

**MINUTES OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE  
SPECIAL MEETING OF BOARDS & COMMISSIONS**  
Regional Planning Initiatives

**April 20, 2011  
WORCESTER CITY HALL – LEVI LINCOLN ROOM**

Planning Board Members Present:           Anne O’Connor, Chair  
  Stephen Rolle, Clerk  
  Satya Mitra  
  Andrew Truman

Staff Present:                                 Joel Fontane, AICP - Director, Planning & Regulatory Services Division  
  Luba Zhaurova – Planning & Regulatory Services Division

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 pm.

- 1. Presentation - Regional Development Compact:** Mr. Fontane stated that the Patrick-Murray Administration is partnering with multiple organizations to engage the region in the preparation of a comprehensive plan for 37 municipalities including the City of Worcester. The compact will serve as a shared framework for long-term public decision-making regarding development, preservation and infrastructure investment.

Vera Koliass, AICP - Principal Planner, Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission, led an interactive discussion with the public to elicit feedback and comments to inform this plan. She stated that the goal is to have a bottom-up approach and seek feedback on the priority development and priority preservation areas in the City as well as infrastructure constraints that are limiting the viability of those areas. She stated that the product of these conversations with different communities will be a regional map showing the identified priority areas that cross municipal boundaries, a draft of which should be completed by the end of the calendar year. She stated that there will be two regional forums held following the release of the draft map in order to provide opportunity for municipalities to comment.

Ms. Koliass stated that the City of Worcester is well-positioned for re-use, redevelopment and smart growth opportunities. Some of the identified priority development areas (transit-oriented and/or mixed-use) based on her discussion with City staff were - Palmer Industrial Park, South Worcester Industrial Park, Gateway Park, Main Street, City Square, Union Station, CSX Railyard, the airport; and UMass development area. She stated that Mass Mobility Study has identified infrastructure constraints with regards to public transit and pedestrian linkages and scarcity of wayfinding signs.

Councilor Haller asked to add the following areas to the priority development areas: Beacon Federal Area – Junction Shops, Ionic Avenue area; Wyman Gordon property; Quinsigamond property across from NSTAR; 95 Grand Street; Mason Winfield property; 835 Main Street; College Hill – vacant properties; and underutilized buildings behind Rotman’s Furniture. Councilor Haller called for preservation of the Elm Park area and long-term water supply preservation, and stated that infrastructure constraints the City is facing are power grid. She also called for more bicycle paths in the City.

Jerry Power of the Stormwater Coalition proposed that future developments dispose of the stormwater on site and not into municipal system.

Answering Timothy Loew's question, Ms. Koliass stated that this initiative does not exclude the Gateway Cities initiative.

With respect to high priority preservation areas, Ms. Koliass stated that the following areas were identified by staff: Coes Reservoir, Mass Audubon Sanctuary; Lake Quinsigamond area and shoreline; area next to Dodge Park and Green Hill Park; parcel on Harrington Ave; and Blackstone Gateway Park.

Peter Schneider of Historical Commission asked if historical preservation will be considered as part of this plan, or just opens pace preservation. Ms. Koliass stated that both will be considered.

Lance McKee requested that the open space area east of the Airport, which is part of the Tatnuck Brook watershed is protected.

Colin Novick of Worcester Land Trust stated that is it important, though often difficult, to assemble linear corridors connecting existing open spaces, such as parcels along Coes. He cautioned against over-relying on MassGIS layers, that don't have as fine of a look at smaller open space areas in a developed City like Worcester. Karin Goins stated that these areas are also important for recreation, access and equity.

Councilor Haler stated the importance of preservation of community gardens and urban farms currently on private lands.

Jo Hart asked than an open space inventory and plan are created.

A member of the public asked to consider providing options for future agricultural use on parcels for people to be able to grow food.

2. **Presentation - Regional Sustainability Grant:** Vincent DeVito, Executive Director of The Institute for Energy and Sustainability, stated that IES is the lead applicant for a consortium of central Massachusetts partners (such as Clark University, WPI, the City, and others) to obtain a \$5 million for the development of Sustainable Communities in the region. IES has already received "preferred sustainability status" for its 2011 application and is seeking to expand its partnerships and engage the community in this endeavor. The components of the Regional Sustainability are: housing, good jobs, and attracting private investment, economic development initiative. He said that the goal of IES and the plan is to help with branding the area to attract green businesses.

3. **Adjournment** – Mr. Fontane adjourned the meeting at 6:15 pm.