

Board Meeting Minutes
Woodland Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts
Tuesday, June 24, 2025 – 6-8 p.m. (dinner at 5 p.m.)
Greylock Glen Outdoor Center (135 Gould Road, Adams, MA) and Zoom (Z)

Present: Joe Nowak, Adams; Doug Brown, BNRC; Chris Cozzaglio, BRPC; Chris Skelly, Buckland; Deb Donaldson, Conway; Sheila Kelliher Comstock, DRWA; Bob O'Connor (Z), EOEEA; Lisa Tanner, Florida; Alain Peteroy, FLT; Kimberly MacPhee, FRCOG; Art Schwenger, Heath; Jonathan Legreze, Colrain; Elayne Murphy, HRWA; Liz Kidder (Z), Leyden; Keith Ross(Z), MA SAF; Russ Richardson, MFA; Sam Haupt, Peru; Elise Leduc-Fleming, Williamstown; Dicken Crane, Windsor; Helen Payne Watt, Shelburne.

Absent: Jay Healy, John Waite, Greg Cox, Avril Levesque, Mark Phelps, Rhonda Anderson, Hannah Poplawski, Rick Peltier, Keith Nislow, Mary Wigmore, Alice Houghtaling.

Project Staff: L. Hayden, Administrative Agent/NEFF; Vanessa Farny, EOEEA; Andrea Colnes, NEFF Dep. Director; videographer Scot Broderick; **Guest speakers:** Fundraising consultant Stephanie Schilling; Stephen Foley, Collins Center; Jessica Atwood, FRCOG; Cornelius Hoss, BRPC; **Public:** Cosmo LaViola (Savoy); Jeffrey Thomas, Lever, Inc.; Robin Sears, Williamstown Rural Lands; Judith Roberts, Colrain; Wayne Feiden (Z).

1. **Call to Order and Welcome:** Adams Select Board member and WP rep Joe Nowak welcomed all to the new Greylock Glen Outdoor Center, recently finished in 2024. The building is a net-zero structure, featuring mass timber beams and views of Mt. Greylock, and plans are ongoing for educational and recreational activities. Call to order by Dicken, 6:03 p.m.
2. **Roll Call:** Introduction of new members Lisa Tanner of Florida, Elise Leduc-Fleming representing Williamstown and Kimberly MacPhee for FRCOG.
3. **Review and Approval of Feb. 26, 2025 Board Minutes:** Art motion, Dicken seconds, Elise abstains, All else in favor.
4. **Reading of Latest Draft of Land Acknowledgement:** Lisa noted the latest version of the land acknowledgement was redrafted by the Building Relationships with Indigenous People Working Group with effort by Kate Conlin, Deb, Dicken and Sheila, who read aloud. Lisa to share draft among the full board in written format for more careful review and comments.
5. **Agent Update:** Lisa reviewed the history of NEFF as the admin agent since 2021 for the Woodlands Partnership which is entering more than a decade since it was just a concept. In the last four years, the 10-year Plan has been drafted, over 100 Board and Committee meetings have been organized and facilitated, and NEFF has applied for and administered multiple grants from both EEA and USFS for the Partnership, raising over (\$950,000). These grants have supported enriching and increasing outreach efforts in the WP region, forestry and climate resilience practice planning and implementation and tree planting, and the state continued providing community support grants for trail planning and other municipal needs. NEFF's current contract with EEA for this position had been set to end in December 2025, but was recently extended through June 2026, and includes \$50,000 to support various aspects of the Heritage Area study. Interviews for a consultant to focus on Indigenous Peoples are almost complete and a consultant will be announced shortly. Vanessa Farny is confirming the RFR for a 3-year/

\$525,000 contract to continue support for the admin agent, due in August 2025. Lisa is also facilitating the \$25,000 Catalyst Fund grant supporting the completion of the 3-year fundraising plan being completed by Stephanie Schilling, currently visiting the region. Agent is still overseeing 2 grants from EEA closing this month: the Tourism & Emergency Public Safety Study, and Estate Planning /Forest Resilience workshops & technical assistance for forestry practice implementation. Under USFS funding, Lisa is identifying sites for the \$60,000 Urban & Community Forestry tree planting grant, ending 8/31/2026; the \$100,000 State & Private Forestry grant currently seeking an extension; and Climate Resilience Forest Practices grant (\$540,000 in Congressionally Directed Spending) to end in July 2026.

- 6. Presentation of 3-year Fundraising Plan with Stephanie Shilling:** Stephanie visited Greylock Glen with Dicken Crane and Lisa before the meeting. Draft of 3-year plan outline is complete. Stephanie reviewed the components including; consideration to create a 501-c3 or formalize structure of a fiscal agent, form a development committee within the board, focus on fundraising objectives of supporting an executive director position for the Partnership, work on capacity building with development of relationships/communications with foundations and private donors. Plan will include annual giving for long-term support. Also working on a grant tracker and calendar for board and admin agent to keep organized. Stephanie plans to submit some start-up grants that don't require the Partnership to be a 501c3 or have a fiscal sponsor. Stephanie described the need to create case statements and background summaries for the partnership and board members to use as templates for grant applications. Also discussed was the need for capacity grants with the goal of hiring permanent staff.
- 7. Stephen Foley from the Collins Center team:** He reported on the findings of the Tourism and Public Safety study, including results of an online survey regarding municipal safety needs and including the 3 public forms held by zoom, and in Windsor and Shelburne. In general, communication is a limiting factor, volunteer recruitment is low for first responders across the region and new or updated equipment is critical. The study looked at the perceived effects of tourism on town safety. Final report is forthcoming and will be reviewed by Municipal Financial Sustainability board committee. Community response was not very high with survey and outreach including emails to town, mail and meetings.
- 8. Mapping presentation by FRCOG and BRPC for the Natural Heritage Area inventory:** CJ Hoss from BRPC and Jessica Atwood of FRCOG discussed the potential themes/attributes that will be reviewed using in part GIS data for the NHA proposal including; history (industrial, colonial, post-war tourism), focusing on uniqueness of this region. Planners recommend looking at the scenic byways, dark sky tourism, with mapping for land use, natural resource characteristics, demographics of the region, protected lands/Biomap, tourism assets, agricultural assets and agro-tourism to build the story about the region's special qualities. Review concept of combining the Deerfield River Watershed Assoc. effort for wild and scenic status with the National Park Service.
- 9. Board Chair Dicken Crane Update:** Dicken reported on CANOPY event that took place at UMASS and the other organizations that were hosting information tables. Dicken emphasized that the partnership should have good communication with all related organizations participating in activities in the 21-town region, and to look for every opportunity to feature the Woodlands Partnership in relevant communications.
- 10. Items not anticipated and public comment:** None
- 11. Adjourn:** Motion made by Art and seconded by Chris to adjourn at 7:58 p.m.