**Rural Policy Advisory Commission**

**Zoom meeting minutes**

**Friday, December 11, 2020 11am-1:30pm**

**Members Present:** Linda Dunlavy, Jay Coburn, Dave Christopolis, Bill Veno, Trish Settles, Thom Matusko, Helen Zincavage, Wendy Hudson, Judy Terry, Representative Paul Mark, Shaun Suhoski, Brian Bullock, Corinne

**Guests:** Andy Hodge (MMA), Katy Lacy (MHP), Kim Robinson, (PVPC), James Fuccione (MCOA), Jessica Atwood (FCOG), Winton Pitcoff (MA Food Systems)

**Absent:** Sara Smiarowski

Call meeting to order 11am – Linda Dunlavy, Chair

RPAC members discussed the need to review data that exists for rural housing and population trends and how COVID had impacted rural regions in MA.

Corinne provided a presentation form the realtors MLA data across many domains. This was a powerful and detailed presentation of home sales, cash sales, days on market and other trends that show how the real estate market is performing and how we may formulate a response.

Cash sales are up and inventory is down. Prices are inflated.

RPAC members discussed some remedies such as the HEROES campaign promoting an increase in deeds excise tax and a local transfer tax. Expanding first time home buyer programming and extending moratoriums on eviction/foreclosure.

Katy Lacy form MHP discussed current eviction being up.

RPAC members are interested in short term rental data and number of units registered as Air B and B, average rent and length of rentals.

Helen Z mentioned impact of climate on rural village centers.

Representative Paul Mark gave an update on the state budget. Governor is using $1 billion I rainy day fund leaving $1.5 -2 billion left in fund with eyes on FY 22 budget. 1/6/2021 the new legislative session begins. RPAC will work to draft and submit legislative priorities and proposals in January.

Representative Mark gave an update on the census and redistricting. He will be working on the redistricting in 2021. The census will clearly have an impact on this process.

Winton Pitcoff gave a presentation on the Food Systems work he is doing. He discussed the state buying land without transparency as a current issue when promoting a state-wide food plan. He is promoting a Farmland Action Plan. UMAS extension has suffered budget cuts. His organization is focusing on decreasing hunger, gathering accurate data on farms in operation and number of farm jobs in the state.

They are generating a white paper for ag day.

Next, RPAC members discussed signing on to the Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI). RPAC member Brian and Trish will draft a letter.

RPAC members requested an update from the MA Broadband Initiative.

RPAC members will meet in January to discuss priorities for 2021

Adjourn - 1:30

Submitted,

Dave Christopolis