

**Minutes of Meeting of Rural Advisory Commission's (RAC) Subcommittee on Workforce Development and Demographics (SWDD)**

November 4, 2016

10:00-11:30 a.m.

Central MA Regional Planning Commission  
Worcester, MA

**Subcommittee members present**

Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments,

Nat Karns, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Trish Settles, Central MA regional Planning Commission

**Subcommittee members absent**

Jay Coburn, Community Development Partnership

Donna Hamel, Nantucket

**Also present**

Rita Farrell, MA Housing Partnership .

**Welcome and Introductions**

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Karns at 10:03 am.

**Acceptance of minutes**

Trish Settles motioned to accept the 9/4/16 minutes; Linda Dunlavy seconded as edited (some typos found). Passed unanimously.

**Rural Population Trends & Typology Planning**

To determine whether the committee needs to do additional data analysis, Trish provided an update of the Infrastructure Committee, Linda provided an update of the Economic Development Committee and Rita provided an update of the Housing Committee. It was determined that additional mapping needed is: location of technical high schools, Community Development Corporations, and Massachusetts state colleges in an effort to identify the different types of rural. Members agreed there are important different rural types but questioned how many classifications should be defined. Weak Market Areas vs. Strong Market Areas or is additional parsing necessary?

This led to a discussion about sewer and water infrastructure and its importance across all focus areas of the RPAC. It was decided that members would like to bring DEP to a future meeting to understand what small scale sewer and water technologies are allowed and could be pursued. Rural sewer and water expansion was also identified as one of the committee's actionable items.

The Committee also discussed reviewing the MassWorks program to evaluate how well it serves rural communities.

Committee members then discussed the issue of rural municipal capacity including the volunteer firefighter shortage and the difficulty of regionalizing municipal services. Members agreed to bring the state fire association or like group to a future meeting. The Committee also agreed to push for more coordinated statewide regionalization assistance and the need to expand RPA Board composition to include Select Board members.

Turning to workforce, the committee first discussed what the problem areas are: mismatch between workforce skill set and employer needs and resulting lack of qualified workers, especially for manufacturing. The Committee agreed to bring REBs from the region to a future meeting and to determine if an actionable item is to revamp technical school offerings to better meet employer needs.

#### **Next steps/Actionable items**

Per Chrystal's assignment at the 9/30 full RPC meeting, the Committee developed three Actionable Items that will be further developed and pursued:

1. To recommend the development of a rural sewer and water comprehensive planning process that would identify technology and financing options, efforts to regionalize operations, and criteria to prioritize where new systems should be placed. *As a first step, the committee will be educated by DEP to understand what small-scale technologies are allowed in MA and if expansion of new technologies is needed.*
2. To develop a more coordinated statewide approach to municipal regionalization, perhaps led by MARPA with support of MMA. *As a first step the committee will discuss this with MARPA and will contact the MMA Regional Policy Committee and will ask the state fire association to a future meeting. We will also look at the Joint Powers changes in the Municipal Modernization Act and determine how that might be promoted or incentivized.*
3. To determine the workforce needs of manufacturing employers and identify how the technical schools can better develop a qualified workforce. *As a first step the committee will ask regional REBs to come to a future meeting.*

#### **Next Subcommittee Meeting**

Proposed: 11/19/16 from 10:30 to 12:30 with an overlap at noon with the Economic Development Committee at FRCOG offices.

The meeting adjourned at 11:45a.m.