Minutes of Meeting: November 20, 2019

The November 20, 2019 meeting was held at the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments office, 40 Church Street, Lowell, Massachusetts. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Chair Pat Wojtas presiding. The following were in attendance, as indicated in Attachment #1:

Councilors

- Christopher Tribou, Billerica Planning Board
- Pat Wojtas, Chair, Chelmsford Board of Selectmen
- Phil Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Jerry Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Jayne Wellman, Tewksbury Board of Selectmen
- Rick Reault, Tyngsborough Board of Selectmen
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff

- Beverly Woods, Executive Director
- Jay Donovan, Assistant Director
- Carmen Bellerose, Outgoing Financial Officer
- Bert Almeida, Incoming Financial Officer
- Justin Howard, Transportation Program Manager
- Katrina Garavanian, Executive Assistant

Guests

- Natasha Vance, City of Lowell Transportation Engineer
- Josh Ostroff, Transportation for Massachusetts

I. Presentation: Josh Ostroff, Partnerships Director, Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA)

Josh Ostroff of Transportation for Massachusetts (T4MA) addressed the Council to offer details about T4MA and the organization’s mission. T4MA is a diverse coalition of approximately 70 agencies, non-profits, business organizations, municipalities, and advocacy groups that work...
collaboratively to improve transportation across the Commonwealth. They advocate at the state, federal, and local levels for transportation policies that are innovative, sustainable, and environmentally friendly and statewide. Josh thanked the Council for allowing him to present, encouraging Council members to look at T4MA in depth and to consider becoming a member of the coalition. Chair Pat Wojtas suggested the Council discuss and draft a resolution with regards to a partnership with T4MA for the next Council meeting.

II. Minutes of Meeting: October 16, 2019

The minutes were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by Jayne Wellman, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the October 16, 2019 meeting. Chris Tribou and Darrin Wizst abstained as they were not present for the October meeting.

III. Executive Director’s Report

The Executive Director’s Report was previously distributed to the Councilors for review. Upon a motion made by Phil Thibault and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted unanimously to accept the Executive Director’s Report as presented. The report is included as Attachment #2.

IV. Financial Report and Warrant

Carmen Bellerose presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and signature. Based on a motion made by Rick Reault and seconded by Jeny Frechette, the Financial Report and Warrant were unanimously approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3.

V. Old Business

1. Update on Staffing Changes

Beverly Woods informed the Council that Jong Wai Tommee accepted a Transportation Planner position in the City of Malden. As the holidays are coming up soon, recommended deferring advertising of the vacant position until the start of the new year.

Beverly Woods introduced Bert Almeida, who is replacing Carmen Bellerose as Financial Officer. Jerry Frechette explained the Personnel Committee’s selection process. A copy of Bert’s resume was included in the Council packet. The Council welcomed Bert and thanked Carmen for her service, wishing her well in her new employment.

2. Transportation Improvement Program-Administrative Adjustment for Flexed Funds

Justin Howard noted that the new Federal Fiscal Year (FFY 2020) began October 1st. The funding sources within the endorsed FY2020 TIP include target funds that will be flexed from
highway to transit specifically for LRTA projects. The LRTA is using toll credits to match other federal funds that comprise the total funding for each project. Given that toll credits are treated as federal funds, the NMMPO must revise the TIP to show a federal match rather than a state or local match. This adjustment does not increase the amount of total funding for each project but rather adjusts the funding categories. Justin included a summary of the adjustment in the Council packet and e-mailed a more detailed description to each councilor.

3. Other Old Business

There was none.

VI. New Business

1. Community Reports

Phil Thibault informed the Council that Dracut approved additional expenditures for the Collinsville fire station at its recent town meeting. Construction is expected to begin within a month or so. The town also approved funding for design services to reroof two schools.

Rick Reault advised the group that Tyngsborough, at its special town meeting, approved a $950,000 feasibility study for the Tyngsborough Middle School replacement. Construction would be about 3-4 years out. The town also approved a TIF for the TJMaxx plaza renovation, and had a robust discussion on an independent living facility zoning amendment.

Chris Tribou mentioned that Billerica has a proposal for a $12 million mixed use development on Boston Road that is being brought to the Zoning Board of Appeals.

Jayne Wellman stated that Tewksbury is very happy to have Route 38 repaved north of the town center.

2. Project Referrals

Beverly Woods informed the Council that there currently are no MEPA projects under review in the NMCOG region. There is, however, a long term control plan (LTCP) for the City of Lowell’s combined sewer overflows (CSOs). This is phase 3 of a multi-phased program and will cost $70 million over the next 15 years in technology and equipment. The City has requested a letter of support from NMCOG to accompany their proposal to the permitting agencies.

Beverly explained that the City has made significant progress in reducing their CSO releases by 80%. She believes a letter of support is appropriate at this time and requested approval from the Council. Based on a motion by Steve Themelis, seconded by Phil Thibault, the Council agreed unanimously to provide a letter of support for the Long Term Control Plan for the City of Lowell.
3. Annual Obligation Report for Transportation Projects

Justin Howard outlined a federal requirement to publicly report on the levels of federal funding spent on transportation projects in the NMCOG region. The FFY2019 report indicates that over $16.1 million in federal funds were obligated for transportation projects in the Greater Lowell area. Justin reviewed the report with the Council, and added that the report can be found on the NMCOG web site as well.

4. Public Input Sessions for the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Update

Jay Donovan informed the Council that the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee was re-established and held the first meeting in October. A public input meeting will be held at Lowell City Hall on November 21, with another to follow in January at Tewksbury Public Library, and a third planned in February at the Chelmsford Police Department Training Room. Jay provided dates, times and locations, requesting that the Councilors encourage local residents and business owners to offer input to the Five Year CEDS document by attending one of these sessions. Included in the packet was a Greater Lowell Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Timeline.

5. December Meeting Date – December 11th

Beverly reminded the Council that the December Council Meeting date is December 11th at the Middlesex Meetinghouse in Billerica, beginning at 6PM with social to follow.

6. Other New Business

There was none.

VII. Announcements

There were none.

VIII. Adjournment

Following a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Jayne Wellman, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:00pm.
CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of November 20, 2019.

Attest: [Signature]

Stephen Themelis, Clerk