

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of Executive Committee Zoom Meeting
January 23, 2025, 5:00 P.M.

Executive Committee Members Present:

Walter Gunn, Chair – Longmeadow
George Kingston, Vice Chair – East Longmeadow
Doug Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown (until 6:00 p.m.)
Marilyn Gorman Fil, Treasurer – Monson
T.J. Cousineau, Assistant Treasurer – Blandford
Joanna Brown, At-large Member – South Hadley
Peri Hall, At-large Member – Goshen (from 5:17 p.m.)
Jack Jemsek, At-large Member – Amherst
James Whalen, At-large Member – Holland

PVPC Staff Present:

Kimberly Robinson, MUP, Executive Director
Lisa Edinger, Director of Finance
Indrani Kowlessar, Director of Human Resources
Deanna Young, Administrative Services Coordinator
Gary Roux, Principal Planner/Traffic Manager
Eric Weiss, Director, Economic and Municipal Collaboration Department
Matthew Leibel, Senior Land Use and Environment Planner
Sarah Maroney, Community Development Planner
Catherine Ratté, Director, Land Use and Environment Department
Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner

Guest

Tanya Campbell, CPA, CBIZ, Accountant

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome, and Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting Held on December 19, 2024

The Executive Committee meeting on January 23, 2025 was called to order at 5:03 p.m. by Chair Walter Gunn.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE DECEMBER 19, 2024 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH FIVE APPROVALS AND TWO ABSTENTIONS.

2. Introduction of New Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) Employees

Catherine Ratté introduced Matthew Liebel, the new Senior Planner. Indrani Kowlessar introduced Deanna Young, the new Administrative Services Coordinator.

3. Presentation of the PVPC's Fiscal Year 2024 Audit Reports as Prepared by the Commission's CPA Firm, Marcum LLP (now transitioned to CBIZ)

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY JAMES WHALEN, TO ACCEPT THE PVPC'S AUDIT REPORTS ENCOMPASSING THE PLANNING COMMISSION'S 2024 FISCAL YEAR (e.g. JULY 1, 2023 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2024) AS PREPARED BY THE PVPC'S CPA FIRM, MARCUM LLP (NOW TRANSITIONED TO CBIZ). THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Tanya Campbell presented the PVPC's fiscal year 2024 audit reports. Ms. Campbell noted that other than the standard adjustments, there were no major adjusting entries which reflects the accuracy of financial information provided at meetings. The unassigned fund balance represents unrestricted funds that are available to spend. Some

of the grant funds had deficits at the end of the year, and the unassigned fund balance has been growing considerably over the past several years. The assigned fund balance includes an unrestricted balance that was set aside by the Board, and it is earning interest. The net position is -\$10 million, which is common, as the number reflects the booking of net pensions and net open liability which are unfunded liabilities that are reported on government-wide statements and allocated to the organization's bottom line. The net pension liability is the Commission's share of the Massachusetts State Employees' Retirement System's (MSERS) unfunded liability. The current year's liability was approximately \$7.7 million, which was a \$400,000 increase. MSERS' investment losses resulted in an increase in PVPC pension liability.

The net OPEB liability is the Commission's share of the retiree health insurance costs. The OPEB trust fund balance was approximately \$800,000 at the end of the fiscal year. The current year's liability was approximately \$2.8 million, which was a \$500,000 decrease. Theoretically, the liability will decrease due to higher contributions and the increase of the discount rate. It was confirmed that no management letter was provided as there were no issues. Lisa Edinger noted that, in the future, the audit report will be provided in advance, and the report for the 2024 fiscal year will be circulated on January 24, 2025. Ms. Campbell noted that the testing did not result in any recommendations, and conversations throughout the year between the PVPC and CBIZ usually address questions or concerns.

Ms. Campbell reported that up to four additional firms are involved with governmental audits; however, they do not apply the same procedures. Ms. Campbell confirmed that it is not uncommon for state entities to be approximately one year behind in reporting. Fiscal Year 2024 was an improved market year compared to Fiscal Year 2022 and Fiscal Year 2023. Mr. Gunn noted that the audit has produced clean results; thus, activities at the state level do not affect the PVPC.

4. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contract Amendment Between the PVPC and the Town of West Springfield for the Completion of the Town's FY22/23 CDBG-Funded Housing Rehabilitation Program

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY JOANNA BROWN, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACT AMENDMENT ADDING THIRTY-TWO THOUSAND ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-TWO DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$32,122) TO THE EXISTING CONTRACT FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT NOT TO EXCEED THREE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND NINE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-SEVEN DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$333,987) FOR THE COMPLETION OF THE TOWN'S FY22/23 CDBG-FUNDED HOUSING REHABILITATION PROGRAM. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Kimberly H. Robinson reported that the Town of West Springfield has hired the PVPC to manage their housing rehabilitation program for several years. The motion is an amendment to add additional funds as the cost of rehabbing houses has increased.

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contract Amendment Between the PVPC and the Developer Maple Street Rowhouses, LLC for the Completion of Ongoing State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit Applications and Amendments for the Properties at 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, and 184 Maple Street in Springfield, MA

MOVED BY JOANNA BROWN, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACT AMENDMENT ADDING ELEVEN THOUSAND FIVE HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$11,550) TO THE EXISTING CONTRACT FOR A TOTAL CONTRACT NOT TO EXCEED THIRTY-FIVE THOUSAND AND FIFTY DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$35,050) FOR THE COMPLETION OF ONGOING STATE AND FEDERAL HISTORIC REHABILITATION TAX CREDIT APPLICATIONS AND AMENDMENTS FOR THE PROPERTIES AT 174, 176, 178, 180, 182, AND 184 MAPLE STREET IN SPRINGFIELD, MA. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Ms. Robinson explained that tax credit applications can take time; thus, additional money may be added to a project's budget. Ms. Robinson confirmed that the \$11,500 could not be added by just her approval because the addendum increases the contract to over the \$25,000 threshold for her approval.

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement Between the PVPC and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Acting Through the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Funding and DLTA Augmentation Funding

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT FOR AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT THOUSAND TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIVE DOLLARS AND NO CENTS (\$458,225) BETWEEN THE PVPC AND EOHLC. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Ms. Robinson noted that the DLTA-A allocation is active until June 30, 2025, as it is for 18 months. The contract to be signed is for grant assistance funds through June 30, 2026 as well as the DLTA funds through December 31, 2025.

7. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement Between PVPC and CH Web Agency for the Creation of a New Website

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACT BETWEEN THE PVPC AND CH WEB AGENCY IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED FIFTY-FOUR THOUSAND FOUR HUNDRED EIGHTY-SIX DOLLARS AND NINE CENTS (\$54,486.09) FOR THE CREATION OF A NEW WEBSITE. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

Ms. Robinson noted that CH Web Agency will visit in late February 2025, for up to three days. The new website should be ready by July 2025. Ms. Robinson noted that a review of the current website will be done to identify the information that should be migrated and how to prioritize items on the new website. The department directors will provide criteria to the developers and not all information will be migrated. Archival information will be available upon request. Ms. Robinson confirmed that volunteers from the Executive Committee will provide structured feedback to CH Web Agency prior to the website's development. It was noted that the current website was developed in 2013.

8. Discussion of Pioneer Valley Planning Commission's FY26 Budget

The draft Fiscal Year 2026 budget will be presented at the February 2025 Commission meeting, which will allow the Commissioners to provide feedback prior to April 2025, when a final vote will occur. Ms. Robinson and Ms. Edinger have worked on the draft budget, and there are lower revenue and expense projections compared to previous years. Information regarding state funding will not be received until May 2025. Robinson noted that there is a possibility of negotiating the PVPC's rent with the landlord, Springfield Housing Authority.

9. Contracts Signed Under \$25,000

Ms. Robinson reported that three contracts under \$25,000 were signed in December 2024, and two have additional work that has been requested of the PVPC. One contract is with the Springfield Partners for Community Action under \$10,000, and the other contract is historic work on the South Warren Cemetery. The total for December 2024 was \$14,263.

10. Human Resources Items

Ms. Robinson reported that PVPC's Principal Planner/Transportation Manager Dana Roscoe has retired, and recruiting will begin in several days for a deputy transportation director. Data Analyst Jacob Tilsch has provided his resignation.

11. Executive Director's Highlights and Updates

- Ms. Robinson will be attending the Massachusetts Municipal Association Conference, and there may be an announcement regarding a municipal empowerment bill. Eric Weiss and Ms. Robinson will attend the fiscal and economic outlook. Ms. Robinson will provide information during the February 2025 Commission meeting.
- The governor's budget was introduced on January 22, 2025. DLTA will be level funded across the 13 RPAs. DLTA day will be held on February 25, 2025, and conversations will be held with members to advocate for additional funds to DLTA allocations and grant assistance program funding in the upcoming budget
- Ms. Robinson attended the annual Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA)/MassDOT meeting, and preliminary budget numbers from MassDOT were received. The PVPC may be slightly over 2%, and final numbers will be received in April 2025.
- Ms. Robinson will attend the National Association of Regional Councils Legislative Conference.
- Senator Jacob Oliveira has sponsored open meeting language, and it is anticipated that additional legislation will be introduced.
- Senator Jo Comerford sponsored the bill regarding retirement legislation for the regional planning agencies.

12. Committee Member Comments, Suggestions, and Future Agenda Items

Ms. Robinson confirmed that the next Commission meeting will be Thursday, February 13, 2025. The Commission meeting agenda will include the annual assessments, draft Fiscal Year 2026 budget, and a presentation by Chris Giglio regarding potential changes with a new administration. Mr. Whalen noted his appreciation for PVPC Community Development team member Sarah Maroney for her efforts in obtaining financial assistance for the Town of Holland.

13. Action Items

- Ms. Robinson and Ms. Edinger will circulate the audit report.
- Ms. Edinger will provide a hard copy of the audit report to George Kingston and Marilyn Gorman Fil.
- Ms. Robinson will involve volunteers of the Executive Committee in the website's development.
- Ms. Robinson will roll out the next fiscal year budget with attachments for the next Commission meeting.
- Ms. Robinson will engage in rent negotiations with the Springfield Housing Authority.

There being no further discussion, Mr. Gunn called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

MOVED BY GEORGE KINGSTON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 6:22 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the January 23, 2025, Meeting

1. Executive Committee January 23, 2025 Meeting Agenda
2. Executive Committee December 19, 2024 Minutes
3. January 23, 2025 Possible Motions
4. December 2024 List of Payments
5. December 2024 Payment History
6. December 2024 Financial Summary
7. Signed Contracts – December 2024