

MINUTES
Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership
Executive Committee Meeting – February 15, 2022

In attendance: Henry Art, Williamstown (Board Chair); Rick Chandler, Ashfield; Whit Sanford, GSFABA; Bob O'Connor, EOEEA; Joe Nowak, Adams; Dicken Crane, alternate board member; Lisa Hayden, NEFF, Administrative Agent; Sophie Argetsinger, NEFF, Assistant; Brian Rhodes, iBerkshires; Glen Ayers.

Call to Order at 2:07pm by Bob O'Connor.

1. **Approval of Minutes from Executive Committee meeting on 1/18/22.** J. Nowak motioned to approve and B. O'Connor seconded. A question was raised about whether or not Keith Ross was in attendance at the 1/18 meeting (as indicated by the draft minutes). L. Hayden confirm with K. Ross. All approved the minutes, with the above possible amendment.

2. **Agenda Items for the March 15, 2022 Full Board Meeting.**

--The meeting should be two hours long, with time for a possible speaker.

--Agenda item: There was discussion of inviting Donna Cesan (Adams Interim Town Administrator) to give an update on the Greylock Glen Outdoor Center (breaking ground in March or April), which the MTWP has given three grants to support. J. Nowak will ask Donna if she can give an update.

--Agenda item: Comments on the Partnership Plan revision draft. Goal is to have a draft of the Partnership Plan ready for the Board to review the week before the meeting. Need to get the Board to read and comment on the draft (45 min. discussion).

--Agenda item: Brief progress reports from each Committee chair (update full Board up on what's been in the works throughout the MTWP) (2 minutes each). L. Hayden will contact Chairs over the next week. W. Sanford suggested that each Committee could write a summary of what they've accomplished or are working on to be emailed to the full Board.

--Agenda item: Vote to replace the GSFABA (no longer in existence) with the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. Needs approval from full board.

--S. Argetsinger will check with Berkshire East about the possibility of holding the June Annual Meeting at their facilities.

3. **Update on the 2022-2023 MTWP Partnership Plan Draft.** L. Hayden said she hopes to have a Plan draft ready in the next week and a half. B. O'Connor will review the chapters that are available next week, and L. Hayden and H. Art will review the Plan together on March 8. The Plan will be shared with Municipalities when it is ready through 10–15-minute presentations to Select Boards with time for questions or input afterwards. S. Argetsinger will start reaching out to Select Boards to be added to meeting agendas. A general public meeting should also be scheduled in April or May.

There was discussion of the need for a cohesive message when visiting Municipalities—perhaps through a series of talking points, a PowerPoint, and/or a 1-page executive summary that could be handed out. R. Chandler suggested that some meetings could be attended by town reps. to keep our

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carbon footprint smaller. W. Sanford said she would be available to attend West County meetings. J. Nowak said he will help where needed and will set up the meeting for Adams.

4. **Review of the Draft Funding Request for Sen. Hinds' Office.** H. Art said the funding request letter was succinct and well done and to go forward with it, with one comment that a 1-year position for an Executive Director might be hard to attract people to apply for. W. Sanford said we could ask for funding for a second year for the same programming and staff, and that she and K. Ross have been working on a budget to go along with the proposal. R. Chandler said that the request looks great and wondered if Adam from Sen. Hinds' office knows if full funding of the Partnership can follow this request. W. Sanford has not had that discussion with him, but noted that if the Partnership can prove that we accomplished all 6 components of the request, it could be a steppingstone to full funding. H. Art moved to take a vote to approve the document. All approved.
5. **Update on Funding Outreach to State Representatives.** H. Art gave the update. No response has come from Sec. Theoharides, Sen. Moore, Sen. Comerford, Rep. Mark, Sen. Hinds, or Con. McGovern. Con. Neil's office has been very sympathetic and has said they will contact McGovern's legislative aide. McGovern is a member of a USDA Advisory Committee, and funding may be possible through the USDA Farm Bill. A number of responses have come from Sen. Barrett's office; they are in contact with Sen. Hinds' office, and a response has come from Rep. Blais' office. H. Art will continue to circle back to these representatives. W. Sanford emphasized that the Partnership is not visible enough—if it were more visible to the public, that could translate to more sway with legislators. J. Nowak agreed and pointed out that the vision was for the Partnership to partner with the State and the Federal government. H. Art said that the Partnership can't survive as a public body if the only way to get funding is to apply for grants. W. Sanford agreed but said in the meantime we need to find other supporters.
6. **Budget Updates and Discussion.** W. Sanford and K. Ross have been working on an aspirational budget for sustained Partnership operational funding that they hope to share with state representatives. The budget is for \$357,125 (total) with money allocated to the Committees in line with each Committee's goals, including: Forest Conservation Committee (\$20,000 for seasonal woodland events); Natural Resource Based Economic Development (\$25,000 for outdoor recreation development); Education, Outreach, and Research Committee (\$10,000 for programs, \$25,000 for research partnerships); also: \$20,000 to augment the wood waste project; \$30,000 for development of a regional tourism map; funds for staffing an executive director; and funds for hiring a website consultant.
7. **Public Comment.** Glen Ayers shared a number of papers and other resources via the chat that he thought might be useful to the Partnership as the Plan is updated, including ["A Call to Stop Burning Trees in the Name of Climate Mitigation"](#), ["GHG displacement factors of harvested wood products: the myth of substitution"](#), ["The Critical Role of Forests in Protecting Climate and Public Health"](#), and an upcoming event: ["Native American Connections with Places Now Called Plainfield and Cummington."](#)

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- 8. Update on Outreach to Indigenous Peoples.** H. Art said that no more communications from Tribes have been received lately, but the channels of communication are being kept open.

- 9. Updates on MTWP Student Projects.**
 - Conway School Riparian Study: L. Hayden said that this student project is supporting a \$60,000 USFS grant to MTWP (administered by NEFF) for riparian restoration in the Deerfield and Hoosic watersheds. The three students working on the project will give a full report in March.
 - MCLA-Williams College Waste Wood Study: H. Art said that a notice about this upcoming summer project has gone out to Williams and will go out the MCLA soon. The project is authorized to take on 2 students from Williams and one from MCLA. Applications will be accepted in the next 3 weeks.

- 10. Any topics not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance of the meeting.**
 - B. O'Connor mentioned upcoming possible grants for advancing the Partnership goal of increasing equity (from Sean Mahoney): wood bank funding, wood for repairs to low-income homes from DCR harvests.
 - H. Art proposed a vote on replacing the GSFABA with the Franklin County Community Development Corporation. W. Sanford motioned and J. Nowak seconded. All were in favor. This vote will be brought to the full Board meeting in March.
 - A date for the next Executive Committee meeting has not yet been set.

- 12. Adjournment.** B. O'Connor moved to adjourn, and J. Nowak seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 3:35pm.