

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership (MTWP) Advisory Committee Meeting

October 4, 2016

Berkshire East Ski Lodge, 66 Thunder Mountain Road, Charlemont, MA

Staff: P. Sloan, A. Larose, T. Matuszko, E. Coughlin, B. O'Connor, W. Ferris, D. Raimo

Members Attending: Hank Art, Tom Brule, Greg Cox, Larry Flaccus, Kyle Hanlon, Fred Jajko, Stacy Kontrabecki, Nathan L'Etoile, Ed Munch, Jim Niedbalski, Rick Chandler, Jim Perry, Mark Phelps, Keith Ross, Whit Sanford, Art Schwenger, Scott Sylvester, Charlie Thompson, Janet Sinclair

Others attending: Evan Dell'Olio, Beth Adams

1. Introductions

T. Matuszko commenced the meeting at 6:00 PM. Meeting attendees introduced themselves.

2. Review and Approval of April 12, 2016 Meeting Notes

Art Schwenger motioned to approve the Meeting Minutes of April 12, 2016 as presented. Kyle Hanlon seconded. The motion carried with Mark Phelps and Stacy Kontrabecki abstaining from voting.

3. Review and Discussion of Draft Legislation for a Special Designation for the 21-Town Region

T. Matuszko introduced the latest draft state legislation for the special designation. Two handouts were provided to the committee - one with only the new draft language, and another showing the edits that have been made with comments from the legislative house counsel.

T. Matuszko reviewed the changes with the committee. There was discussion which included the following items: leaving the partnership (opting out) after a community had opted in; any requirement for municipal funding; work with federal legislators; possible health impact assessment; possible environmental assessment; the extensive breadth of the proposed project; potential air quality and carbon emissions impacts from wood heat; public review of the proposed project; the economic entity from Berkshire County; representatives from the environmental and health communities; provisions of flexibility in the proposed legislation; a wood pellet producing facility; the need for land conservation; clarification on the membership of the proposed partnership executive committee; update to include the Town of Peru; the proposed demonstration forest; a definition of permanently protected open space; the specificity of the proposed legislation; bylaws of the proposed partnership; the procedure for moving forward if the state or federal legislation is not approved; and the interaction of the proposed partnership with the Forest Legacy program.

In addition to the above discussion there was a specific suggestion to change the phrasing of "must approve" in the section paragraph 3 (iv) on P. 8 to "shall have the right to review" and approve or something similar. It was agreed to make that revision.

T. Matuszko stated that the Mass. legislature is in informal session right now, and the new session will begin in early January. Committee members agreed that, if possible, the revised legislation should be emailed to the group for final review before filing with the state.

There was additional discussion about towns opting in.

4. Update on Wood Heat & Air Quality Workshop & Schedule for Completing Renewable Wood Heat Study

P. Sloan provided an update about the Wood Heat and Air Quality Workshop that FRCOG hosted.

B. O'Connor provided an update about the wood heat and air quality studies. There was discussion about the consultant doing the work on the study.

No action on this item was taken by the Committee

5. Review and Discussion of Draft Revisions to the Plan to Include the Town of Peru and Updated Goals

Staff presented changes to the Plan and Goals.

T. Matuszko explained that relatively recently, Peru was added into the study area for the MTWP. Staff updated the MTWP Plan to include additional data from Peru.

P. Sloan stated that one of the goals related to sustainable forestry practices and energy efficient renewable wood heat was revised. The goal was revised to read *“reduce fossil fuel use, retain rural jobs and keep more fuel dollars in the local economy.”*

Charlie Thompson motioned to accept the changes and Scott Sylvester seconded. The following discussion occurred: the reason for removing the phrase *“reduce greenhouse gas emissions;”* and updating the project timeline.

The committee voted on the proposed changes to the goal language and the plan. The motion passed unanimously.

6. Update on Meetings with Select Boards and U.S. Forest Service to Discuss MTWP Project

D. Raimo provided an update about meetings with various USFS personnel. There was discussion about USFS support for the project and possible federal funding mechanisms.

P. Sloan provided an update about meetings with towns.

7. Public Comment / Other Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting / Adjournment

T. Matuszko asked for public comments. The following public comments were received: the potential pellet manufacturing facility not being part of the legislation; potential creation of a National Park for this area and Berkshire County; and concerns about biomass and possible health risks.

There was a specific request to provide staff contact information. Staff agreed to do so.

T. Matuszko asked for the group to set a tentative meeting date for the next meeting. The group decided on January 31 2017 for the date of the next meeting. The meeting is to be held from 6-8 pm. at Berkshire East Ski Lodge, 66 Thunder Mountain Road, Charlemont, MA.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Fred Jajko. Art Schwenger seconded. The motion passed unanimously.