PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of Executive Committee Zoom Meeting
January 22, 2026, 5:00 P.M.

Executive Committee Members Present:
William Dwyer, Chair – Hadley
Doug Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown
Marilyn Gorman Fil, Treasurer – Monson
T.J. Cousineau, Assistant Treasurer – Blandford
Peri Hall, At-large Member – Goshen
Jack Jemsek, At-large Member – Amherst
Jack Luttrell, At-Large Member – Wilbraham
James Whalen, At-Large Member – Holland

PVPC Staff Present:
Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director
Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner (from 5:11 p.m.)
Laura Bandara, Deputy Director, Land Use and Environment Department
Ken Comia, Director, Land Use and Environment Department
Lisa Edinger, Director of Finance
Gary Roux, Director of Transportation Planning (from 5:07 p.m.)
Deanna Young, Administrative Services Coordinator

1. Chairman's Call to Order, Welcome, and Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting Held on November 20, 2025

The Executive Committee meeting on January 22, 2026, was called to order at 5:02 p.m. by Chair William Dwyer.

MOVED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 20, 2025, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

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

Ken Comia introduced Laura Bandara as the new Deputy Director of Land Use and Environment, noting that Ms. Bandara will support land use and comprehensive planning activities. Ms. Bandara joins the PVPC with 15 years' experience preforming consultant, land use, and landscape architecture work.

3. Listing of Payments/Financial Reports

Lisa Edinger stated that the payments and financial reports for November and December were routine, with nothing unusual to report. Ms. Edinger noted that the organization is six months into the fiscal year, with revenue at 33.56% of the budget and expenses at 50.99%, which is expected due to invoicing timing. Ms. Edinger highlighted the Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) contribution for fiscal year 2025, now totaling $554,000.63, and expressed satisfaction with the financial summary.

The FY25 Audit Presentation is delayed, as the auditors' recent merger has disrupted their regular procedures and processes. It is expected in February and will include the new Federal requirements.

The Committee discussed how the current OPEB balance compares to estimated liabilities. Kimberly Robinson explained that OPEB liabilities are assessed every three years, with the last report showing a little over $3 million. Ms. Edinger added that the OPEB liability is a significant burden for all communities, but the organization is making steady progress in reducing it.

Ms. Edinger clarified that the payment to Scaling and Associates was for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) audit. Ms. Robinson confirmed it was an audit for one of the towns, funded by CDBG monies. Ms. Robinson provided an overview of revenue sources, including a $500,000 Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant, steady District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) funding, and the last year of gap funding for technical assistance. Ms. Robinson clarified that a negative balance in the Department of Health and Human Services was due to a transfer of coalition management, not a financial loss.

The Committee discussed if state funds supplemented any zero-dollar revenue categories in lieu of federal cuts. Ms. Robinson responded that such supplementation would be reflected in the next budget cycle, starting July 1, 2026.

Ms. Edinger clarified the bottom-line dollar change in the budget versus actual figures. Ms. Edinger explained that the dollar change reflects specific returned amounts rather than the difference between the total budget and actual columns, and confirmed that the percent change is accurate. Ms. Robinson noted that revenue came in at just over 92% of the budget, which is considered good, and mentioned the loss of a grant for Springfield, which is reflected in the numbers.

Ms. Edinger reviewed expenses and noted that staff salaries and leave were under budget by $828,000 due to conservative planning. At the same time, unemployment and taxes were higher due to increased rates and more interns. Office expenditures such as rent, internet, and software were discussed, with some categories coming in over or under budget due to changes in tracking and unexpected costs. Ms. Edinger explained that professional services and meeting expenses were over budget due to website management and the MVP project. Ms. Robinson also clarified that stipends and meeting expenses for projects are funded from project budgets, not the main organizational budget.

The Committee discussed the impact of fewer CDBG projects on future budgets. Ms. Robinson explained that only three projects were funded in fiscal year 2025, which is a loss of revenue. Still, the organization has diversified its work to mitigate the impact and expects funding levels to remain steady in the upcoming application round.

4. Presentation of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) New Interim AI Use and Governance Policy

This item was deferred to the next Executive Committee meeting.

5. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office (FFIO) in the Massachusetts Executive Office for Administration and Finance (A&F) for Economic Development

The Healey-Driscoll administration established the Federal Funds and Infrastructure Office (FFIO) to help Massachusetts maximize federal funding by coordinating applications and providing support, including state matching funds when required. As federal funding opportunities have decreased, FFIO has arranged for each Regional Planning Agency (RPA) to receive technical assistance funding over the next two years, with each RPA allocated just over $91,000 per year. The allocation follows the same schedule as DLTA dollars, which is mostly population-based, but the exact formula remains unclear despite multiple inquiries to the department administering the grant. The funding is intended as a backstop for projects that have previously received federal support, and the first allocation must be spent by June 30, 2026, with all funds used by June 30, 2027; extensions are possible due to delays in disbursement.

The Committee discussed whether, if the program is successful over two years and funding returns to expected levels, local control over project funding could be maintained rather than reverting to centralized oversight. Ms.

Robinson noted that FFIO was not established as a permanent office, and the funding is also not permanent. The program's future beyond June 30, 2027, is uncertain and would require legislative approval. However, maintaining local control is considered a valuable topic for future discussion.
The Committee sought clarification on how the $91,000 allocation could be used and requested more detail about the types of economic development projects that might be supported. Ms. Robinson clarified that the funds can be used for three main purposes: substituting for missing Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding, supporting the EPA and Brownfield's work, and providing technical assistance for communities, especially those with limited staff resources, including projects under the Brune Grant. The funds support staff and activities related to economic development, help with EDA applications, and assist in implementing the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy developed in 2025.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY DOUG ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE FEDERAL FUNDS AND INFRASTRUCTURE OFFICE (FFIO) IN THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE FOR ADMINISTRATION AND FINANCE (A&F) FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

6. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to Develop Farmland Protection Plans for Two Communities in Hampden and Hampshire Counties and to Work with Staff from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) to Develop Templates for Farmland Protection Plans

Mr. Comia presented a new grant-funded initiative to develop local farmland protection plans in Western Massachusetts, specifically targeting communities in Hampshire and Hampden counties. Mr. Comia explained that the grant is dedicated to farmland protection in Western Massachusetts, working with active agricultural commissions. The plan is to develop a model for other communities while addressing other land-use issues separately. It was clarified that the project targets communities with active commissions; others will need to establish commissions to participate in the future. Mr. Comia indicated that the project may inform state partners and help drive legislative changes to prevent the development of valuable farmland.

MOVED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO NEGOTIATE AND EXECUTE A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT WITH THE FRANKLIN REGIONAL COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS (FRCOG) TO DEVELOP FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS FOR TWO COMMUNITIES IN HAMPDEN AND HAMPSHIRE COUNTIES AND TO WORK WITH STAFF FROM BRPC AND FRCOG TO DEVELOP TEMPLATES FOR FARMLAND PROTECTION PLANS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

7. Authorization for the Executive Director to Negotiate and Execute a Mutually Acceptable Contractual Agreement Between the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Acting Through the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) for 2026 District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Funding

The DLTA grant for January 1, 2026, through December 31, 2026, totals $274,935. There were 17 expressions of interest received, and 15 projects were funded, with the possibility of funding an additional project through another grant. Supported projects included updates to open space and recreation plans, comprehensive planning, shared director initiatives for senior centers and recreation, assistance with RFPs for town buildings, and work on both zoning and general bylaws, depending on in-house expertise.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY T.J. COUSINEAU, TO AUTHORIZE 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 2026 DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (DLTA) FUNDING. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

8. Contracts Signed Under $25,000

Ms. Robinson reported that most contracts under $25,000 in November and December were dedicated to water-related initiatives, such as localized flooding mitigation, the Abbey Brook stream restoration, and phases of a regional drinking water action plan. Additional contracts supported analysis and open-ended survey work for Chesterfield's master plan visioning, with these findings to be included in an upcoming report.

9. Human Resources Items

Recruitment efforts are active for a Land Use and Environment planner, with a strong pool of candidates and interviews underway. Additionally, a new posting for the director of Community and Economic Development is scheduled for January 26. Once this position is filled, the Executive Director will transition back to a full-time executive role, no longer managing the Community Development department directly.

10. Executive Director's Highlights and Updates

Ms. Robinson announced several organizational updates, including shifting the newsletter from monthly to quarterly to provide more comprehensive content, with the first edition launching at the end of January. There has been a notable increase in press coverage, attributed to a new website and expanded social media efforts. Upcoming advocacy events include the National Association of Regional Councils meeting in Washington, D.C., and DLTA Day at the state level, both focused on securing funding for community projects. The fiscal year 2027 budget is being drafted, and an updated housing study will be presented at the February Commission meeting. The organization also received a grant to update the regional housing plan, with community engagement events planned for Hampden and Hampshire counties in March.

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

Considering recent increases of Zoom Bombing - the Committee discussed meeting platform security, the influence of IT service providers on technology adoption, and the evolving preferences and standards within organizations. The group is weighing the benefits of Zoom versus Teams, considering security, simplicity, and future trends.

MOVED BY WILLIAM DWYER, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 6:13 P.M.

12. Action Items

- Deanna Young is to forward Ms. Edinger's "FY25 Actual Revenues" and "FY25 Actual Expenses" documents to the Executive Committee as soon as possible.

Respectfully Submitted,
Doug Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the January 22, 2026, Meeting

1. Executive Committee January 22, 2026, Meeting Agenda
2. Executive Committee November 20, 2025, Minutes
3. January 22, 2026, Possible Motions
4. December 2025 List of Payments
5. December 2025 Financial Summary
6. Signed Contracts – December 2025
7. December 2025 Check Listings