest management planning and practices appropriate for the MTWP region and make recommendations for assisting municipal and private family forest owners to be able to apply for grants once funding is available. The partners are also developing an outreach plan and they want to seek feedback from key stakeholders, including diverse landowners and representatives of tribal Nations in the region, looking for opportunities to enhance planning for Berkshire lands and forests by incorporating their knowledge and values into the environmental conservation process.

It was also reported that the Lever, Inc. grant competition event went very well. The "winners" of the \$25,000 grant were a couple from Charlemont who want to develop a project in concert with Zoar/Berkshire East.

7. Other Items not anticipated prior to the setting of the agenda

Hank Art wants the draft of new the MTWP Plan to be completed within the next year. He wants the Standing Committees to begin the effort by editing the plan per their committee charges and making sure it complies with USFS's Shared Stewardship Program.

8. Future meeting dates; potential items for June Partnership Agenda

The next Executive Committee Meeting will be May 11 at 1:00 pm. The Full Board will meet on June 8 at 6:00 pm.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 PM.