

MetroWest Growth Management Committee Wellesley Town Report

Formed in 1985, MetroWest Growth Management Committee (MWGMC) includes leaders from Ashland, Framingham, Holliston, Marlborough, Natick, Southborough, Wayland, Weston and Wellesley. The organization helps local elected officials and planning staff meet growth management challenges by facilitating inter-local collaborative planning and problem solving to enhance the quality of life and economic competitiveness of the MetroWest region. In addition, MWGMC is the oldest of the eight subregions of the regional planning agency, Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC).

One selectman and one planning board member represent each member community. Wellesley's representatives to the Committee are Selectman Owen Duggan and Planning Board Member Donald McCauley. Mr. Duggan also serves on the committee's Executive Board. MWGMC is funded by member assessments, grants and contracts. MWGMC maintains an office in Framingham and employs a staff of two to deliver core services to member communities.

Technical Assistance – In FY08, the Technical Assistance to our member communities continued to expand.

Pre-Disaster Mitigation - MAPC and MetroWest staff worked with MetroWest communities to identify areas within each community that are at risk of damage from natural hazards, evaluate existing protection measures, and develop a multiple-hazard mitigations strategy to reduce future damages. MWGMC provided an in-kind match rather than asking each community to provide the \$3,000 local match. The local plans for Ashland, Holliston, Marlborough, Natick, Southborough, Wayland and Weston have been completed and will be submitted to FEMA by the end of June. The next PDM project will be for the Town of Wellesley during FY09.

As part of the PDM effort, I developed a "Flood Facts" brochure for the Town of Framingham, which is posted on the MWGMC website, www.metrowestgrowth.org. The information and facts is replicable, and I am happy to assist with development of a similar brochure for all MetroWest communities.

Wellesley West Gateway - The Town of Wellesley contracted with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council, the regional planning agency, and the MetroWest Growth Management Committee to undertake a study report for the area along Route 9 from the Route 9 Weston Road intersection to the Route 9 Oak street intersection, but with special attention to the land in Wellesley. The study was finalized in FY08, and the draft report was submitted to the Wellesley Planning Board.

Stormwater - MWGMC developed a stormwater bylaw and accompanying regulations for Southborough. The bylaw can serve as a model for other communities, and we continue to assist other MetroWest communities in this area.

Housing –MWGMC developed rules and regulations for Wayland's Inclusion of Affordable Housing bylaw, and assisted Holliston with their regulations. In addition, MWGMC provided significant technical assistance to the Town of Ashland by developing a Housing Plan, Inclusionary Bylaw, and Planned Production Strategy.

MWRTA Efforts

The MetroWest Regional Transit Authority is the 15th regional transportation authority in Massachusetts and paves the way for local control of the LIFT bus system, the Natick Neighborhood Bus, and other public transit options in the area. MWRTA members include Framingham, Ashland, Natick, Wayland, Holliston, Hopkinton, Weston, Sherborn, Marlborough, Southborough and Sudbury.

The MWRTA has developed a strong partnership with the MWGMC. In 2008, the MetroWest Growth Management Committee assisted the MWRTA with two applications to the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for a Green Line project. The Green Line project is designed to expand existing fixed route and demand responsive services provided by the MetroWest Regional Transit Authority, specifically those that would serve the needs of individuals with disabilities attempting to access fixed route or para-transit services, and would improve access to employment related activities for people with low incomes. An added benefit provided by the expanded services would be improvement of access to reverse-commute employment.

The first application was for funding under the Boston MPO's Suburban Mobility Program for a new route, Route 1, to provide service from MetroWest to the Woodland Station of the MBTA's green line.

The second application that MWGMC wrote for the MWRTA was under the Jobs Access Reverse Commute (JARC) federal program for five new buses. The goal of the JARC program is to transport residents of urbanized areas and nonurbanized areas to suburban employment opportunities, and to improve access to transportation services that provide transportation to employment and employment-related activities for welfare recipients and eligible low-income individuals.

The additional buses will provide a new connection to the MBTA Green Line. At present, the population of MetroWest has access to the MWRTA, the MBTA commuter rail service, and Logan Express. The addition of the new route can be realized in large part by the new buses, and will provide a heretofore unavailable connection to the Green Line. The two applications resulted in almost \$750,000 for the MWRTA, when they were awarded by the Boston Metropolitan Planning Organization in August 2008.

The Green Line project will improve access to reverse-commute employment from urban areas to MetroWest. Both MWGMC and the MWRTA regularly communicate with the CEO's of the largest public employers in the Commonwealth, and they express their frustration about the fact that they have a tough time attracting recent college graduates to work in MetroWest. The majority of the jobs that need to be filled in MetroWest are in engineering, computer and research & development. These employees work unusual hours, and need more public transit options than are currently offered to get from their homes in Worcester and Boston/Cambridge to the jobs available in MetroWest. In addition, the low income workers in both MetroWest and the urban areas east of MetroWest are needed to fill the multitude of retail and service jobs located in Golden Triangle of MetroWest.

Outreach

Transportation Finance Crisis

MWGMC has been concerned about the current inequity in funding transportation in Massachusetts. The dialogue will carry on for many months to come, and it is likely to change in pitch, volume and complexity as various aspects of the crisis are addressed. At its March meeting, MWGMC established a position paper on the Transportation Finance Crisis. Developed by staff and the Transportation Task Force, the Transportation Finance Position Paper contains a set of beliefs, and recommendations for reforms and funding. You can read the position paper at www.metrowestgrowth.org.

Legislative Breakfasts - Our ties with the MetroWest legislative delegation continue to be strong. Seventy-seven people signed up for the Spring Legislative Breakfast on April 4th, including nine Legislators or their aides. Regrettably, the weather did not cooperate and we experienced heavy downpours, flooding on roadways and traffic snarls. Even with the weather against us, we had a good turnout, and a plethora of topics were discussed, including the three major agenda items, transportation finance, shared services, and zoning reform. The discussion of regionalism/shared

services became a hot topic and resulted in an editorial and news articles and plans for MWGMC and MAPC to co-sponsor a couple of events (see below). The next legislative breakfast will be held on November 14, 2008 at the Sheraton Framingham.

Planners Roundtable – MWGMC also holds monthly Planners' Roundtables for local planners and planning board members. The Roundtable provides staff and officials with technical information and training on planning and growth issues. It also provides planners with the opportunity to share expertise, experience, and questions with their colleagues.

Regional Impact Review (RIR) - As always, environmental concerns are a high priority for MetroWest communities. One of the core services MetroWest Growth Management provides to its members is the **Regional Impact Review (RIR)**. Regional Impact Reviews provide local leaders an opportunity to comment on the impacts of proposed commercial, industrial, and residential development projects, and provides administrative services to citizen advisory boards. The MEPA review process is the most common trigger for a Regional Impact Review; however, members of the MWGMC and local planning boards also submit development proposals for a RIR. This allows the opportunity for regional development impacts to be considered early in the development project.

MWGMC held a regional impact review on the proposed **Legacy Farms** project. Legacy Farms is being developed by Weston-based Boulder Capital LLC on the former Weston Nurseries land off Route 135 in East Hopkinton. Plans call for 940 units of mixed housing, 300,000 sq. ft. of commercial, professional, and medical office space, and another 150,000 sq. ft. of retail space. A smaller version of the Weston Nurseries garden center operation will continue at its present location. Regional Impact Reviews were conducted for the Wellesley Travel Inn, the Beacon @ 495 Center project in Marlborough, a very dense development of a former apple orchard in close proximity to the I-495 interchange, 5 Chrysler Road in Natick that consists of a 404-unit apartment development, EMC expansion and the Wayland Town Center project

NYANZA – MWGMC along with MAPC secured a grant from the MetroWest Community Health Care Foundation to develop strategies to further study and mitigate the plume that has affected the Sudbury River in the past and may continue to adversely impact this valuable environmental resource in the future.

The services of Exponent, Inc. were secured to complete a critical review of EPA's Human Health and Ecological Risk Assessments of the Nyanza site.

Exponent is an engineering and scientific consulting firm that provides scientific expertise needed to understand important issues and make sound strategic decisions. They will work to:

1. Assist with data analysis to help determine whether the plume needs to be addressed as a public health hazard that may impact the Sudbury River and potentially affecting all of the communities through which the river passes;
2. Communicate the progress and results of the studies;
3. Develop strategies to further mitigate the human health risk, as needed;
4. Establish an educational awareness campaign through the development of pamphlets that provide factual information, and the distribution of the pamphlets and other literature to the citizens of Ashland, Framingham and other communities in the affected MetroWest region.

A Nyanza Advisory Board, which directly involves representatives from each community, was established. The Nyanza Advisory Board will work closely with MWGMC staff and the consultants to ensure that the project provides useful and credible information to reduce the risk of health impacts in the communities.

Economic Development

MWGMC and the Mass. Office of Business Development (MOBD) hosted a special training workshop at the Memorial Building in Framingham for area planning boards and other permit granting authorities on Chapter 43D, Expedited Permitting. The workshop was requested by planning board members from two municipalities. Greg Bialecki, the State's first permitting ombudsman, informed the 35 attendees about this new economic development tool. Because 43D applies to all permit granting, from project submission to building permit, we hope to follow this workshop with another workshop tailored for municipal staff involved in issuing permits such as building commissioners, public safety inspection personnel, DPW for water & sewer connection permits, etc.

MetroWest Transportation Taskforce – The Task Force meets at least once a month and focuses specifically on analyzing and advocating for MWGMC communities on transportation matters. Chaired by John Stasik, the Transportation Task Force advocates for improved transportation services to the region, and strategizes to influence transportation planning and decision-making done by the Boston MPO.

Over the past several months, the Transportation Task Force has been developing a draft mission statement, goals and strategies for consideration by the MWRTA Advisory Board. A final draft was approved by the task force in May, and was presented to the MWRTA Advisory Board in June.