

MORGANTOWN MONONGALIA
METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION POLICY BOARD
JANUARY 16, 2020 MINUTES

Members Present:

Chairperson Jennifer Selin, Vice Chairman Joe Statler, Treasurer Mayor Patricia Lewis-Granville, Steven Blinco, Star City, Commissioner Tom Bloom-Monongalia County, Dave Bruffy-Mountain Line, Brian Carr-WV DOH, Commissioner Edward Hawkins-Monongalia County, , Councilperson David Harshbarger-City of Morgantown, Ron Justice-West Virginia University, Bill Kawecki-Mayor of Morgantown, Mike Kelly-Board of Education, Commissioner Sean Sikora-Monongalia County

MPO Director: Bill Austin

Members Absent:

Councilperson Janice Goodwin-City of Westover

1. Call to Order

With a quorum present, Chairperson Selin called the Policy Board meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

2. Public Comment

Bill Rice noted that he is on the Chamber of Commerce Transportation Committee. He noted that the Mileground project is very important to the community and encouraged that the City of Morgantown assist the DOH to solve the right-of-way issues in the Mileground project.

JoNell Strough, the Chair of Mon Valley Green Space Coalition, noted that the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan identified many needs to improve walking and cyclizing environment in the community. She encouraged the Board prioritize projects that will provide key connections among the neighborhoods, including connections between trails and parks, routes to schools, and links between park/trail and neighborhoods.

Mathew Cross, the Chairman of the Morgantown Pedestrian Safety Board, expressed his appreciation to the committee members and the consultants working on the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. He noted that the traffic signal at the intersection of Campus Drive and Beechurst Ave should be adjusted to alleviate the backup of the northbound traffic on Beechurst Ave during peak hours.

Catherin Madison, a resident of 825 Madison Ave, noted that the Jerome Park Neighborhood Association concerns about the safety of pedestrians crossing the Don Knotts Blvd between the Caperton Trail and the Rail-Trail Connector in the White Park. The association recommends installing a crosswalk as a short-term solution to improve the safety at that location.

2. Executive Session per WV 6-9A-4-2a Personnel Matters

Mr. Justice made a motion to move the meeting into Executive Session per WV 6-9A-4-2a Personnel Matters; seconded by Mayor. Kawecki. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

The meeting went into the executive Session.

Mr. Justice made a motion to move meeting out of executive session; seconded by Commissioner Sikora. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

3. Election of Officers

Mr. Justice noted that the Officer Nominating Committee nominate Mr. Statler for Chairperson, Commissioner Bloom for Vice-Chairperson, and Mayor Lewis for Treasure. Mr. Justice made a motion to approve the nomination; seconded by Mr. Kelly; The motion was approved by acclamation.

Chairman Starter expressed his appreciation to Councilperson Selin for her service in the past year.

5. Reports

a. Citizens Advisory Committee

Bill Rice, the Chair of Citizens Advisory Committee, noted that the committee reviewed the draft TIP update and suggested that the TIP project table be sorted by the amendment dates and obligation dates.

b. Finance Committee

Mayor Lewis presented the Finance Report for November as the following:

-- Beginning balance in November \$47,388.46 with expenditures of \$43,199.62, leaving a balance of \$4,188.84 at the beginning of November.

-- Beginning balance in December \$4,188.84 with expenditures of \$30,247.04 and two deposits of \$31,849.24, leaving a balance of \$5,791.04 at the beginning of January.

Mr. Kelly moved to accept the Finance Report as presented; seconded by Councilperson Selin. With no discussion, the motion unanimously passed.

c. Executive Director

Mr. Austin noted that the MPO expects large bills in the next month, as the MPO is finishing up the bicycle and pedestrian study and will pay for the traffic counts that have not been paid for due to a billing error by the traffic count consultant. The MPO will probably need to use the line of credit in February.

Mr. Austin noted that the consultant held the first field review for the Van Voorhis PIE study earlier this month. The West Run PIE study has been wrapped up and the project is moving forward to the general obligation bounds. The Mileground project has been narrowed down to ten parcels for right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Austin noted that he will be out of office from Wednesday to Friday next week due to family loss. He will take vacation for the first week of April.

Mr. Austin noted that he attended the WV MPO Association meeting. The topic of the meeting included STIP and the definition of groupable projects. The association is working with WV LTAP to host an annual conference from May 5th to 7th at Shepherdstown. Many entities have been invited to participate in conference, including WV Association of Public Transportation Providers and WV Complete Street Commission.

Councilperson Selin noted that the agenda does not have the item for approval of minute. She noted that on the second page of the minutes, the word “transportation” was misspelled as “transpiration”. Mr. Austin noted that the minutes will be corrected and re-presented to the Board in the next meeting for approval.

Mayor Kawecki asked about the management of traffic signals on major corridors in the area. Mr. Austin noted that the signal system is currently monitored by the DOH district office. It has been adjusted manually. The MPO has several informal discussions on issue with the DOH to optimize the signal systems in the area.

6. Audit

Mr. Austin noted that a copy of the MPO’s Audit for last fiscal year is included in the agenda package. There were no findings in the report. It is respectfully requested that the Policy Board accept the audit.

Mr. Justice moved to accept the Audit as presented; seconded by Commissioner Bloom. With no discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

7. Draft 2020 Unified Planning Work Program

Mr. Austin noted that the draft FY 2020-2021 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) is included in the agenda package. Besides regular ongoing tasks, staff will perform additional work on performance measures as data to evaluate the State’s performance measures becomes available and to develop MPO specific performance measures. The draft UPWP includes continuing the part-time employee at a cost of approximately \$20,000 with proportional benefits shared with Monongalia County. This position has been advertised. The initial work anticipated for this employee would be website maintenance, social media outreach, the development of an ongoing newsletter, and data collection. The draft UPWP budgets a 2% cost of living pay increase for MPO personnel.

Commissioner Sikora asked about the hiring process of the new employee. Mr. Austin noted that the MPO received 7 applications, some of which are highly qualified. He is working with the director of the County Planning Commission on the hiring process.

8. Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan Priorities

Mr. Austin noted that this agenda item is contingent on the successful completion and summary of the prioritization process to be undertaken by the Policy Board at its January 13th meeting. The prioritization process has not been completed.

9. Transit Plan Update

Mr. Austin noted that the transit plan consultant is doing data collection with the Mountain Line, and evaluating existing transit routes. The study steering committee will hold its next meeting in early March.

10. Other Business

Chairperson Statler suggested that the policy board get a weekly update on the status of Mileground Project, passing on any information on the progress of the project. It will help local collaboration to move the Mileground project forward. Chairperson Statler noted that the project has taken more than 7 years.

Mr. Austin noted that it is not untypical for such a project to take multiple years as it has to go through NEPA process and other federal regulations. Mr. Carr agreed and noted that the prolonged process is unavoidable.

Chairperson Statler suggested that the MPO strengthen its collaboration with the transportation committee of Chamber of Commerce in terms of information sharing and consensus building. Commissioner Bloom noted that it is essential for the region to have a unified voice in Charleston. Mayor Kawecki agreed and noted that the committee has been considered as an advisory group to the policy board.

Mayor Kawecki noted that there have been difficulties for the City of Morgantown to relocate the utilities on Mileground Rd. Councilperson Selin noted that the City is developing an agreement with the Mon Power on the utility issue to move the Mileground project forward.

Commissioner Bloom noted that he learned from Robert Miller, the director of WV Route 2/I_68 Authority, that the DOH will conduct a study for the I-68 corridor. Mr. Austin noted that the group has tentatively set up a meeting on January 24 in Charleston. Chairman Statler and Mr. Austin will represent the MPO at the meeting.

Mr. Bruffy noted that the Mountain Line is implementing a bus pass property tax program. Anyone who pay property tax in the county will be eligible for a bus pass with unlimited rides. More information of the program is available on the Mountain Line's website at busride.org. He encouraged public participation to the program.

Mayor Kawecki expressed his concern over Mr. Statler's roles as the legislation representative for the county and the Chairperson of the MPO.

11. Meeting Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 9:10 PM.