

MOHAWK TRAIL WOODLANDS PARTNERSHIP

Forest-Based Economic Development and Conservation

MTWP Executive Committee Minutes July 20 2021

Members present: Henry Art (chair), Joe Nowak, Mark Buccowich, Bob O'Connor

Others present: Lisa Hayden, NEFF/Admin. Agent; Sarah Reynolds, Charlemont Town Administrator

The meeting was called to order at 1:09 p.m.

J. Nowak moved and B. O'Connor seconded approval of the May 11, 2021 Exec. Committee minutes, which passed unanimously.

Update on EOEEA grants: B. O'Connor reported that there will be a press release from the Commonwealth in the near future announcing about \$313,000 in grants from the Exec. Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs funded through the MTWP town and regional grant program, targeted to the region's municipalities that have voted to join the partnership. In response to questions, he noted that not every application was funded in this round to which there were 10 town and 4 regional applications. There was discussion about the Ex. Committee reaching out to towns that have never applied for this grant program to make them aware of future funding opportunities. It was also suggested that the grant announcement should be publicized in local media and posted on the MTWP web site.

September 14 Webinar project and speaker selection: L. Hayden asked for Committee suggestions on speakers from towns that have received MTWP grants in the past to invite them to provide an overview of their project benefits at a forum intended to spread the word about grants available to the municipalities in the region. In addition to an update on the Greylock Glen long-running project in Adams, projects in Heath, Rowe, New Ashford, Florida and Conway were also mentioned among past grant recipients that could be featured at the public forum, which will also need to be publicized and publicly posted. It was agreed on a 75-minute agenda with a variety of grant projects related to trails and forest stewardship for about 15-minute presentations on each.

MTWP Center Student Project - Fall 2021 & Economic Development intern - Summer 2022, Williams College: H. Art reported on two proposals for student interns that he can submit at Williams College to advance focus areas of the MTWP. The first would be for an Environmental Planning course team of 3-5 students who could focus on a needs assessment for the proposed MTWP Forest Center concept that would include review of questions such as location, design, potential functions and programming for such a Center. The second student project would involve 1-2 interns in the summer of 2022 through the Zilkha Center for Environmental Initiatives to research the amount of waste wood generated by MTWP towns, utilities and industry and review suggestions for how best to utilize this material. Committee members agreed that both were good ideas and that students are an incredible resource that the MTWP should engage in projects. B. O'Connor noted that the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission did a similar analysis of waste wood for Hampshire County, a report that might be available. J. Nowak said the MTWP should also seek to involve the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts in North Adams and H. Art agreed to reach out to a contact there about partnering with the MTWP.

B. O'Connor also suggested that another possible topic for a student team would be to research long-term funding options for the MTWP, likely in coordination with the Budget and Finance Committee. A few options for evaluation might include: a) seeking National Heritage Corridor status for the region and understanding the pros and cons of such a designation through the National Park Service; b) a specialty

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environmental license plate featuring the MTWP, for which Massachusetts has an established program in which individuals order and buy the plates with a percentage of funding going to the featured organization or cause; c) a regional trail pass that could be promote to visitors to the MTWP, similar to the White Mountains trail system where pass holders get parking privileges, etc.

Relationship with Stockbridge-Munsee Community of the Mohican Tribe: H. Art said he has sent an email to representatives of the Stockbridge-Munsee Community of the Mohicans seeking to discuss opportunities to work together but has not yet heard back. One suggestion is to invite a member of the Stockbridge-Munsee Band of Mohicans to participate in the oak resilience workshop being planned for late 2021 by sharing indigenous knowledge, as the tribe in Wisconsin sustainably manages oak woodlands for forest products. J. Nowak mentioned that he is looking into reserving Hoosic Valley High School in Berkshire County for this event being planned by the Education, Outreach & Research Committee while Kate Lindroos Conlin is looking for a venue in Franklin County.

Timing of mileposts in MTWP Plan revision: The Committee discussed the process of updating the 2015-16 MTWP Plan in the Agent's work plan to coordinate. J. Nowak suggested that Board members representing communities should be enlisted to engage their municipality in the process. B. O'Connor said he thinks that there should be at least one listening session focused solely on the Plan update in each county in order to gather public input, and that including discussion at the end of the Oak workshop would not be enough time. A priority will be to remove earlier references to biomass that were not included in the enabling legislation, and comments and perspectives of groups active in the region could be folded into the new version of the plan. Standing Committee comments and suggestions on Plan revisions can be compiled and hopefully submitted to L. Hayden in the next couple months with the goal of having a draft revised plan to review at listening sessions in late fall or winter so that a final draft Plan could be ready by early 2022.

Options for alternative website/social media use of "MTWP": There was discussion of options for requesting that a group that uses the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership name on a Facebook page and web site remove those references as they are not the official regional organization. It was noted that a Buckland town meeting has apparently declined to join the partnership.

The next Executive Committee meeting is scheduled for Aug. 24 at 1 p.m.

J. Nowak moved and B. O'Connor seconded to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.