PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC)
Minutes of Executive Committee Zoom Meeting
August 20, 2026, 5:00 P.M.

Executive Committee Members Present:
William Dwyer, Chair – Hadley
Marilyn Gorman Fil, Vice Chair – Monson
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk – Belchertown
James Whalen, Treasurer – Holland
Jack Luttrell, Assistant Treasurer – Wilbraham
James Bradbury, At-Large Member – Pelham
Peri Hall, At-Large Member – Goshen
Richard Holzman, At-Large Member – Chester
Jack Jemsek, At-Large Member – Amherst

PVPC Staff Present:
Kimberly H. Robinson, Executive Director
Rana Al-Jammal, Principal Transportation Planner
Becky Basch, Principal Planner
Ken Comia, Director, Land Use and Environment Department
Lisa Edinger, Director of Finance
Indrani Kowlessar, Director of Human Resources and Administrative Services
Evan Mastroianni, Senior Planner I
Gary Roux, Director of Transportation Planning
Deanna Young, Administrative Services Coordinator

1. Call to Order, Welcome and Approval of the Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting Held on June 25, 2026

The Executive Committee meeting on August 20, 2026, was called to order at 5:01 p.m. by Chair William Dwyer.

MOVED BY DOUGLAS ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JUNE 25, 2026, EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

2. Listing of Payments/Financial Reports

Lisa Edinger presented the financial reports and provided an update on fiscal year-end activities. She reported that the agency's checking account, receivables, and payables showed healthy balances. A significant portion of the outstanding receivables and payables were associated with project and consultant expenses incurred near the end of the fiscal year. The PVPC will pay those consultant obligations as it receives reimbursement for its receivables.

The PVPC completed more than $2 million in June invoicing. Staff reconciled the general ledger and individual projects, completed year-end entries, and prepared materials for the FY 2026 audit. Preliminary audit work is expected during September, and the auditors are scheduled to conduct their primary work during the final week of October.

Ms. Edinger also reported that the PVPC's Other Postemployment Benefits investment has grown to more than $1 million and has approximately doubled. Although the FY 2026 budget had conservatively projected $6.6 million in activity because of uncertainty surrounding federal funding, preliminary results indicate that agency activity exceeded $7 million.

3. Contract Authorization: Town of Belchertown for Providing Assistance with Zoning Bylaw and Map Update

Ken Comia presented the contract authorization for the Belchertown zoning project that will include reviewing,

reorganizing, and reformatting the town's zoning bylaws and preparing zoning bylaw amendments. The PVPC recently completed similar work for three other communities and plans to work with Belchertown's Planning Board during the coming year.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY PERI HALL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027, TO ASSIST WITH UPDATING THE TOWN'S ZONING BYLAW AND MAP, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $95,000. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

4. Contract Authorization: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for Planning Services Related to Regional Climate Resilience

Mr. Comia reported on a climate resilience grant awarded through a statewide initiative under which each of Massachusetts's 13 regional planning agencies received nearly $500,000. Over the next two years, the PVPC will use the funding to build staff capacity, convene regional discussions, identify potential resilience projects, and develop an implementation roadmap for at least five high-priority regional resilience initiatives.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY JACK LUTTRELL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE PLANNING SERVICES FOR REGIONAL SERVICES, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $450,000. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

5. Contract Authorization: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for Planning Services Related to Assessment of Unpaved Road

Mr. Comia shared information on the second phase of work involving 21 municipalities and the use of an unpaved road stormwater management toolkit and trainings. The project will support municipal public works departments in assessing unpaved roads and improving their maintenance practices. Training will include classroom instruction, demonstration sites, videos, and opportunities for participating communities to share lessons learned.

The PVPC will also develop a standardized, accessible cost-estimating template for implementing best management practices identified in the Franklin Regional Council of Governments' unpaved road stormwater toolkit. The project will provide a model for municipalities considering discontinuing unpaved road segments, using Palmer as a case study.

Jack Jemsek asked whether unpaved roads should generally be preserved or converted to paved roads. Mr. Comia explained that the project is primarily intended to improve assessment and maintenance rather than prescribe a single approach.

Peri Hall described Goshen's experience with an unpaved road and culvert assessment which helped Goshen prioritize its roads, strengthen grant applications, and obtain nearly $600,000 from the MassDOT Unpaved Roads Program for structural improvements to a key connector road.

MOVED BY JACK JEMSEK, SECONDED BY DOUGLAS ALBERTSON, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE PLANNING SERVICES FOR CAPACITY BUILDING FOR MUNICIPALITIES IN ASSESSMENT OF UNPAVED ROADS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $336,560. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

6. Contract Authorization: Town of Belchertown for Planning Services Related to Development of Resilience Hub and Civic Center

Mr. Comia provided context on the PVPC's role in the Belchertown resilience hub and civic center project funded through the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Action Grant Program. The overall grant was approximately $1 million, with a substantial portion intended to support planning and programming for the proposed facility.

The PVPC's primary responsibility will be community engagement, led by Angela Panaccione and Liam Gude. Staff will help facilitate local conversations about the project and its intended role as a resilience hub and civic center.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY JAMES BRADBURY, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF BELCHERTOWN FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE PLANNING SERVICES FOR PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND ENGAGEMENT RELATED TO DEVELOPMENT OF A TOWN RESILIENCE HUB AND CIVIC CENTER, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $77,000. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

7. Contract Authorization: Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) for Planning Services Related to Hampshire County Flood Resilience

Mr. Comia presented the planning assistance project intended to help Hampshire communities update their floodplain bylaws. The updates are needed in response to revised Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) flood maps and related requirements. The work will continue Patty Gambarini's flood-resilience activities and will include collaboration with the Franklin Regional Council of Governments and municipalities along the Connecticut River.

MOVED BY PERI HALL, SECONDED BY JACK JEMSEK, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE PLANNING SERVICES FOR HAMPSHIRE COUNTY FLOOD RESILIENCE, INCLUDING UPDATING FLOODPLAIN ZONING BYLAWS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $199,50. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

8. Contract Authorization: Town of Southwick for Providing Assistance for Development of Town Center, Business District, and Transitional District Zoning Bylaws

Mr. Comia informed the Committee about a Southwick planning project developed from recommendations in the town's master plan and subsequent zoning bylaw reorganization work. The PVPC will evaluate potential changes to the town's business restricted zoning district, including the types of development that may occur by right and possible new development standards.

The project will also examine creating a town center overlay district and a transitional zoning district. These changes are intended to support mixed-use development and improve the transition between general business districts and nearby residential and agricultural areas. The PVPC will work with Southwick's town planner and Planning Board.

MOVED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, SECONDED BY JAMES BRADBURY, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF SOUTHWICK FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE WITH DEVELOPMENT OF ZONING BYLAWS FOR THE TOWN CENTER, BUSINESS DISTRICT, AND TRANSITIONAL DISTRICTS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $45,000. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

9. Contract Authorization: Town of Palmer for Planning Services Related to Stormwater Infrastructure

Mr. Comia discussed the planning assistance grant supporting implementation of Palmer's recently adopted master plan. The PVPC will assist with community engagement as the town develops a stormwater resilience plan addressing chronic and future flooding caused by undersized culverts, river flooding, and increasingly intense storms.

The project will combine public engagement, infrastructure inventories, field assessments, and climate-informed modeling. The results will identify vulnerable culverts and critical facilities, prioritize high-risk locations, develop targeted resilience concepts, and create an actionable watershed-scale plan to guide future design, funding, and implementation.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY JACK JEMSEK, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF PALMER FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE RELATED TO STORMWATER INFRASTRUCTURE AND RESILIENCE, INCLUDING PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $45,000. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

10. Contract Authorization: Town of Goshen for Comprehensive Update to Zoning Bylaw and Map and Subdivision Regulations

Mr. Comia announced that the planning assistance grant for Goshen will continue implementing recommendations from the town's zoning diagnostic and will include zoning best practices, zoning bylaw amendments, and revisions to subdivision regulations. Because the funding came through the Community One Stop for Growth process, the work will also incorporate climate resilience considerations.

MOVED BY JAMES BRADBURY, SECONDED BY JACK LUTTRELL, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH THE TOWN OF GOSHEN FOR FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028, TO ASSIST WITH A COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE TO THE TOWN ZONING BYLAW AND MAP AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $45,500. THE MOTION CARRIED WITH ONE ABSTENTION FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

11. Contract Authorization: Health Resources in Action Through Funding from the Community Health and Healthy Aging Fund for Implementation and Update to the Hampden County Health Improvement Plan

Becky Basch presented a new three-year grant supporting the Hampden County Health Improvement Plan. Health Resources in Action will administer the funding on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Public Health. The PVPC has spent the past six years working with community organizations and healthcare providers to update the plan, establish implementation work plans, and develop a strategy for communicating Hampden's health needs.

The project will now move more fully into implementation and will continue through FY 2029. Although implementation funding is limited, the PVPC expects to pilot several projects and pursue additional funding for larger initiatives. Previous work focused primarily on Springfield and Holyoke because available data showed significant health needs in those communities. The PVPC now hopes to involve more rural Hampden communities.

MOVED BY DOUGLAS ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY JACK JEMSEK, TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO EXECUTE A CONTRACT WITH HEALTH RESOURCES IN ACTION THROUGH THE COMMUNITY HEALTHY AGING FUND FOR FISCAL YEARS 2027, 2028, AND 2029, TO CONTINUE IMPLEMENTING AND UPDATING THE HAMPDEN COUNTY HEALTH IMPROVEMENT PLAN, IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED $374,318.08. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

12. Review and Authorization to Approve Proposed Changes to the Draft Pioneer Valley Planning Commission (PVPC) 2026 Human Resources Handbook

Indrani Kowlessar presented a comprehensive set of proposed revisions to the Human Resources Handbook. Ms. Robinson explained that employees may participate in multiple professional organizations; however, the PVPC will fully fund one approved membership as an employee benefit. Ms. Kowlessar noted that the PVPC's policies compare favorably with peer agencies and that legal compliance is a primary consideration. Ms. Robinson added that several regional planning agencies have reviewed the Human Resources Handbook updates and have expressed interest in using portions of the policies as models. She also noted that a compensation study will be conducted later in the year.

It was suggested that the Human Resources Handbook's anti-harassment reporting procedures should explicitly include both the Executive Director and the Executive Committee Chair as additional reporting options if an employee is uncomfortable approaching the designated contacts. Ms. Robinson indicated staff will review the language with legal counsel and incorporate the change if appropriate.

Mr. Luttrell commended staff for improving clarity and consistency in personnel policies. He stated that consistent application of policies is important for employee retention and organizational stability.

MOVED BY JAMES WHALEN, SECONDED BY MARILYN GORMAN FIL, TO APPROVE PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE DRAFT PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION (PVPC) 2026 HUMAN RESOURCES HANDBOOK.

MOVED BY DOUGLAS ALBERTSON, SECONDED BY RICHARD HOLZMAN, TO APPROVE ITEM 12 WITH THE INCLUSION OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE CHAIR TO THE HUMAN RESOURCES HANDBOOK FOR RECEIVING COMPLAINTS. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY FOLLOWING A ROLL CALL VOTE.

13. Contracts Signed Under $25,000

The Committee reviewed contracts under $25,000. The PVPC signed 10 such contracts in June and six in July, representing approximately $170,000 in total work. The activities included Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) stormwater permit assistance, Geographic Information System (GIS) mobile applications, freshwater resilience and regional drinking-water work, professional planning assistance, historic-preservation assistance for West Springfield, burial ground documentation in Wilbraham, on-call planning assistance for Goshen, and an updated Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) self-evaluation and transition plan for Middlefield.

14. Human Resources Items

Ms. Robinson reported that the PVPC is actively recruiting for a Deputy Director of Community Development to support Community Development Director Sarah Maroney. Staff also expected to begin recruiting a Senior Planner II in the Land Use and Environment section. The PVPC plans to prepare a job description and begin recruitment for an assistant to the Executive Director.

At the September meeting, the Executive Committee expects to organize an operations subcommittee to conduct the Executive Director’s performance evaluation.

15. Executive Director's Highlights and Updates

Ms. Robinson reported that the nine contracts approved during the meeting represented approximately $1.67 million in work across the region. The PVPC applied for seven of those nine funded projects and also received a $150,000 state budget earmark sponsored by Representative Carlos Gonzalez. The funding is designated for an analysis of

industrial land in the Pioneer Valley. Staff intend to develop a work plan and timeline and provide additional information at a future meeting.

With the revised Human Resources Handbook approved, the PVPC will proceed with a comprehensive salary and compensation survey and will provide the Executive Committee with an anticipated schedule for that work. Ms. Robinson reminded members that the full Commission's in-person meeting is scheduled for October 8, 2026, at the same location used in 2025.

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

Ms. Hall expressed appreciation to PVPC staff and Goshen's gratitude for the agency's support, partnership, and assistance on numerous municipal initiatives.

MOVED BY WILLIAM DWYER, TO ADJOURN TODAY'S EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING. THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED WITHOUT OBJECTION AT 6:16 P.M.

17. Action Items

- Indrani Kowlessar will include the PVPC Chair and Executive Director as contacts to receive staff harassment complaints in the Human Resources Handbook.

Respectfully Submitted,
Douglas Albertson, Secretary/Clerk

List of Documents and Other Items Distributed at the August 20, 2026, Meeting

1. Executive Committee August 20, 2026, Meeting Agenda
2. August 20, 2026 Possible Motions
3. Executive Committee June 25, 2026, Minutes
4. June 2026 Listing of Payments
5. July 2026 Listing of Payments
6. Signed Contracts – June 2026
7. Signed Contracts – July 2026
8. 2026 PVPC Human Resources Handbook