Minutes of Meeting: September 18, 2019

The September 18, 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
- Mary McBride, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, Chair, Chelmsford Board of Selectmen
- Henry Parlee, Chelmsford Planning Board
- 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
- Jayne Wellman, Tewksbury Board of Selectmen
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff

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

I. Minutes of Meeting: July 17, 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 July 17, 2019 meeting. Darrin Wizst and Mary McBride abstained as they were not present at the July meeting.
II. 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.

III. Financial Report and Warrant

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

IV. Old Business

1. Update on DLTA XII Projects

Jay Donovan provided an update on the status of the DLTA projects currently in progress in the NMCOG region. The Massachusetts Rural Policy Plan is nearly complete and will be presented to the legislature in October. The transportation staff is working with the City to conduct an inventory of pedestrian infrastructure in the downtown and Acre neighborhoods. Work continues on Master Plan Updates in Chelmsford, Pepperell and Tyngsborough. The Dracut Housing Production Plan is nearly complete and will be submitted to DHCD for approval in October. An Economic Development Visioning Session will take place in Westford next month. Significant progress continues on the construction of the NMRECC, with completion expected in early 2020. Jay added that the Governor has signed the FY2020 budget without any vetoes and NMCOG will receive another round of DLTA funding beginning in January or February 2020.

2. Update on DOER Grants

Beverly Woods informed the Council that NMCOG recently received a $21,800 Regional Energy Planning Assistance (REPA) program grant from the Department of Energy Resources. The grant will allow NMCOG to provide assistance to five communities (Dunstable, Dracut, Pepperell, Tewksbury, and Tyngsborough) relative to the Green Communities Program. NMCOG staff is helping Dunstable with the Green Community designation process, and will assist the remaining four communities with annual reporting, grants, and procurement activities.

A contract from the Department of Energy Resources is expected within the next week or so under the Affordable Access to Clean & Efficient Energy Grant Program. The contract will provide $77,036 for clean energy training to municipal or community organizations and non-profit developers that support low income populations. The long-term goal of the AARC Program is to provide sustained resources at the local level to low income residents or to smaller low income or affordable housing owners or developers that do not have the internal capacity to build such knowledge themselves or within their organizations.
3. **Merrimack Valley Smart Growth Summit: The River, Our Water, Our Land-Managing for Climate Challenges**

Beverly Woods updated the group on the Merrimack Valley Smart Growth Summit to be held on October 29th from 8:00AM to noon at UTEC. The event is being hosted by Massachusetts Smart Growth Alliance, Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and NMCOG. There have been weekly conference calls for the past two months to organize the event, which will focus on how water can strengthen or undermine future development and quality of life in the Merrimack Valley. It will examine development patterns, water supply and quality, infrastructure and ecological design, climate resilience, health and equity.

Beverly gave detailed speaker and panelist information. Registration information was included in the Executive Director’s Report.

4. **Other Old Business**

There was none.

V. **New Business**

1. **Community Reports**

Phil Thibault updated the Council on the bid progress for Dracut’s Collinsville fire station. Also, Dracut Access TV has completed its move into the new studios. Phil invited fellow Council members to attend the studio grand opening on October 1st from 4:00-7:00 pm.

Chris Tribou stated that Billerica Town Meeting will consider funding for a new fire station and also that Billerica’s Access TV is moving into new studio facilities.

Jayne Wellman informed the group that Tewksbury has appointed Planning Board member Stephen Johnson to the Council.

2. **Project Referrals**

Beverly Woods stated that there were two projects in the region under MEPA review over the summer. An ENF was filed for the Main Street Well upgrades in Dunstable, and the Council approved the comment letter for that project in July. Additional information was added to the MEPA table indicating that an EIR was not required for the project. An ENF was also filed for the River Road Well project in Tyngsborough. A staff comment letter was included in the Council packet.

Based on a motion by Jerry Frechette, seconded by Chris Tribou, the Council voted unanimously to approve the NMCOG staff comment letter regarding the River Road Well project in Tyngsborough.
3. **Report of the Personnel Committee – Staff Performance Reviews**

Prior to the Council meeting, the Personnel Committee met to discuss the recent NMCOG staff performance reviews and possible staff salary adjustments. Jerry Frechette informed the Council that the Personnel Committee recommended staff salary increases of 3% with the exception of one recently filled position which would increase 1.5%.

Based on a motion by Phil Thibault, seconded by Sen. Ed Kennedy, the Council voted unanimously to approve NMCOG staff salary adjustments as presented.

4. **Election of NMCOG Officers**

Steve Themelis presented and distributed the 2019 Council Election Ballot. Nominees were previously contacted to determine their interest in serving in the office for which they were nominated.

Upon completion of the election process, the following officers were elected to serve over the upcoming year:

- Pat Wojtas, Chair;
- Andrew Deslaurier, Vice Chair;
- Jerry Frechette, Treasurer;
- Rick Reault, Assistant Treasurer;
- Steve Themelis, Clerk;
- Chris Tribou, Assistant Clerk; and
- Ron Keohane, NMMPO Representative

5. **Upcoming Annual Meeting**

The Annual Meeting will be held October 16, 2019 at Lenzi’s in Dracut. An invitation will be mailed separately to each Councilor. Beverly Woods has confirmed that City of Lynn Mayor Thomas McGee, former State Representative and former Senator, as well as Co-Chair of the Commuter Rail Communities Coalition, will be the guest speaker. A very brief Council business meeting will be held at 6:00 pm to address essential business only. The reception will begin at 6:30 pm, followed by dinner and the speaking program at 7:00 pm.

6. **Other New Business**

There was none.

VII. **Announcements**

Mary McBride announced to the group that the new Billerica High School is now open.
VIII. Adjournment

Following a motion made by Phil Thibault and seconded by Jayne Wellman, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:37 pm.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of September 18, 2019.

Attest: ____________________________

Stephen Themelis, Clerk