

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Natural Resource-Based Economic Development Standing Committee
Approved MINUTES
April 21, 2021

3:04 p.m. called to order

1. Introductions made:

Subcommittee Members:

Andy Kawczak; Jeffrey Thomas, Whit Sanford, Zachary Feury, Nicole Pyser.

Non-members:

Board member Doug McNally; Board Chair Hank Art, Administrative Agent Lisa Hayden.

Glenn Ayers - member of the public; stated opposition to MTWP based on environmental concerns re: biomass production.

2. Mission Statement:

Board Chair Hank Art explained the purpose of having a mission statement—each subcommittee has been tasked with developing a mission statement for their respective groups. Mission statement should summarize the purpose for which the subcommittee is formed.

Jay Healy recommended that the mission statement be short—2 sentences.

Jeffrey Thomas agreed with Jay Healy's remarks, adding that it all boils down to job creation—creating opportunity for employment in the Mohawk Trail communities.

Whit Sanford offered to share a mission statement template. Andy Kawczak suggested the template be shared through Lisa Hayden.

3. Define Programs/Projects/Priorities:

Andy Kawczak asked Hank Art to advise the standing committee as to how programs/projects/priorities should be defined. Hank Art responded that these should be defined by the standing committee with a focus on economic development that aligns with and/or promotes environmental sustainability in the Mohawk Trail Region.

Andy Kawczak asked Hank Art for background and history on formation of the MTWP. Hank Art cited the Shared Stewardship Agreement with the US Forest Service and its statements regarding economic development, tourism, and environmental sustainability.

Andy Kawczak reminded members that this is a deliverable due to the full board at its June meeting and asked members for input.

Jay Healy indicated that it would be better to develop a few well-defined priorities as opposed to a litany of undefined priorities.

Whit Sanford mentioned that western Franklin County, unlike the Berkshires, has struggled with developing an identity. Creating an identity across said region would help local marketing for tourism—this is something that would help the whole region.

Andy Kawczak asked each member to provide a priority matrix for projects to Lisa Hayden—stating doing so would expedite the process. These matrices would be reviewed by the committee with projects/programs prioritized by the committee.

Doug McNally noted that Windsor has struggled to leverage its natural resources for economic development purposes, stating that learning how communities can do this is his primary reason for participating in this meeting.

4. Identify Research Needs/Sources:

Andy Kawczak noted that this task is difficult to undertake without first identifying priorities, but it is on the agenda to note that it needs to be completed.

5. Need to Update Plan:

Andy Kawczak noted that is a need to be noted, but nothing requiring immediate action.

6. Natural Resource and Recreation Assessment:

Andy Kawczak asked Lisa Hayden to update the group on this item.

Lisa Hayden noted that this is a task that is necessary (due to initiate or determine need by late 2021) and may fall under the purview of this committee. It is essentially an inventory of natural resources recreational amenities/assets throughout the MTWP region. Completion may require contacting a consultant; or could be completed via ongoing municipal and regional efforts.

Andy Kawczak asked Zachary Feury to describe an ongoing project that might help inform this deliverable. Zachary Feury described the project from a regional MTWP grant to create an inventory of natural resources and assets that can be used to leverage tourism, including a map and creation of marketing materials.

Jeffrey Thomas noted that not all jobs are created equal and that some focus should be given to industries that create higher paying jobs.

7. Follow-up Zoom Meetings:

Members will be notified of future Zoom meetings.

8. Annual Meeting:

Andy Kawczak noted the annual board meeting is coming up on June 8 and all members should attend. Hank Art noted that standing committees will be able to report their business there.

Hank Art noted that the board's treasurer position has been vacated due to resignation. The board is looking for nominations to fill the position.

Other Items:

Jay Healy suggested creating Listserv for the group for communication purposes. Andy Kawczak supports the notion, but indicated there might be open meeting law compliance issues.

Lisa Hayden noted that such communication may constitute deliberation, which must be conducted publicly. Hank Art noted this is true and noted that all communication should filter through the administrative agent, Lisa Hayden.

Jay Healy stated that he intended the listserv for information sharing purposes, noting that filtering information through the administrative agent would not be efficient.

Jeffrey Thomas noted that the Zoom format being used for the meeting is susceptible to Zoom bombing. He suggested that the administrative agent work with his organization to set up a more secure format for the meetings.

Lisa Hayden reminded members of the MTWP grant available through EEA with a deadline of May 24 and asked if the committee wanted to schedule another meeting. Meeting was scheduled for May 12 at 3:30pm.

The meeting was opened to public comment.

Glenn Ayers indicated his interest in Hank Art's work related to carbon storage trusts noting that it could be beneficial to forest owners related to his interest in conservation restrictions for wild forests as opposed to working forests. He stated that these are programs/projects that should be pursued by the committee.

Hank Art described updates on carbon sequestration.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10.

-Respectfully submitted by Zachary Feury