

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

Minutes of Meeting: May 19, 2021

The May 19, 2021 meeting of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments was held virtually on the Zoom platform due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. with Chair Andrew Deslaurier presiding. The following were in virtual attendance, as indicated in Attachment #1:

Councilors

- Andrew Deslaurier, Chair, Billerica Board of Selectmen
- Chris Tribou, Billerica Planning Board
- Pat Wojtas, Chelmsford Select Board
- Kieran Meehan, Dunstable Board of Selectmen
- Daniel Rourke, Lowell City Council
- Gerard Frechette, Lowell Planning Board
- Mark Mathews, Pepperell Select Board
- Chuck Walkovich, Pepperell Planning Board
- Stephen Themelis, Pepperell Alternate
- Jayne Wellman, Tewksbury Board of Selectmen
- Anita Tonakarn-Nguyen, Westford Select Board
- Darrin Wizst, Westford Planning Board

Staff

- Beverly Woods, Executive Director
- Jay Donovan, Assistant Director
- Bert Almeida, Financial Officer
- Justin Howard, Transportation Program Manager
- David Tilton, Transportation Planner, Sealer of Weights and Measures
- David Righter, Environmental Planner
- Katrina Garavanian, Executive Assistant

I. Minutes of Meeting: April 21, 2021

The minutes of the April 21, 2021 meeting were distributed to all Councilors for review. Based on a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Chris Tribou, the Council voted to approve the minutes of the April 21, 2021 meeting.

II. Executive Director's Report

The Executive Director's Report was previously distributed to the Councilors for review. Following discussion regarding the necessity of Council approval and vote, the Council members agreed that a vote is not necessary going forward, as the report is informational in nature and not a record of proceedings. The report is included as Attachment #2.

III. Financial Report and Warrant

Bert Almeida presented the Financial Report and the Warrant for review and approval. Based on a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Financial Report and Warrant were unanimously approved. The Financial Report is included as Attachment #3. The warrant was sent by mail for signatures due to the COVID pandemic.

IV. Old Business

1. Proposed FY 2022-2026 Transportation Improvement Program

Justin Howard provided an overview of the Draft FY 2022-2026 TIP that will be considered for endorsement at the upcoming MPO meeting on May 26th. An Executive Summary of the document was included in the Council packet. Justin also summarized comments that were received during the public comment period. He requested the Council authorize the Chairman and MPO Representative to vote in support of endorsement at the May 26, 2021 MPO meeting.

Based on a motion by Chuck Walkovich and seconded by Jayne Wellman, the Council voted to authorize the Chairman and the MPO Representative to vote in support of endorsement at the May 26, 2021 MPO meeting.

2. Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program

Justin Howard provided an overview of the draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program that is currently being developed. An Executive Summary of the draft was included in the Council packet. Justin informed the Council that the MPO will be voting on whether to release the document for a twenty-one day public comment period at its May 26, 2021 meeting. He requested that the Council authorize the Chairman and MPO Representative to vote in favor of releasing the document to the public at the MPO meeting.

Based on a motion by Chris Tribou and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted to authorize the Chairman and the MPO Representative to vote in favor of releasing the Draft FY 2022 Unified Planning Work Program for a twenty-one day public comment period at the May 26, 2021 MPO meeting.

3. Results of the DLT A Request for Proposals (RFP) II Process

Jay Donovan reminded the Council that, as discussed at last month's meeting, there was \$43,456 in uncommitted funds in our DLT A contract. A second solicitation for eligible projects was issued on April 30, 2021 to our member communities. Three proposals were submitted by Chelmsford, Lowell and Pepperell. Jay provided an overview of the proposals, which included a business survey identifying the COVID-19 impacts from Chelmsford, an asset management project for Lowell, and an Age-Friendly Hiring Handy Person guidelines project from Pepperell. Jay informed the Council that remaining funds were added to the COVID-19 recovery project category to support all NMCOG communities. An updated listing of the DLT A XIV projects was included in the meeting packet.

4. Other Old Business

There was none.

V. New Business

1. Community Reports

Andrew Deslaurier informed the Council that Billerica recently held Town Meeting and voted to amend its planned unit development zoning. This action brought a nuanced touch to several dozen parcels on Boston Road, tailoring them to be consistent with the Town's future plans and allowing a maximum three stories, to include two stories residential and first-story retail. The Town is hoping to encourage economic development in this area.

As Chris Kluchman presented on the topic of changes to Chapter 40A at the April Council meeting, Darrin Wizst mentioned, as a point of interest, that Westford has a proposed development of high density, age-restricted housing, requiring approval by town meeting. Because of the new 40A reform, a request to the State for review of the proposed concept was made in order to determine whether a majority or super majority vote will be required.

Kieran Meehan informed the group that this past Saturday, Dunstable Town Meeting passed the 113 Highway Project requirements and the project is now able to move forward which is very beneficial for the Route 113 corridor and the community.

Jayne Wellman stated that the new Zoning Bylaw was not approved by voters. The vote was close, and as a result of two votes, the 120-page document will have to be brought back at next year's Town Meeting with minor changes.

2. Project Referrals

David Righter informed the Council that there is one project under MEPA review within our region. An ENF for the Heald Street Culvert Replacement /Sucker Brook Restoration project in Pepperell was reviewed by staff. The proposed project includes the replacement of a deteriorating 36-inch diameter corrugated metal pipe culvert with a 16-foot-wide precast concrete open-bottom box culvert in accordance with MA Stream Crossing Standards. The construction will take place at the crossing of Heald Street over Sucker Brook. The project triggers MEPA review as it meets the threshold for the alteration of 1,000 or more square feet of outstanding resource waters. A copy of the MEPA table and a staff comment letter was included in the meeting packet.

Based on a motion by Pat Wojtas and seconded by Jayne Wellman, the Council voted to approve the staff comment letter as presented.

3. Overview of the 2020 Traffic Count Book

David Tilton gave a brief presentation on the 2020 Traffic Count Book explaining that, as part of the transportation work program, traffic count data is collected and analyzed annually. The data is summarized in a report and made available to NMCOG communities and the public. He stated that COVID-19 affected travel significantly. The travel impacts related to the virus caused MassDOT and NMCOG staff to alter the design and parameters of last year's program. He gave an overview of the unusual results seen through traffic monitoring as COVID cases increased. Brief discussion ensued regarding new and unique challenges in traffic volume monitoring as the economy reopens.

4. Approval to Submit an Application for Economic Development District Designation to EDA

Jay Donovan outlined how the staff has been developing the draft application to establish the Northern Middlesex Economic Development District (NMEDD) for the Greater Lowell region, which was included in the Council packet. Jay indicated that the Greater Lowell CEDS Committee recommended at their April meeting that the Council approve the EDD designation application for submission to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). He reviewed the benefits of EDD designation to NMCOG and its member communities. EDD designation has been placed on the agendas for the Lowell City Council, Board of Selectmen and Select Board meetings throughout the region and support letters are being submitted. A letter from EOHEd Secretary will also be provided. Jay requested authorization from the Council to submit the application to the EDA.

Based on a motion by Chris Tribou and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted to approve the submittal of the Application for Economic Development District Designation to EDA.

5. Other New Business

There was none.

VI. Announcements

There were none.

VII. Adjournment

Following a motion made by Jerry Frechette and seconded by Darrin Wizst, the Council voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 7:58 pm.

CLERK'S CERTIFICATE

I certify that this is a true copy of the Minutes of the meeting of May 19, 2021.

Attest: _____



Stephen Themelis, Clerk