

**Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Annual Board Meeting – June 8, 2021**

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Hank Art at 6:04.

1. Introductions – Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Board Members

Towns

Hank Art, Chairperson, Williamstown; Rick Chandler, Vice Chairperson, Ashfield; Zachary Feury, North Adams; Larry Flaccus, Shelburne; Doug McNally, Windsor; Ed Munch, Peru; Joe Nowack, North Adams; Art Schwenger, Heath; Rebecca Stone, Clarksburg; Mark Phelps, New Ashford.

Organizations

Jeffrey Thomas, Lever, Inc.; Kyle Hanlon, BRPC; Sheila Kelliher, DRWA; Kate Lindroos-Conlin MA Forestry Alliance; Andrew Kawczak, HRWA; Bob O'Connor, EOEEA; Alain Peteroy, FLT; Nicole Pyser, BRPC; Keith Ross, MA Society of Foresters; Whit Sanford, GSFABA; Emily Johnson, FRCOG; Paul Catanzaro, UMass School of Earth & Sustainability.

Staff & Partners

Lisa Hayden, Agent, NEFF; Mark Buccowich USFS; Keith Nislow, USFS.

Guests

Glen Ayers, Partnership for Policy Integrity, Matt DiBona, Naturalist, National Wild Turkey Federation; Dicken Crane, Windsor Alternate; Emily Boss, Forester, FLT, Wylie Goodman, public.

2. Review and Approval of Feb. 23, 2021, MTWP Board Minutes

Art Schwenger moved and Doug McNally 2nd a motion to accept the Minutes of February 23, 2021, which the Board accepted after changes were suggested and made. The acceptance of the Minutes passed with Emily Johnson and Mark Phelps abstaining.

3. Panel Presentations: Update on Grants at Work in the MTWP

Bob O'Connor of EOEEA gave a brief introduction to the presentations about the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Grant Program. He noted we are in the third year of the program, which totals about \$250,000 to \$300,000 a year. The grants are up to \$20,000 per MTWP member town or \$60,000 to regional organizations that are doing projects in more than one town, or a regional application. The presentations are from the second round. The third-round applications are in – 10 towns applied – including land purchases and trail building, and travel and tourism projects.

Jeffery Thomas of Lever introduced the first presenter. He noted that of the applicants from last year, all five companies that were funded are launching and now entering the job creation phase. Adventure East, Berkshire Bike Tours with Berkshire East, Wigwam Summit, Remote Harvest Centers MCLA, Foolhardy Hill.

a. **Katie & Patrick Banks – Foolhardy Hill**

Foolhardy Hill Campground is in Charlemont. The couple created their business because of their love of the outdoors. However, that did not mean they knew what they did not know in creating and operating a business. Lever collaborated with them throughout the incubator phase to help them get up and running, while the grant paid for a new solar array and bath house. They learned networking most important to their goal to have a multiplier effect on the Berkshires and to help Charlemont thrive while protecting the area's environment.

b. **Rick Chandler – Ashfield Lake Access**

Rick reported this was Ashfield's 2nd year participating in the MTWP grant program; last year the town did trail development with signage. The Ashfield Lake Access project has been needed for a long time. The town and volunteers (crew of 18-24-year-olds from Texas, Virginia and Massachusetts) fixed the box steps to Ashfield Lake and created planters with flower beds to support pollinators. They smoothed boat a landing area which "was an elegant solution to a long-standing problem."

c. **Josh Rapp, Mass Audubon – MVP Forest Climate Resiliency Pilot Program**– NEFF & Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science (NIACS) Team creating a program for the region with the goal to help landowners to implement practices that enhance forest resilience and store carbon, and to create stewardship plans with climate change in mind. Initial funding went to Williamstown and Adams for the pilot through Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) grants. Other grants will help develop different aspect of the project, e.g., a Program Handbook for implementation when funding is available.

d. Lisa announced there would be a Public Forum – *Landowner Voices from the Mohawk Trail Woodlands* – on June 15, at 4:00 PM on Zoom to share an overview of this program and to gather feedback on landowner needs.

4. Nomination and Election of MTWP Board Treasurer

Hank Art noted that he has been unable to find anyone to fill the position of Treasurer. Keith Ross offered to serve as Treasurer for one year. Hank moved that Keith be Treasurer for a year, Doug McNally seconded the motion, and the Board unanimously accepted the nomination with Keith abstaining.

There was a lengthy discussion as to whether the treasurer should be on the Executive Committee. The Board decided it would continue to think about this as the organization

grows. Doug observed that one of the reasons not to include the treasurer on the Executive Committee is because the position is not easy to fill, and we may want/have to hire a consultant to be MTWP's treasurer.

5. Set dates of Fall Forum and Board Meeting

Hank and Lisa announced tentative dates for:

- 2020-2021 Municipal & Regional Grant Awards Town updates/showcase on projects will be on Tues. Sept. 14, via zoom.
- Fall Board Meeting tentative Tues. Nov. 9.

6. Update USFS participation in MTWP

Hank reported there is no real news or progress yet on the participation of the USFS on the Board. He thanked Mark Buccowich and Keith Nislow for continuing to participate as liaisons to the Partnership. The Shared Stewardship Agreement states if there is not an Act of Congress immediately forthcoming, the Partnership should operate with a USFS Liaison representing FS interests. Hank will continue to work with Congressman Neal's office to urge support. The MTWP has a new grant from USFS for \$60,000 for the State & NEFF to continue supporting the Partnership.

7. Administrative Report (appointments, procedures, events, grant proposals)

Lisa reported that she pulled together a narrative under the Urban & Community Forestry Program grant for \$60,000 that focuses on a series of tree planting sites for downtowns and heavily used sites in the Hoosic and Deerfield River watersheds. The Conway School would be hired to identify and assess lands for the project(s). A matching grant proposal would focus on a pilot tree-planting site as well as climate-informed Forest Stewardship Planning.

Mark and Keith from the Forest Service reported that Chief Christiansen resigned from the Forest Service position. They noted she led FS through challenging times and that the agency is looking for a new Chief.

Lisa reported that NEFF is seeking to have a colleague to take on some work for Lisa and to help her with postings and admin work and that there is funding to refresh the website and update the Partnership Plan.

8. Standing Committee Reports – draft mission/charge statements & priority setting

a. Finance & Budget

Keith Ross

The Committee's Mission revolves around Financing & Budgeting, but they have not finalized the statement.

The F&B Committee has four priorities for the coming year, to:

- Develop a budget with Standing Committees that can become the organization's annual budget
- Identify project priorities and submit grant applications
- Create a Funding Sources Spreadsheet to give the Board Members & Committees insights as to what monies might support their projects
- Develop a Chart of Accounts using a template of another NGO.

b. Forest Land Conservation

Kate Lindroos-Conlin

Mission: To conserve forest lands in private ownership; to protect the region's rural character, forest-based economy, and ecological services through funding and outreach.

Bob noted several towns are trying to create public access to hiking trails. Town lands and forest could be connected to State lands and forests, e.g., Heath. Towns have big visions and Committee could take part in this by encouraging:

- Letter of Support for Forest Legacy Program from towns to get grants
- Help compile a spreadsheet of available funding with Whit and Lisa
- Interact with the EOR Committee to update website which can serve as a clearing house of information for landowners
- Update Land Protection Projects/Places – create a spreadsheet to help towns to focus on specific projects
- DCR is going through a rapid-fire resource management process – Dicken thinks MTWP should be part of this planning process. (Dicken on the Stewardship Council and will help with this.)
- The Committee should be the clearinghouse to connect towns' forests and trails with state lands and forests.

c. Natural Resource Economic Development

Andrew Kawezak

Mission: to create jobs through economically viable and environmentally sound rural economic development, forestry, recreational and tourist projects and policies thus strengthening our working landscapes and local economy.

Priority Projects

- Committee hosted Guest speaker, Charlie Cary who pointed out the benefit of contacting towns in dealing with waste wood – Take away message was, MTWP does not have an inventory of waste wood that towns take in and how it could be

used – economic development. Whatever we decide to do we could do an inventory through UMass or Williams College.

- Tourism – mountain biking, demonstration forests, glamping and full-service camping, etc.
- Higher quality wood products – e.g., production of furniture, etc.
- Marketing to help independent saw mills as a collective, e.g., marketing cooperative

Others

- Revive the Green Economy Consortium started years ago by Jay Healy.
- Municipal & Utilities Waste Wood – Dicken encourages – great idea to inventory – offset fossil fuel with waste wood.
- USDA Rural Development – Bob suggested a potential connection with MTWP, and Whit noted utilities are another entity for grant funding – important to growing the capacity of MTWP.
- Sean Mahoney, DCR – is working on Wood Banks to offset fossil fuel use.

d. Education, Outreach & Research

Mission: Not yet articulated.

Project Priorities

- Website – hire a consultant to develop/improve the current site. Board Members advised that the site not be rushed, and the Committee develop a template of the site for MTWP.
- Digital Site Walks – this is a great idea over time because it makes forests accessible to everyone versus the in-person site walks. The Committee is creating a spreadsheet of sites and facilitators. If the site walks require an expenditure of funds, the Committee should go through the Executive Committee to authorize the expense and draft an annual budget for the walks.
- Site visits could focus on places of interest in the woods.
- Brochure by Whit and Beth – needs to be incorporated into the website.
- The Committee wants part of the website to include a Catalogue of all the resources for landowners.

The Board then discussed ideas for the EOR Committee:

1) Doug McNally suggested that MTWP get an account with Mail Chimp to send out information.

2) The EOR Committee should work with the Executive Committee on how to move forward with their projects and message development, because information that goes out via the web, Mail Chimp, and other media needs to be consistent, e.g., make general project

recommendations to the Board while the Executive Committee would work with the EOR Committee to hone messages and authorize projects relative to the annual budget.

3) Website issue(s) – there are competing websites – the .org site belongs to the MTWP while the .info site is spreading misinformation about the Partnership. The Board wants the EOR Committee to be thoughtful and thorough in developing the current site and any events or activities they plan so MTWP gets minimal push back from its detractors. The Board want EOR to develop a template/framework for the website before we move forward with the site.

e. Municipal Financial Sustainability

A. Houghtaling

Lisa reported that the MFS Committee has not met yet.

9. Public Comment

Glen Ayers suggested that the Partnership do the following:

- Say no to pipelines and biomass (pellet plants)
- Focus on our natural resources that drive tourism, e.g., Deerfield River intact forest
- Compare the region to Maine’s Katadin Woods & Waters National Monument with respect to turning the region’s economy around when the wood mills closed.
- Rely on private philanthropy not just government funding. Whit noted that is why the Partnership is creating the Funding Resources Spreadsheet and it is seeking to develop small donations (membership/friends of) base of support.

10. Other Topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting

None

11. Adjourn

Hank suggested the Board could take pride in its accomplishments to date – it is taking baby steps but making progress from the theoretical to the actual.

Mark Phelps moved, and Larry Flaccus 2nd, the motion to adjourn. It passed unanimously.