

Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
40 Church Street, Suite 200
Lowell, MA 01852

Minutes of Meeting: April 20, 2022

The April 20, 2022 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments was in held hybrid form via the Zoom platform and in person at the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments Office, 40 Church Street, Lowell, Massachusetts. The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. with Chair Andrew Deslaurier presiding. The following were in attendance:

Councilors

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chair, Billerica Board of Selectmen
- Chris Tribou, Billerica Planning Board
- Mary McBride, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board
- George Zaharoolis, Chelmsford Alternate
- Phil Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Council
- Gerard Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Westford Select Board
- Jim Silva, Westford Alternate

Staff

- Justin Howard, Assistant Director / Transportation Program Manager
- Bert Almeida, Financial Officer
- Christopher Hayes, Economic Development and Housing Planner
- Jeff Owen, Regional Planner

I. MINUTES OF MEETING: MARCH 16, 2022

The minutes of the March 16, 2022 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Chris Tribou, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the March 16, 2022 meeting as presented.

II. MINUTES OF MEETING: APRIL 13, 2022

The minutes of the April 13, 2022 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Phil Thibault and seconded by Chris Tribou, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2022 meeting as presented. Pat Wojtas abstained, as she was not present for the April 13, 2022 meeting.

III. ASSISTANT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Assistant Director's Report was previously distributed to the Councilors for review. The report is included as Attachment #2.

IV. FINANCIAL REPORT AND WARRANT

Bert Almeida presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and approval. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Chris Tribou, the Financial Report and Warrant were approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3.

V. OLD BUSINESS

1. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH UPDATE

Andrew Deslaurier thanked everyone that participated in the Council's interview of Executive Director candidate finalist Jenny Raitt and informed the group that an offer letter had been sent to Jenny following one additional post-interview meeting with the Committee. He stated that Jenny had a few questions to be answered but he is cautiously optimistic that she will accept the position and hopes to hear from her within the next few days.

2. MPO UPDATES

Justin Howard reminded the group that there will be an MPO meeting next Wednesday and invited all to attend. At the March Council meeting, Justin had presented the initial financially constrained programming scenarios to the Council for consideration by the MPO. Since that time, the MPO has voted on a preferred scenario. The MPO will vote to consider releasing the Draft TIP for public comment during their April 27th meeting. Justin informed the Council that due to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), the NMCOG region would receive an additional \$2,000,000 to be used in FFY 2022. The additional funds will be applied to the Boston Road rehab project in Billerica, leaving extra funding available in FFY 2023. Those funds will be applied to an ADA access improvement project at the Gallagher Terminal.

Justin presented the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP), which is a list of the activities carried out by MPO staff during the next Federal Fiscal Year, FFY 2023. The UPWP is federally funded and includes planning funds from Federal Highway and 5303 Transit Planning Funds from FTA, along with LRTA 5307 contract funds for planning services to the LRTA. Similar to the TIP, the UPWP allocation to the NMCOG region will also increase this year due to the BIL. In addition to appropriating increased funding, the largest additional task will be to update the long-range transportation plan for the region, which involves a major effort by NMCOG staff. Justin provided an explanation of each task on the list and answered questions from the group.

3. CEDS UPDATE

Christopher Hayes presented the draft 2022 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update for approval by the Council prior to submission to the EDA partners. He noted that this is the first of four annual performance reports on implementation of the 2020-2024 CEDS. Chris stated that the report provides updates on economic development activities, provides adjustments to the strategy and evaluates progress on the goals/action plan. He detailed the schedule of goals for 2022 through 2023. A copy of the presentation slides, along with the full document, was made available to Councilors.

Based on a motion by Steve Themelis and seconded by Chris Tribou, the Council voted to approve the Annual CEDS Update for 2022.

4. OTHER OLD BUSINESS

There was none.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

1. COMMUNITY REPORTS

Steve Themelis informed the Council that Pepperell would hold its annual election on April 25th. Chuck Walkovich is running for Board of Selectmen, Steve is running for Board of Health. The Council wished the best for both candidates.

The Council congratulated Pat Wojtas on her re-election to the Chelmsford Select Board in Chelmsford's recent town elections.

2. PROJECT REFERRALS

Justin Howard reminded the Council at the March meeting, David Righter presented an ENF for a warehouse project in Tyngsborough, which includes construction of a 492,750 square foot warehouse/distribution/logistics facility and a 26,000 square foot retail building on Middlesex Road. The project triggered MEPA review for the creation of ten or more acres of impervious area, generation of 2,000 or more average daily trips (ADT) on roadways providing access to a single location, and construction of 300 or more new parking spaces at a single location. Comments were due at MEPA on March 29. NMCOG staff submitted a comment letter to MEPA, which was copied to the Council in their meeting packets.

3. DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA) REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP) II

Christopher Hayes informed the Council that as mentioned at previous meetings, the initial DLTA XV RFP resulted in 12 approved projects totaling \$93,150. A second solicitation will be distributed later this month for the remaining \$28,196 in uncommitted funds. Priority will be given to communities who did not receive awards during the first RFP round. Chris provided a brief overview of the process to the group.

4. OTHER NEW BUSINESS

There was none.

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

The next Council meeting is scheduled for May 18, 2022.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

Following a motion made by Phil Thibault and seconded by Dan Rourke, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 pm.

CLERK’S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of April 20, 2022.

Attest: _____ 

Stephen Themelis, Clerk