

Minutes of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission Meeting

Date: March 10, 2017
11:00am – 1:30pm
Massachusetts State House
House Members' Lounge, 3rd Floor
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

Members Present

Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay (Chair)
Representative Gailanne Cariddi (Speaker of the House Appointee)
Brian Bullock (At-Large)
Dave Christopolis (At-Large)
Linda Dunlavy (Franklin Regional Council of Governments)
Corinne Fitzgerald (Senate President Appointee)
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)
Nathaniel Karns (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)

Members Absent

Donna Hamel (At-Large)
Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission)
Konnie Lukes (At-Large)

Others Present

Ryan Ambrose, DHCD
Karen Bresnahan, DHCD
Paul McMorro, EOHED
Rita Farrell, MHP
Callie Clark, MHP
Philip Crean, MHP
Don Bianchi, MACDC
Shira Schoenberg, Springfield Republican
Wendy Xu, Senator Barrett's Office
Scott McNeil, OSA
Maureen Glynn, NECTA
Jared Freedman, Representative Kulik's Office

Welcome and Introductions

Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay (Chair) welcomed members of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission and each member briefly introduced themselves.

Adoption of Minutes from January 6th, 2017 Commission Meeting

The members requested two minor changes to the previous meetings minutes:

- Add “sewers” to the list of key issues of the Infrastructure Working Group
- Change the organization name under “Presentation on Housing Legislation” to “Greater Boston Real Estate Board”

Board voted to approve minutes as amended: All members approved with 2 abstentions.

Scheduling Future Meetings in 2017

The Commission briefly discussed the next approved meeting:

April 28, 2017
State House, Boston, MA
11:00am – 2:00pm

Commission member Linda Dunlavy agreed to handle logistics for the next meeting, scheduled for June 9, 2017 in Greenfield.

Presentation by Peter Larkin, MA Broadband Institute

Peter Larkin made a presentation updating commission members on work of the MA Broadband Institute. MBI has asked communities to enter into a readiness process and has established a criteria for bandwidth speed. Mr. Larkin discussed current negotiations between MBI and towns across the Commonwealth, referencing the \$40 million that has already been distributed. MBI has been making progress towards helping towns to bridge the last mile. Mr. Larkin also announced the new MBI grant only program that will provide direct funds to communities to construct and operate their own system.

Questions for Peter Larkin from Commission Members

Commission member asked questions involving the following three topics:

- Some businesses require bandwidth speed that is higher than some top proposed speeds
- Charter Communications proposal
- The possibility for an online transparency portal

Working Groups Present 3-5 Key Issues:

Commission members presented their key issues that were developed through the four working groups.

Infrastructure Working Group

1. Regionalization
2. Broadband connectivity
3. Water and sewer
4. Workforce development

Economic Development Working Group

1. Create vibrant town and village centers
2. Focus on sector based economic development
3. Monitor impact of federal changes on rural areas

4. Economic inequality between rural and urban areas

Housing Working Group

1. Continue to monitor broadband
2. Title 5 (Septic)
3. Water and sewer connections in town centers
4. Regionalization

Workforce/Demographics Working Group

1. Public Education
2. Sewer and water
3. Job creation
4. Energy costs
5. Civic Infrastructure and regionalization

Group Consensus Exercise

Undersecretary Kornegay led an exercise among the four working groups to find consensus across groups in order to identify the top issues. The top three issues that were agreed upon were:

- Water/Sewer and Title 5
- Small Business Creation / Job Creation
- Regionalization

The commission discussed the need to monitor the progress of MBI and agreed that while broadband access would not be part of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission's study, monitoring MBI's progress would be a component of the commission's work.

Additional Discussion

The commission discussed next steps ahead of the next scheduled meeting. The primary topics included how the commission would recommended that they monitor the progress of MBI going forward. The commission will also work to further describe each of the three categories that were decided upon. Finally, the commission began discussing ways that they could comment on proposals by the administration that affect rural communities.

Meeting adjourned at 1:30pm