

**MINUTES**  
**Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts\***  
**Natural Resource Based Economic Development Committee Meeting**  
**October 19, 2022**

**Committee Members in Attendance:** Jeffrey Thomas, Lever, Inc. (chair); Zachary Feury, North Adams (notetaker); Amy Shapiro, Franklin County Community Development Corporation; Colin Mettey, Conway.

**Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Administrative Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Assistant.

1. **Call to Order** at 5:05 p.m. by J. Thomas.
2. **Approval of Minutes from Natural Resource Based Economic Development committee meeting on 12/15/21.**

J. Thomas motioned to approve the minutes and A. Shapiro seconded. Unanimously approved.

3. **Review of Committee Charter.**

J. Thomas shared the originally drafted charter document and restated the mission, goals, primary interests, and main concerns.

Mission: A. Shapiro noted that the mission seems comprehensive and agreeable; said it could be shortened. C. Mettey and Z. Feury agreed.

Goals: Typographical errors mentioned in goal section; Additional discussion regarding the phrasing of the goal was had. J. Thomas noted that, while important to have measurable criteria demonstrating increased economic activity, doing so is an arduous task. Z. Feury stated that the focus of metrics should be to illustrate the status of economic activity. A. Shapiro noted that doing so requires effort and resources. J. Thomas suggested "seek funds to develop and track metrics." A. Shapiro concurred: there is an opportunity to be mindful and leverage. J. Thomas suggested amending language to: "Facilitate economic development activity in the Woodlands Partnership region; position the Woodlands Partnership to harvest economic development metrics in support of future projects."

Primary Interests: J. Thomas noted that primary interests of the Committee could be used as baseline for data gathering tracking.

J. Thomas stated the Charter document is a working document that can be returned to as needed. Its review helped orient new members.

4. **Review of "Forests as an Economic Driver" Section of Partnership Plan.**

The section was reviewed and discussed, with favorable commentary.

5. **Update on Hall Tavern Farm Project.**

J. Thomas provided an update on the Hall Tavern Farm project. Purpose: To repurpose an historic dairy barn into a woodcraft center that would be an economic driver in the region. The barn, once restored, will be open to showcase wood-based makers to the public ("tree to table" model). Combination of education and wood craft businesses. Original grant - \$60,000; additional grant - \$30,000. Additional opportunity through USDA. A. Shapiro said there is no news on the USDA grant,

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but potential for additional funding exists. Larger goal is to seek a MassDevelopment grant for the construction costs associated with the renovation. J. Thomas establish a 501(c)3 “Hall Tavern Woodcraft Collaborative” to manage the project as an incubator for wood-based businesses.

**6. Update on Grant-funded Forest Center Planning Activities.**

L. Hayden provided the update. J. Thomas noted that Hall Tavern may be a potential site for the Forest Center; with Greylock Glen gaining traction in Berkshire County, locating the Forest Center in Franklin County makes sense. Another nature center would not be additive to local economy. The Center could be an economic driver for the region if it showcased how the region can produce products that can be used locally. A goal should be for the community to have a voice in how the Forest Center could benefit the community.

**7. Discussion of Priorities for the Year.**

Z. Feury suggested that identifying grant opportunities for developing metrics to establish baseline measurements of economic activity could be a priority. J. Thomas and A. Shapiro concurred. Action items: A. Shapiro contact FRCOG; J. Thomas contact Jay Healey; Z. Feury contact BRPC.

J. Thomas suggested placing “Brainstorm” on next agenda to help flesh out what could be realistic. What metrics would be useful? What data is available or measurable? What’s unique about the region right now? (i.e, new industries, second home development).

Other suggestions for possible priorities this year:

- Articulate the economic benefits of carbon sequestration in a way that can be easily shared with the public
- Potential establishment of a Wood Bank in the region
- Point source tracking for certified wood

**8. Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours.**

J. Thomas suggested that the Committee should meet about 4-5 times per year, every 6-8 weeks. Next meeting time: November 30<sup>th</sup>, 5pm.

**9. Adjournment.**

J. Thomas motioned to adjourn and A. Shapiro seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 6:15 p.m.

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**\*On Oct. 11, 2022, the Board of the public body created in 2018 voted unanimously to change its name from the “Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership” in its bylaws to Doing Business As the “Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts” and requested the state legislature and USDA Forest Service to officially establish and recognize the new name.**