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

Minutes of Meeting: April 17, 2019

The April 17, 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

- Mary McBride, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, Chair, Chelmsford Board of Selectmen
- S. George Zaharoolis, Chelmsford Alternate
- Philippe Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Sen. Edward Kennedy, Lowell City Council
- Jerry Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Ron Keohane, Tyngsborough Alternate
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff

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

I. Minutes of Meeting: February 20, 2019

The minutes were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Steve Themelis and seconded by George Zaharoolis, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the February 20, 2019 meeting.

II. Executive Director’s Report

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

III. Financial Report and Warrant

Carmen Bellerose presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and signature. Based on a motion made by Phil Thibault and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Financial Report and Warrant were unanimously approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3.

IV. Old Business

1. Proposed FY 2019-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Amendment

Justin Howard informed the Council that the NMMPO will vote to release a draft amendment of the FY 2019-2023 TIP for a 21-day public comment period at its April 24th meeting. He provided a handout with the full details of the amendment which includes the following:

- Provide a funding increase for intersection improvements at Route 129 and Riverneck Road in Chelmsford. The cost estimate at final design increased from $4,871,227 to $5,595,664. The added cost increase is covered by target STP funding sources;
- Provide a funding increase for intersection improvements at Main Street, Salem Road and South Street in Tewksbury. The cost estimate at final design increased from $3,296,077 to $3,778,724. The increase is covered by target CMAQ and state CMAQ funding sources; and
- Per federal guidance, the FFY 2019-2023 TIP must incorporate NMMPO adopted performance measures and targets. The amendment includes a narrative outlining the NMMPO’s adopted targets, target setting procedures and linkage to priority investments.

Based on a motion by Steve Themelis and seconded by Phil Thibault, the Council voted unanimously to authorize Chair to vote to release the amendment for the required 21-day public comment period.

2. FY 2020-2024 TIP

Justin Howard gave a brief overview of the FY2020-2024 TIP projects under consideration. A summary chart was included in the meeting packet. The NMMPO will vote at its April meeting on the release of the draft document for public review and comment.

Based on a motion by Steve Themelis, seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the Chair to vote at the April 24th NMMPO meeting to release the FY 2020-2024 TIP for public review and comment.
3. **FY 2020 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)**

Justin Howard provided an update on the development of the FY2020 UPWP. He reviewed the proposed task list and funding summary for the work program. He encouraged the Council members to consult with their communities on potential projects, which could be funded with the uncommitted funds remaining.

4. **Other Old Business**

There was none.

V. **New Business**

1. **Community Reports**

Sen. Ed Kennedy informed the Council that a group recently addressed the Lowell City Council for the purpose of raising strategic and financial support to conduct a cleanup along the Merrimack River. This group had previously approached the City but at that time did not have full support from other communities along the river. He suggested NMCOG and MVPC meet to discuss the proposal. Beverly Woods responded that NMCOG and MVPC met over a year ago and an RFP for that cleanup was released. This particular group had responded to that RFP but was lacking professional expertise, insurance and capacity. Beverly also discussed a request for a Merrimack River conference raised by Mayor Holaday of Newburyport and Sen. DiZoglio, in which all communities along the river would be involved. Discussion ensued regarding the best way to approach the handling of the cleanup issue, the number of communities and property owners involved along the Merrimack River, as well as the fact that the river’s headwaters are in New Hampshire. Chair Pat Wojtas requested this be added to the Agenda for the May Council meeting and that an update be provided at that time.

2. **Project Referrals**

Beverly Woods informed the Council that currently there is one project in the region under MEPA review. The project proposed by National Grid is located in Lowell, Tewksbury and Billerica and involves:

- Extension of the 2385 distribution line from Woburn Street to the Wigginville Substation and then to the Markley Data Center;
- Extension of the 2385 distribution line from the Wigginville Substation to the Quebec Street Substation;
- Reconductoring a portion of the existing 2385 line located along Woburn Street and Billerica Avenue; and
- Removing the existing 309 and 313 sub-transmission lines from Wigginville Substation to the Quebec Street Substation.
A copy of the NMCOG staff comment letter was included in the Council packet.

Based on a motion by Jerry Frechette, seconded by Phil Thibault, the Council voted unanimously to approve the staff comment letter.

3. **DLTA XIII Funding Status**

Beverly Woods informed the Council that the House Ways and Means budget has been released and DLTA funding made out better than last year (when there was no earmark in the House Ways and Means budget.) DLTA XIII received level funding of $2.8 million within line item 1599-0026. MARPA is requesting an increase in the funding level to $3.4 million. This would represent the first funding increase for the program in many years. She stated that NMCOG has been able to use DLTA funds to meet very important needs within our communities, including the preparation of Master Plans and Housing Production Plans. Included in the meeting packet was a copy of the flyer developed to provide legislators with information on the importance of this program to communities across the state. Beverly will update the Council as the process progresses. She encouraged Council members to stress the importance of the DLTA funds to their legislators.

4. **House Bill 48 Relative to Non-Commonwealth Entities within the State Retirement System filed by Office of the Treasurer**

Beverly Woods provided an overview of House Bill 48. She included in the Council packet a copy of the bill and a brief summary table, and discussed the potential impacts of the legislation. The Bill is now in the Committee on Public Service. Sen. Ed Kennedy stated that he will look into this issue with members of the Committee. Beverly Woods will keep the Council informed on this matter going forward.

5. **Environmental Planner Position – Staff Resignation**

Beverly Woods advised the Council that NMCOG’s Environmental Planner, Kristan Farr, had resigned in March to accept a position at a private consulting firm. NMCOG has advertised the position and has received 54 applications, which have been narrowed down to 6 individuals. Candidate interviews will be held within the next week. She stated that the finalists for the position will be interviewed by the Personnel Committee, and that the full Council will act on the hiring of this individual in May.

6. **Summer Planning Intern**

Beverly Woods informed the Council that she was recently contacted by a graduate student from Northeastern University regarding an unpaid internship. Emily Lange is pursuing an M.S. in Urban Planning and Policy and has a year of urban planning experience, including work for the City of Seattle and The West Studio, a firm that creates master plans for Native American reservations. Beverly gave a brief overview of her skills and interests and said Emily is
interested in working four days per week. She stated that Emily’s skills could be put to good use at NMCOG over the summer months.

Based on a motion by Sen. Ed Kennedy, seconded by Mary McBride, the Council voted unanimously to authorize the addition of the summer intern position for Planning.

7. Other New Business

There was none.

VI. Announcements

Jerry Frechette distributed an article from the April 2nd Lowell Sun regarding the Baker administration’s proposal to ease zoning rules for housing. He voiced concern around the removal of a super-majority requirement for zoning change. Jerry stated that Rep. Golden had requested that the Council provide a letter to him voicing concern of the super-majority removal should the members be in agreement. Chair Pat Wojtas requested this item be added to the May Council meeting Agenda and suggested that Councilors talk with their planning staff regarding this issue.

VII. Adjournment

Following a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by George Zaharoolis, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

CLERK’S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of April 17, 2019.

Attest: Stephen Themelis, Clerk