**Minutes of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission Meeting**

Date: July 30, 2019

**Members Present**

Brian Bullock (At-Large)

Dave Christopolis (At-Large)

Linda Dunlavy (Franklin Regional Council of Governments)

Trish Settles (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning District Commission)

Judy Terry (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)

Bill Veno (Martha’s Vineyard Commission)

Wendy Hudson (Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission)

Tom Matusko (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)

Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission)

Sara Smiarowski

Shaun Suhoski

Helen Zinkavage

Corinne Fitzgerald

Representative Paul Mark

**Members Absent**

**N/A**

**Others Present**

Dan Hodge

Peter Larkin

**Welcome and Introductions**

Linda Dunlavy (Chair) welcomed members of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission and each member briefly introduced themselves.

**Presentation by Peter Larkin, MA Broadband Institute**

Peter Larkin made a presentation updating commission members on work of the MA Broadband Institute. Mr. Larkin went over a recent report indicating the various stages of development each town is at regarding broadband coverage. Work will continue through 2020 as most towns approach their construction phases. It was reported that state government will be working closely with the federal government to recover federal funds available to Massachusetts towns relative to the cost of this project.

**Legislative Update**

Representative Paul Mark gave Commissioners an update on relevant legislative efforts underway at the statehouse.

**Rural Policy Plan Activity**

Consultant Dan Hodge introduced himself and presented the draft rural plan to the Commissioners with an emphasis on cross-cutting themes. The group participated in an exercise designed to better align the focus areas and categories. This was done for clear communication and marketing purposes as well as clarification regarding terms and definitions. This process led to some minor changes in the categorization of focus area content.

**Lunch 12:00**

After lunch Dan Hodge and Linda Dunlavy led the group through an exercise that included rank voting by members to prioritize rural plan categories and recommendations. Member walked through each category and prioritized recommendations. The rank voting was done with the use of a web-based program called Menti.

The following categories were ranked by members and highest rank category is listed below:

* Community Vibrancy – **Community Scale Housing**
* Economic Vitality – **PILOT for ecosystem value of land**
* Infrastructure and Mobility – **Equity assessment of Chapter 90**
* Municipal Capacity – **Training programs for municipal positions**
* Climate Change and Resiliency - **Watershed resiliency planning**

\*results of the Menti process are attached to these minutes in more detail.

Linda Dunlavy discussed the ”roll out’ of the Rural Plan which is scheduled for October 2 at 2:30 at the statehouse.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:30**