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CENTRAL MASSACHUSETTS REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

July 31, 2025 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

Attending Officers	Attending Sub-Regional Delegates
Chairperson: Daniel Schur, Westborough	North: Otto Lies, Holden*
Vice Chair: Robert Hassinger, Grafton*	Northeast: Julianne Hirsh, Northborough*
Treasurer: Andrew Coles, Auburn*	Southeast: Mary Bulso, Blackstone*
Asst. Treasurer: Howard N. Drobner, Boylston	Southwest: William Trifone, Dudley*
Asst. Clerk, Barur Rajeshkumar, West Boylston*	Central City: David Quiroa, Worcester*
Staff:	Not In Attendance:
Janet A. Pierce, Executive Director	West: Jared Grigg, Spencer
Trish Settles, Dep. Dir., RCCP*	Clerk: Timothy H. Wheeler, Berlin
Stephanie Toupin, Dep. Dir., Administration*	
Anthony Senesi, Communications Coordinator	
Sherrie Haber, Executive Assistant*	*indicates virtual attendance

Call to Order:

Chairperson Schur called the July 31, 2025, Executive Committee meeting to order at 7:00p.m. with a roll call to establish a quorum.

Approval of Minutes-

Motion: to accept the minutes of the June 26, 2025, Executive Committee Meeting. Made by Mr. Rajeshkumar, seconded by Mr. Hassinger. Roll Call vote. **Motion Unanimously Approved with Abstentions from Ms. Hirsh, Ms. Bulso & Mr. Coles.**

Public Comment:

None.

Executive Director's Report:

- **Staffing and Administration (Janet Pierce)**
 - MARPA is asking for support for a Municipal & Safety Building Authority. Ms. Pierce read the letter supporting the Senate and House bills.
 - Ms. Bulso fully supports this and hopes that it is for more than just buildings but also for the health and safety of employees. Ms. Pierce added that it seems it would be modeled after the Mass School Building Authority.
 - Ms. Hirsh fully supports this and added that it is a statewide problem

- Mr. Hassinger heard no objection from the Commission when it was presented so he supports it
- **Motion:** to give authority to the Executive Director to sign on to the letter of support for the Municipal and Safety Building Authority. Made by Ms. Bulso and seconded by Mr. Quiroa. Roll Call Vote. **The motion passed with one objection from Mr. Lies.**
- **Transportation (Janet Pierce)**
 - Vernon Connected – to connect neighborhoods in the Vernon St. area. Survey went out June 25th
 - Safe Streets 4 All – A preferred contractor has been chosen and starting a vision zero action committee.
 - Regional Housing & Transportation study is being done to see how the two connect
 - Transportation is fully staffed and traffic counting is ongoing throughout the region.
- **Regional Collaboration and Community Planning (Trish Settles)**
 - Grants Awarded:
 - DEP604B program – watershed planning for Blackstone
 - Palmer slum & blight survey (Pioneer Vally RPA declined)
 - Brownfields assessments
 - Mass Broadband for Digital Equity in Berlin & Boylston
 - MVP 2.0 for Princeton -seed project
 - In the works:
 - Mosaic Opioid Recovery Partnership’s Municipal Training & Technical Assistance Program – letter of interest to serve as the Regional Coordinator for Central / MetroWest
 - Mass Broadband – Mendon
 - Charlton Master Plan
 - Department of Energy Resources for REPA
 - Economic Development partnership planning
 - National Park Service Grant for 5-6 communities for Historical Economic Development
 - EDA disaster recovery
 - High Hazard dams
 - Reviewed rural development applications and submitted reviews
 - Upcoming:
 - August 8 – Regional Roundtable on Battery Storage
 - August 21 – Informal Planners gathering
 - September 11 – Quarterly meeting discussing Imagine 2050
 - October – Regional Dialogue on Accessory Dwelling Units

- October 7 – MARPA DLS Conference
- October – Governor’s climate office will have a session
 - Ms. Hirsh asked if anyone can go to the 8/21 planner meeting. Ms. Settles said that it is limited to 50 people and it is for planners. There was a suggestion to have a similar gathering for planning board members.
- **November & December Meetings**
 - The regularly scheduled November and December meeting dates land on Thanksgiving and Christmas respectively and need to be changed.
 - **Motion:** to hold the November meeting on November 20th and the December meeting on December 18th. Made by Ms. Hirsh and seconded by Mr. Trifone. Roll call vote. **Motion was approved unanimously with an abstention by Mr. Quiroa.**
- **In person vs. Hybrid vs. Virtual meetings for FY26**
 - This item started with discussion from Ms. Pierce stating that the majority of the RPA’s hold their meetings completely virtual.
 - Mr. Hassinger prefers virtual (Zoom)
 - Ms. Bulso stated that hybrid or virtual are required for her participation
 - Mr. Schur stated that hybrid or virtual allow for participation from broad geographic areas.
 - Mr. Drobner stated that virtual is better in the winter.
 - Mr. Senesi verified that as of April 2025 the Attorney General stated that the requirement for a quorum of the committee or the chair to be in the room is suspended.
 - **Motion:** to hold Executive Committee meetings virtually. Made by Mr. Trifone and seconded by Mr. Hassinger.
 - Discussion continued: Mr. Quiroa asked if we ever have members of the public attend in person with a concern that some members of the public may not have the ability to join virtually. Ms. Pierce replied that we have not unless they were invited. Mr. Drobner added that once a reporter attended.
 - Roll call vote. **Motion was approved unanimously.**
- **Commission Bylaws**
 - This item started with discussion from Ms. Pierce stating that there are items in the bylaws that are out of date with current practice and current law including clipboard votes and sending assessments by registered mail.
 - Mr. Schur suggested that changes start with a redline version from staff. Next month he will ask for interest in an Ad Hoc Bylaw committee.
 - Ms. Hirsh asked if there will be legal review and Mr. Trifone replied that legal counsel would review after staff make changes.

- Ms. Haber will email the current bylaws to the Executive Committee. It was asked if there could be a share drive for Executive Committee documents so they can be easily accessed. Mr. Senesi will work on that.

Approval of Warrant for Payment of Bills and Review of Financial Statements:

Executive Director Janet Pierce presented Warrant 25-12a for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of June totaling \$495,660.16.

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 25-12a for the month of June in the amount of \$495,660.16. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Lies.
- Discussion: Mr. Drobner asked about the marketing line. Mr. Senesi stated that it included the annual report and documents for the annual meeting. Ms. Pierce added that it included the Out to Lunch events in Worcester including two new tents.
- Roll call vote. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Executive Director Janet Pierce presented Warrant 26-1 for the payment of bills as required by Section 7, Chapter 40B, for the month of July totaling \$32,003.53

- **Motion:** to approve Warrant 26-1 for the month of July in the amount of \$32,003.53. Made by Mr. Hassinger, seconded by Mr. Rajeshkumar. Roll call vote. **Motion approved unanimously.**

Committee and Sub-Regional Briefings:

- **Transportation** – did not meet
- **Legislative Affairs** – did not meet
- **Physical Development Committee**- did not meet
- **Personnel** – Mr. Drobner stated that the Personnel committee met just prior to this meeting to discuss the review of the Executive Director and gave a summary.
 - The administrative side of the commission has grown significantly and are a strong team. Ms. Toupin is fantastic and Mr. Senesi is on the pulse of what is happening.
 - Empowerment – Ms. Pierce wants staff to grow within the organization
 - Financials – Ms. Pierce is meeting commitments and the commission is continuing to grow with a buffer. The cash summary should be shown at Executive Committee meetings
 - Concerns – There was one problem with a submission deadline, but processes have been put in place to collect data, submit and watch for deadlines
 - Goals – Succession planning needs to begin for Ms. Pierce's retirement. Also consider working with Montachusett RPA – cooperating across boundaries.
 - Thank you to all members who provided feedback and comments for the review.

- **Motion:** to approve the review of the Executive Director as presented by the Personnel Committee. Made by Mr. Hassinger and seconded by Ms. Hirsh. Roll call vote. **Motion was approved unanimously.**
- **Motion:** to approve a 5% salary increase for the Executive Director based on the contract. Made by Mr. Hassinger and seconded by Ms. Bulso. Roll call vote. **Motion was approved unanimously.**
- Ms. Pierce thanked Ms. Settles, Ms. Krishnan & Ms. Toupin.
- **Sub-regional–** Chairperson Schur asked if there were any updates
 - Northeast: Mr. Drobner had discussions regarding state funding to add CMRPC staff to handle grant administration for items that are usually outside the purview of the RPC.
 - Southeast: Ms. Bulso stated that Blackstone has certified the deed to build a riverwalk.

New Business:

- None

Adjournment: Having completed all business Chairperson Schur adjourned the meeting at 8:34pm.

Respectfully submitted by Sherrie Haber, CMRPC.

Documents:

Minutes of June 26, 2025

Warrants 25-12a and 26-1

MARPA letter in support of Municipal & Safety Building Authority

Executive Director Annual Review