

MINUTES

The Executive Committee of the
Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts
October 21, 2024

Present: Art Schwenger – Heath (Board Vice Chair); Rhonda Anderson – Ohketeau Cultural Center; Dicken Crane – Windsor (Board Chair); Alain Peteroy – Franklin Land Trust (Clerk); Russ Richardson – Massachusetts Forest Alliance; Constance Carpenter (USFS ex-officio)

Absent: Robert O’Connor – MA EOEEA

Board: Liz Kidder – Leyden

Staff: Lisa Hayden – Admin. Agent; Kate Conlin – Coord.

Public: none

Call to order and welcome – 4:02pm

Approval of September 24, 2024 minutes & April 16, 2024 Chair Summit minutes – A. Schwenger moves to approve September minutes, R. Anderson seconds, all in favor. A. Schwenger moves to approve April minutes, A. Peteroy seconds, all in favor, R. Anderson abstain.

Review of Catalyst Fund job description for a Development Strategist - \$25,000 grant to plan funding and prioritize projects, will be matching the grant with Agent funds. Agent contract runs through December 2025. The need for Board input will be highlighted in the job description, as this will be an important part of the plan process. Timing: potential to have the work start in January. A. Peteroy – the job posting should also list minimum requirements and experience as well as a request for examples of past work, though not too onerous. Ex. Committee with Board involvement for hiring process. As a courtesy, NEFF development staff reviewed the description and suggested places to post the job that will attract talent.

Review of reallocation of USFS Space Needs Study fund proposal – There is a need to upgrade equipment for virtual meetings, as current hybrid meetings are very hard to attend virtually (sound, etc.). Another idea for the funds is to meet with Ethan Tapper and discuss how he could provide consulting communication work. Other ideas: professionally videotape woods walks, Mass Trails partnership focused on tourism and recreation. R. Richardson suggests “woods sits” instead of walks to attract those with limited physical abilities and to focus on one area of the forest more in depth. A. Schwenger recalls focusing on one place for the entire program on a FLT walk at Crowningshield on pollinators.

Review of Request for Proposals for Heritage Area feasibility study data through COMMBUYS – R. Anderson will potentially be part of a feasibility study for an Indigenous cultural byway within Massachusetts led by the Mass. Cultural Council (precedence exists in western U.S. - this is similar to “China Town,” “Little Italy” and other such designations). It is an important moment for a different story

to be told along this byway with Indigenous-led involvement. It is crucial that the Heritage Area feasibility study includes diverse/marginalized experiences (K. Conlin mentions “sundown” towns and KKK in Shelburne Falls for instance) as well as labor market, seasonal work on farms, tobacco barns in the hills, families that lived in the hills in trailers displaced. D. Crane mentions that the biggest sugar maple year was during the Civil War, due to refusal on part of the Northerners to consume sugar produced by slaves. R. Anderson - another MCC Governing Board Member, Anika Lopes, founder of Ancestral Bridges, might have interesting stories to share in the region. Geology should be included (Richard Little, former GCC professor). Wood cut for the Hoosic Tunnel and down the Deerfield River through Vermont. Shelburne - the first 50 acres of a farm bought for one yard of Irish linen per acre. <https://www.nepm.org/regional-news/2024-02-12/artifacts-from-black-and-afro-indigenous-residents-of-amherst-tell-a-lesser-known-history>

Agenda and speaker(s) for Full Board Meeting in November – Brainstorming and discussion to help frame the identity of the landscape, the human stories, what things do we need to dig into and learn more, invite the Heath Historical Society? Nicole Keleher, DCR forest health, as potential speaker.

Outreach strategy regarding forest management – N. Adams public forum hosted Sept. 12. It is up to the City as deedholder if they want to move forward. D. Crane and H. Art wrote an op-ed in support of the project and highlighting the importance of planning for forest climate adaptation. We’d like to follow-up and host woods walks in places where we can show similar landscapes that have received active management and those that have not. Possible Guyette Farm walk with FLT (habitat, dynamic, climate adapted). Might be pushed to the spring. Not a large cut, just very visible from the road. Lots of footage from before the cut. Part of the property is a reserve.

C. Carpenter: "The lands that nobody wanted" talking about the establishment of national forests in the eastern US. <https://foresthistor.org/research-explore/us-forest-service-history/policy-and-law/the-weeks-act/lands-nobody-wanted/>

D. Crane: Ken Gooch walk at Sturbridge Town Forest Conference saving Hemlocks in Ice Glen from injected/applied herbicides. Public acceptance of managing for individual trees vs. forest systems is worth exploring.

Importance to take people into the woods to show how dynamic forests are and what a well-functioning forest looks like and all that it provides. Often these places have been stressed by past land use history (high-grading, plantations, etc.) Videotaping them and sharing on our website. Importance of cooperative hosting and partnerships.

Agent update: EOR Chair vacancy, NRBED Chair vacancy, treasurer appointment, newsletter, Collins Center public safety services study, Markey staff follow-up – Searching for Board members to fill EOR and NRBED Chair vacancies. There will be an upcoming vote for Treasurer at the next full Board meeting. Our first newsletter was sent out on October 9 to 166 recipients with a 75% open rate. Collins Center public safety services study is in motion and materials developed will be reviewed with the Board and the Executive Committee as they are produced.

Scheduling next Committee meeting(s) - dependent on timing of Fundraising Strategy Consultant posting and application review. Will schedule offline.

Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours – C. Carpenter mentions the Recreation Economy for Rural Communities grant that she sent out. This should be shared with towns. In Claremont, NH – EPA helped them develop a recreation economy plan and they received a subsequent implementation grant. Maybe someone from Claremont would be willing to speak about the development of recreation as an economic generator. She will send contacts.

Public comment – none

Adjourn – A. Schwenger motions, D. Crane seconds, all in favor. 5:30 p.m.