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

Date: September 14, 2018

10:30am – 2:30pm

Provincetown Town Hall

260 Commercial Street

Provincetown, MA 02652

**Members Present**

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 Commission)

Judy Terry (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)

Bill Veno (Martha’s Vineyard Commission)

Wendy Hudson (Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission)

Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission)

Dave Christopolis (At-Large)

Sarah Smiarowski (At-large)

Representative Paul Mark (call in)

**Others Present**

Toby Gould, Rural Commonwealth

Beth Bandy, Rural Commonwealth

David Panagore, Provincetown Town Manager

Senator Julian Cyr, Cape and Islands

Representative Sarah Peake, 4th Barnstable

Andy Hogeland (MSA/MMA)

Ariela Lovett (MMA)

Helena Altman (EOHED)

Adrian Servetnick (EOHED)

**Welcome and Introductions**

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

**Adoption of Minutes from June 15th, 2018 Commission Meeting**

Board voted to approve minutes without amendment.

**Future 2018 – 2019 Meetings**

Commission members discussed holding 6 meetings per year. The following tentative schedule was presented.

* November 9th or 16th, perhaps in Sandwich
* Friday, January 11th, 2019 – Worcester, MA
* Friday, March 15th, 2019 – Boston, MA
* Friday, May 10th or 17th, 2019 – Greenfield, MA
* July 12th or 19th, 2019

The exact time and location of each meeting has yet to be determined.

**Presentation – MBI Broadband update from Peter Larkin**

Peter Larkin (EOHD) gave a presentation telephonically that updated the Commissioners on the current state of Broadband development across the unserved and underserved rural communities in Massachusetts. Commissioners were provided a paper report with data on each town and their arrangement to complete construction of a and system. A few towns have been able to connect to larger communities through an established provider. Other towns are constructing their own systems. A few towns are planning to utilize a wireless only system. Commissioner Dave Christopolis asked if they have taken winter conditions into account and how that may impact the completion of the projects. Mr. Larkin stated they do plan for unforeseen conditions.

**Report on Securing Funding and/or Staffing for RPAC**

Several Commissioners have worked on a job description, budget and detailed memo to the legislature requesting funding to support an Executive Director, office and assistant to the RPAC. Dave Christopolis updated the Commissioners on this process and other members weighed in. Representative Peak and Senator Cyr engaged in the conversation with members and discussed the possible places and manners in the budget and legislative process this could be pursued. They recommended that the RPAC continue to develop a proposal and meet with new, incoming legislators.

**MA Municipal Association**

Andy Hogeland and Ariela Lovett provided information related to the MMA and how the RPAC and MMA may be able to work together on rural issues. Andy noted that MMA’s skillset includes expertise in legislation and policy development that could be helpful and synergistic with RPAC. Members agreed that a partnership with the MMA should be pursued and fostered.

**LUNCH BREAK**

**Report of Working Group on Rural Plan Development**

Commissioner Dunlavy summarized the committee recommendations for an outline of the plan and related deadlines. Commissioners were asked to comment on the five sections of the outline to prioritize and add any new areas of concern for the commission to study. The five sections include: Description of Rural MA, Infrastructure, Economic Activity, Manufacturing, Housing, Priority Actions. Rehabilitation was added to Housing. Arts and Culture was added to Economic Activity. The members agreed the repot should be succinct with overarching issues and sub-regional differences. The plan’s primary audience is the legislature, Governor and state agencies.

Other issues were discussed that impact rural communities. The members discussed strategies to include specific issues when needed.

Commissioner Coburn reported to the members research he did in Vermont relative to their rural state initiative. He shared their vision statement and the legal structure.

Commissioner Terry reported research she did in the state of Maine on their state rural initiative. She reported Maine’s council failed after a few attempts and was disbanded in 2016.

Members voted unanimously to approve the plan outline with additions. This will include public input between October 2018 and January 2019. The plan will be authored and vetted between January 2019 and May 2019.

**Meeting adjourned at 2:16pm**