

MINUTES

The **Natural-Resource Based Economic Development Committee**
of the **Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts**
(established as Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership)*
April 12, 2024

Present: Amy Shapiro—*Franklin County Community Development Corporation (chair)*; Chris Skelly—*Buckland (notetaker)*; Jay Healy—*Charlemont*

Absent: Paul Catanzaro—*UMass Amherst, Forest Ecosystems, Carbon Cycling in Terrestrial Systems & Climate Change Faculty*; Russ Richardson—*Massachusetts Forest Alliance*

Board Members: Dicken Crane—*Windsor, Board Chair*

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

1. **Call to order and welcome** – 4:00 p.m.
2. **Review & approval of January 19, 2024 minutes** J. Healy moved, seconded by C. Skelly, all in favor.
3. **Finalization of Committee’s message/asks at the upcoming joint Committee Chair/Executive Committee hybrid meeting on April 16. Already-discussed topics include:**
 - **Begin consistent educational programming/woods walks**
 - **Possible reallocation of Forest Center space needs study grant funds to begin programming now**
 - **Promoting local products, tie in with agriculture – Buy Local, state aid**
 - **Promotion of non-timber forest products**
 - **Developing relationship with/asks of Agricultural Commissioner**
 - **Wood banks expanding regionally**
 - The need to meet with local legislators initially to get their input and support—they could probably do as much or more pushing MDAR in the right direction.
 - Secretary of Housing and affordable housing effort could be a way to involve local forest products (for equity and climate). There is precedent to include a percentage of products from women-owned and veterans’ businesses (Springfield Casino example).
 - In Charlemont, 34 glamping cabins to be built, timber frame – how about having a connection between local proposals and using local people to put them together and local wood material. Same with Greylock Glen, there should be some incentive for them to use local products.
 - J. Healy – will check with Charlemont’s town administrator before the next meeting to see about having the town be a pilot project of support.
 - D. Crane – the Greylock Glen project could also be a pilot project; Joe Nowak should be involved in this discussion as an Adams selectman. It might be a way to decrease the discontent with the project if it uses local forest products.
 - Another possible partner is Wright Builders – Northampton-based builder, went to UMass, very interested in local forest products. He could help in a discussion like this.

- A. Shapiro – Marketing of places could focus on their sustainability, should they use local wood. Stamped native lumber needed?
- J. Healy – no need for state law, just approval at the local level – we would need more research on what you could condition a permit on.
- D. Crane – we should focus on the parts of the building that are compatible with what we produce locally. How can we demonstrate the carbon and climate benefit?HIP-like program rather than mandates.
- Next meeting– FRCOG and partners to discuss?
- A. Shapiro – if you got 4 towns in West County to implement some zoning change, you could gather data about how many projects, how much wood.
- A. Shapiro – will be stepping down, John Waite will be joining.
- D. Crane – Regarding events, programming, Mass Forest Trust has a robust mailing list and online newsletter. Events would be well-advertised and targeted.
- J. Healy – woods walk at Hall Tavern Farm – Saturday mornings. Partnering with Tree Farm or Mass Forest Trust would address limited staff capacity.

4. Agent update – Canopy 2024 Forests, Climate, & Innovation Forum; grants updates; upcoming events; BRPC EPA Climate Justice Grant planning group

- Upcoming woods walk at Pelham Lake Park, Rowe on May 2nd
- Upcoming woods walk in Hawley, May 4th
- Canopy
- One more tree planting site, potentially Hawlemont
- EPA – focus on including local wood in pre-weatherization work

5. Items not anticipated within 48 hours

- Importance of inviting Winton Pitcoff, Deputy Commissioner / Legislative and Policy Director at MDAR to discuss concise asks and data.
- D. Crane shares that he attended Sen. Mark’s “Beacon Hills in the Berkshire Hills” held in Lenox. The legislature passed a bill in the late 90s that state procurement could pay a certain percentage more for Massachusetts-produced lumber than the lowest bid. That did nothing. Commonwealth Quality has been successful in some aspects of agriculture, but not for wood production. Note that the state has tried to do things in the past. We need to produce and then share a plan that we think might be successful.

6. Schedule next meeting Agent will work on scheduling a committee meeting with partners invited for June 13, 4:30pm

7. Public Comment - none

8. Adjourn J. Healy moves, seconded by C. Skelly, all in favor.

*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 operating as the “Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts” and requested the state legislature and USDA Forest Service to officially establish and recognize the new name.