

**Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership  
Natural Resource-Based Economic Development Standing Committee**

**MINUTES  
August 24, 2021**

**Committee Members present via Zoom:** Chair Andrew Kawczak, Zachary Feury, Nicole Pyser, Jay Healy

**Members Absent:** Jeffrey Thomas

**Others Present:** Robert O'Connor, EOEAA; Henry Art, MTWP Chair; Board members Sheila Kelliher (DRWA); Whit Miner (GSFABA); Alain Peteroy (FLT); Lisa Hayden, MTWP Administrator; Emily Boss, MWI

1. A. Kawczak: Welcome and call to order at 3:34 p.m.
2. Approval of June 2 minutes: motion to approve made by Z. Feury; seconded by N. Pyser; all in favor.
3. Review of mission statement: A. Kawczak read the mission statement.
4. Jay Healy | Overview of MA Woodlands Cooperative: Organization arose from UMass to combine green practices with cooperative practices to add value to local forest production. Some aspects worked well; some did not. The rubbing point was the restriction on the products that could be utilized: low grade log, low grade lumber—one step ahead of firewood—to create flooring products. The problem was that the logs that came in were not of a high enough grade to make flooring. The products were not well-reviewed by consumers. Green certification became problematic due to difficulty with certifying third parties. The downturn of the economy contributed to the downfall of the cooperative. A reconstituted cooperative could be successful at this time. Three-legged stool: 1) education, 2) marketing, 3) processing facilities for turning harvested lumber into finished products. The aim should be higher grade products with greater added value—not firewood.

Questions:

A.K.: How was cooperative managed?

J.H.: Hall Tavern Farm invested in new equipment after the creation of the cooperative – having a dry kiln and planer key to efficiency in a 1-stop shop. The cooperative's end led to financial loss. But the model works, provided that quality of raw materials is high.

A.K.: How many members were a part of the cooperative? Did they pay annual dues?

J.H.: 30-40 active members; paid a nominal fee of around \$200.00 annually. Members received discount on milling, information on forest management, and education.

A.K.: How was marketing conducted?

J.H.: Self-perpetuating—by members who used their own logs for finished products. Other organizations contributed efforts in selling cooperative-produced products to other entities. This was a primary weakness in the cooperative model—need independent marketing expertise to help financial sustainability—especially given the size of cooperative members' businesses.

E.B.: 60 members at the end, including land trusts and other organizations, covering about 12,000 acres. Small staff, E.D., sales staff—this was a challenge. The main structure was to bring together members and connect them with mills and help marketing products. Challenges: creating new markets for material, ensuring quality, financial recession. MWI still provides a directory of locally made wood products: <http://www.westernmasswood.org/>

H.A.: Williams College was a member for a time in a Living Building Challenge to use beech as classroom paneling. Is there a greater demand going forward? Is there potential to revitalize a similar organization?

J.H.: Compared to five-ten years ago, the buy local movements are gaining strength. Wood products industry is weaker when it comes to conveying the local message. Only 3-5% of forest product harvested in MA are consumed in state. Sometimes members would get paid six months later.

B.O.: One idea DCR staff considered was a program that would connect local wood to carpenters with state funding to provide repairs to lower income home owners.

L.H.: Relaying feedback about the Cooperative experience from Paul Catanzaro, Board member from UMass Amherst: A spatial database had been envisioned to help keep track of forest inventory, potential harvest timing, and to explore landscape scale management opportunities. We have the technology now to make this a reality. Looking back on the coop almost 20 years later, Paul's insight: perhaps the best thing that came out of it were relationships built among landowners, foresters, loggers, mill owners, and supportive groups (e.g., land trusts). "Everyone had a love of forests, wanted to do the best management possible, and saw the ecological and economic good that could be done by producing more of our own wood product needs locally."

5. A. Kawczak moved to adjourn, seconded by N. Pyser, approved unanimously. Meeting closed at 4:43 p.m.