

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

Minutes from Council Meeting January 18, 2023

I. The January 18, 2023 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) was held in hybrid form via Zoom and in person at the NMCOG office at 40 Church Street, Lowell, Massachusetts. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Chair Andrew Deslaurier presiding. The following were in attendance:

Councilors:

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chairman, Billerica Select Board
- Chris Tribou, Asst. Clerk, Billerica Planning Board
- Mary K. McBride, Clerk, Billerica Alternate
- Pat Wojtas, MPO Rep, Chelmsford Select Board
- Paul McDougall, Chelmsford Planning Board
- George Zaharoolis, Chelmsford Alternate
- Phil Thibault, Dracut Alternate
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Council
- Gerard Frechette, Treasurer, Lowell Planning Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Select Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Vice Chair, Westford Select Board
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff:

- Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director
- Justin Howard, Transportation Director
- Bert Almeida, Financial Officer
- David Tilton, Sealer of Weights & Measures/ Transportation Planner
- Christopher Hayes, AICP, Housing and Economic Development Planner
- Jeff Owen, AICP, Regional Planner
- Shravanthi Gopalan Narayanan, Transportation Planner

II. Minutes of Meeting: December 21, 2022

The Minutes of the December 21, 2022 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a Motion by Steve Themelis, seconded by Mary McBride, on a roll call vote, the Council approved the Minutes of the December 21, 2022 meeting as presented. Chris Tribou, Phil Thibault, and Chuck Walkovich abstained since they were not present for the December meeting.

III. Financial Report and Warrant – Income and Expense Statements 12/20/2022 – 1/17/2023

Bert Almeida presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and approval. Based on a Motion by Daniel Rourke and seconded by Mary McBride, following a roll call vote, the Council unanimously approved the Financial Report and Warrant.

IV. NMCOG Employee Handbook

Ms. Raitt introduced and distributed the NMCOG Employee Handbook, which has been reviewed by KP Law, at the Council's December 21, 2022 meeting. Because of its size and detail it was decided that members take more time to review the document and notify the Executive Director of any proposed edits in time for the January meeting, at which point there will be discussion and a possible vote. Members submitted suggestions, especially Pat Wojtas, who shared many detailed corrections/edits.

After some discussion, the Council decided to vote on adoption of the NMCOG Employee Hand at the January meeting with the understanding that changes may be suggested and possible amendments made going forward. Based on a Motion by Pat Wojtas, seconded by Mary McBride, the Council unanimously voted to adopt the Employee Handbook. Ms. Raitt will distribute the document and review it with all employees.

V. Resolution to Commit Matching Funds for the Lowell Regional Transit Authority (LRTA) Transit Planning Contract with the US DOT

The Resolution was previously discussed at the Council's January 18, 2022 meeting. It authorizes Executive Director Jennifer Raitt to execute a contract with LRTA on behalf of NMCOG, to fund the local matching funds portion of a grant application by the LRTA to the U.S. of Transportation under the Section 5307 program administered by the Federal Transit Administration. Based on a Motion by Gerard Frechette, seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted unanimously to give Ms. Raitt the authority to so negotiate.

VI. Call for Project Proposals for Technical Assistance

NMCOG has invited all member communities to submit proposals for projects starting in Winter/Spring 2023.

VII. Report of the Executive Director

The Executive Director's Report was distributed for review to the Council in advance of the meeting, and was extensive. Ms. Raitt shared some highlights:

The new Deputy Sealer of Weights and Measures, Mark Normandin, has been hired and will start January 30.

Staff presented updates on activities associated with the Regional Long Range Transportation Plan, Envision 2050 at the January 5 meeting of the NMMPO.

Six NMCOG communities so far have indicated tentative or committed interest in a regional or individual application to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. A partnership between NMCOG and the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) was approved as a vendor for this technical assistance program.

NMCOG staff have been attending working group meetings hosted by the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) regarding Merrimack River water quality and related issues.

VIII. Community Exchange

Billerica Planning Board member Chris Tribou talked about a just-approved project at 279 Boston Road which will have a restaurant and 20 apartments, two of which will be affordable. The project failed to get Planning Board approval last year with a different owner.

IX. Reminders and Announcements

- **Strategic Planning Retreat**
January 28 at Chelmsford Public Library from 10-1
- **Council Meeting**
February 15 at NMCOG Offices at 7PM

X. Other Business Not Known at Time of Posting

XI. Adjournment

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of January 18, 2023.



Attest: _____

Mary K. McBride, Clerk