

Minutes of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission Meeting

Friday, June 15, 2017
11:00 am - 2:30 pm
Franklin Regional Council of Governments
12 Olive Street
Greenfield, MA 01301

Members Present

*Linda Dunlavy (Franklin Regional Council of Governments) (Chair)
*Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission) (Co-Chair)
*Dave Christopolis (At-Large) (Clerk)
Helena Fruscio Altsman (Secretary of EOHED Appointee)
Sara Swiarowski (At-Large)
Brian Bullock (At-Large)
Representative Paul Mark (Speaker of the House Appointee)
Trish Settles (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission)
Judy Terry (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)
Bill Veno (Martha's Vineyard Commission)
Donna Hamel (At-Large)
Corinne Fitzgerald (Senate President Appointee)

Members Absent

Wendy Hudson (Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission)

Others Present

Ryan Ambrose, DHCD
Adrian Servetnick, EOHED
Toby Gould, Rural Commonwealth
Beth Bandy, Rural Commonwealth
Georgianna Parkin, Mass Small Business Development Center – State Director
Keith Girard, Mass Small Business Development Center – Berkshire County Regional Director
Andy Hogeland, Williamstown Select Board Member

Welcome and Introductions

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

Adoption of Minutes from March 9th, 2018 Commission Meeting

Board voted to approve minutes without amendment.

Review of the Draft 2018 Legislative Report

Commissioners reviewed a draft of the 2018 legislative report. Members asked to add language relating to RPAC monitoring of the progress of the Mass Broadband Institute (MBI) and other minor edits to the draft. The vote to approve the draft report as amended was as follows:

Linda Dunlavy	Yay
Jay Coburn	Yay
Dave Christopolis	Yay
Sara Swiarowski	Yay
Brian Bullock	Yay
Rep. Paul Mark	Yay
Trish Settles	Yay
Judy Terry	Yay
Bill Veno	Yay
Donna Hamel	Yay
Corinne Fitzgerald	Yay
Helena Fruscio Altsman	Abstain

Discussion of Rural Plan Process

Helena Fruscio Altsman discussed the Rural Plan that the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development will be developing with consultation from the RPAC. The discussion centered on process and what would be included in the plan itself. Commissioner Fruscio Altsman described it as an action plan that would help direct state policy moving forward. A subcommittee was formed to work out a suggested process for developing the plan and will present their recommendations at the September 14, 2018 RPAC meeting in Provincetown, MA.

Additionally, Helena Fruscio Altsman proposed that the subgroup have the ability to call a meeting of the entire RPAC if it deems it necessary. The motion was unanimously approved 12-0.

Elections

Elections were held for a new RPAC chair, co-chair, and clerk. The results were as follows:

Chair – Linda Dunlavy

Linda Dunlavy	Yay
Jay Coburn	Yay
Dave Christopolis	Yay
Sara Swiarowski	Yay
Brian Bullock	Yay
Rep. Paul Mark	Yay
Trish Settles	Yay
Judy Terry	Yay
Bill Veno	Yay
Donna Hamel	Yay
Corinne Fitzgerald	Yay
Helena Fruscio Altsman	Yay

Co-Chair – Jay Coburn

Linda Dunlavy	Yay
Jay Coburn	Yay
Dave Christopolis	Yay

Sara Swiarowski	Yay
Brian Bullock	Yay
Rep. Paul Mark	Yay
Trish Settles	Yay
Judy Terry	Yay
Bill Veno	Yay
Donna Hamel	Yay
Corinne Fitzgerald	Yay
Helena Fruscio Altzman	Yay

Clerk – Dave Christopolis

Linda Dunlavy	Yay
Jay Coburn	Yay
Dave Christopolis	Yay
Sara Swiarowski	Yay
Brian Bullock	Yay
Rep. Paul Mark	Yay
Trish Settles	Yay
Judy Terry	Yay
Bill Veno	Yay
Donna Hamel	Yay
Corinne Fitzgerald	Yay
Helena Fruscio Altzman	Yay

Presentation on Small Business

Two representatives from the Mass Small Business Development Center Network (MSBDC), Georgianna Parkin, State Director and Berkshire County Regional Director Keith Girouard attended to brief Commissioners on their organization, rural demographics, a recent Rural Small Business Roundtable and to also discuss MSBDC's work with small rural businesses. Commissioners, Ms. Parkin and Mr. Girouard discussed what they see as barriers to small business creation and retention in rural Massachusetts, which include lack of reliable broadband, the lack of communication between people and organizations, and the need for greater succession planning for small business.

Noted Rural Policy Items

Peter Larkin, Chair of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI), called to provide RPAC Commissioners with an update on rural broadband. Mr. Larkin discussed recent progress and work that still needs to be done. Commissioners reinitiated their desire to receive frequent updates on MBI's work.

Commissioner Linda Dunlavy updated Commissioners on a meeting she held with Joel Barrera, Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Innovation in the Office of Governor Charlie Baker. The meeting was to address concerns that the Governor's Housing Choice Initiative program would not benefit rural communities. Mr. Barrera assured Commissioner Dunlavy that the program was never intended to hurt communities that do not produce housing. He offered to continue to work with Commissioner Dunlavy and rural communities to address their concerns.

Updates from Council

Commissioner Linda Dunlavy provided an update on her work to connect with the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection to help create an education program to educate RPAC Commissioners on the complexity of state environmental regulations. The DEP is in the process of launching a new platform with pictorial explanations of complex regulations that may satisfy the RPACs desire to become better informed on these issues.

Public Comment

Andy Hogeland, Select Board Member from Williamstown and a member of the Massachusetts Selectmen Association, thanked the Commission for taking steps towards the creation of a rural plan.

Meeting adjourned at 2:35pm