

MINUTES
The **Municipal Financial Sustainability Committee**
of the **Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts**
November 21, 2024, 4:00-5:00 p.m. - *virtual*

Committee members in attendance: Sam Haupt—*Peru (chair)*; Liz Kidder—*Leyden*; Mark Phelps—*New Ashford*; Art Schwenger—*Heath*;

Board members in attendance: Dicken Crane—*Windsor, Board Chair*

Absent: Ron Bosley—*Florida*;

Staff: Lisa Hayden—*Neff/Admin. Agent*; Kate Conlin—*NEFF/Coord.*

Guests: Stephen Foley—*Collins Center*; Stephanie Lessing—*Collins Center*; Shawn Fenn—*Collins Center*

Public: Glen Ayers;

Call to order: 4:00 p.m.

Review & approval of October 8, 2024 minutes: M. Phelps motion to approve, L. Kidder second. All approved.

**Discussion with the Collins Center on Interviews; Research; Data and GIS Analysis;
Public Outreach Survey and Meetings and the role the WP Board might play:**

- S. Lessing has joined the Collins team and will help with data collection, sorting, and presentation, and creating a table tracking response by location, agency and month.
- The challenge so far has been working with different dispatch centers who have different ways of recording data. This is all manual, not a searchable query. The timeframe of data collected is the 2024 calendar year.
- S. Fenn met with the dispatch officers in Shelburne and Dalton as well as with the EMD in Leyden. In a couple of weeks, he will meet with Williamstown and N. Adams.
- S. Haupt mentions the national fire incident reporting system, which S. Foley will connect back to the fire marshal about.
- Is it possible to include how many people responded to an incident? S. Foley will check.
- Is the FAA on the list of agencies that respond? Helicopters and small search planes. State police have 4 helicopters. Also, National Guard could be included.
- When and how do we start drilling down into the communities? Data could be collected by the middle of January.
- WP assistance to future stakeholder gathering (locating, condensing, planning) and survey dispersal. Importance of including the perceived causes of current conditions. Survey to be for community members.
- Listening tour: How do the perception of the larger community and the responders differ or align? What are the gaps in providing services, such as with procurement procedures (Ch. 30B)? What are the things that “get in the way” of responders?
- Possible to host two in-person (which prioritize EMS, highway) at the regional high schools?
- Community newsletters as vehicle for the survey and events.

Next meeting: goals to workshop draft survey, strategize dissemination of the survey, settle on locations for in-person meetings, discuss invitation to listening tour & who is invited (post publicly). Committee would like some analysis from data to tell a story at this point in the process. Target first couple weeks of December for snapshot of the data collection table as well. Board members should come with ideas of where to host and who to invite.

Agent Update: 2024 Regional Conservation Partnership (RCP) Network Gathering recap; Press Release and recent coverage of public safety study; regional wood bank initiative: RCP panel featuring the Woodlands Partnership went well. Municipal involvement was of interest and a different model than many land trust collaborations. Press release and Greenfield Recorder article about the public safety study is on the Woodlands Partnership website. Regional wood bank initiative seeks to lessen administrative burden on towns via shared services to provide wood to needy residents; more information will be shared at the upcoming board meeting.

Items not anticipated within 48 hours: none

Schedule next meeting: K Conlin will schedule offline, for the second week of December.

Public Comment: G. Ayers: Over 2,063 people have signed a petition in opposition to the Notch Forest project and it has been sent to local elected officials and the state. In the process of starting a sign-on letter asking for defunding of the Woodlands Partnership so that no state or federal funds go to the Partnership, and to introduce legislation dissolving the Partnership in the upcoming environmental bond bill. Enabling legislation forbade the MTWP from promoting and dealing with biomass. Going to send a recording of this meeting to the Partnership for Policy Integrity. *(K. Conlin clarified that enabling legislation specifies a biomass facility and that the wood bank initiative would be providing municipal assistance for existing or desired programs).*

Adjourn: L. Kidder motion, second M. Phelps, all in favor. 5:03 p.m.