

AGENDA ITEM: Minutes, # 2

SRPEDD Commission Meeting – Draft Minutes
April 22, 2026
Remote Meeting via Zoom

Present:**Commissioners:**

S. Elliott, Attleboro	S. Leary, Berkley	K. Estes, Dartmouth	D. Aguiar, Fall River
N. Durfee, Freetown	L. Carboni, Lakeville	B. Roche, Mansfield	N. Hills, Marion
M. Clarner, No. Attleb.	D. Luciano, Norton	S. Warchal, Norton	L. Ferreira, Rehoboth
R. Peirce, Somerset	B. Fitzgerald, Taunton	J. Pateakos, Taunton	J. Whitin, Westport
C. McDermott, Attl. A/L	G. Saddler, F.R. A/L	A. Slavin, N.B. A/L	

Guests/Staff:

D. Brogan, SRPEDD	A. Horowitz, SRPEDD	L. Estrela-Pedro, SRPEDD	K. Porter, SRPEDD
S. Royer, SRPEDD	N. Soutier, SRPEDD	M. Tinger, SRPEDD	J. Walker, SRPEDD

Absent:

D. Wojnar, Acushnet	V. Alfaro, Acushnet	G. Ayrassian, Attleboro	K. Robinson, Carver
C. Haddad, Dartmouth	J. Carvalho, Dighton	J. Fidalgo, Fairhaven	A. Romano, Fairhaven
D. Petty, Freetown	D. Lodge, Lakeville	R. Burke, Marion	J. Robbins, Mattap.
L. Bradley, Middleboro	W. Pike, Middleboro	J. Ponte, New Bedford	M. Borg, No. Attleboro
C. Desprez, Plainv.	T. Torres, Plainville	C. Sullivan, Raynham	P. Menconi, Raynham
M. Shoemaker, Roch.	S. Cadime, Seekonk	S. Smith, Seekonk	W. Raposa, Somerset
J. Hansen, Swansea	C. Parayno, Swansea	J. Faherty, Wareham	J. Moran, Wareham
M. Soares, Westport	A. Eaton, N.B. A/L	T. Lobo, Taunton A/L	

- 1. Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 6:32 P.M by Chairwoman Clarner.
- 2. Staff Presentation-Improving Transportation in a Food-Resilient Region Presentation:** Mr. Soutier and Mr. Brogan, SRPEDD staff, presented "Improving Transportation in a Food-Resilient Region" based on new data from the Greater Boston Food Bank. Specifically, over the last 6 years, food insecurity rates across the state have more than doubled, with both Bristol and Plymouth County representing some of the highest rates of insecurity across the state. Staff mentioned as a reminder, Phase 1 of the Transportation Department's Food Access and Security in Transportation (FAST) Plan explored this and other data in greater detail to provide a broad analysis of the SRPEDD region regarding food access, transportation, and affordability. Phase 1 also produced the Food Access Critical Destinations Map. This presentation, and Phase 2 of the Plan, sought to develop a quantitative scoring methodology to better assess the multiple factors that impact food access across the SRPEDD region using a 0-10 scoring scale to determine relative food access based on four specific criteria: Accessibility, Diversity, Affordability, and Social Vulnerability. This portion of the presentation was supplemented with development of a Transit-Accessible Food Access Dashboard highlighting key food distribution locations across the region accessible through SRTA and GATRA bus service. Upon conclusion of the presentation, both staff members entertained questions from the Commission.
- 3. Approval of Minutes – Mar. 25, 2026:** A motion was made and seconded to approve the Mar. 25, 2026 minutes. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

4. Reports:

- a. **Chair:** Chairwoman Clarner thanked the SRPEDD staff on a great presentation. She commented on the importance of neighborhood stores and, in a number of cases, the need for applicable zoning to encourage their development.
- b. **Executive Director:** Mr. Walker likewise acknowledged the work of the staff and quality of the presentation, expressing appreciation for their efforts. He also acknowledged Ms. Jones and others responsible for producing the first-rate newsletter that was distributed out earlier in the day. He mentioned if anyone is not currently on the distribution list and would like to be added, please contact Ms. Royer. Mr. Walker reported that the team has been closely monitoring the state budget as it continues to come into focus. He was pleased to see that DLTA (District Local Technical Assistance) funding is at least level-funded. As most know, this is a vital source of funding that supports many core planning projects throughout our communities. It helps reduce the burden on municipalities when updating master plans, open space and recreation plans, housing production plans, and other important planning efforts. He mentioned if any members happen to cross paths with members of our state delegation, please share how grateful everyone is for this vital planning funding source. The agency has also continued to actively pursue and make strong headway in securing other diversified grant monies. While funding opportunities are still available, resources are becoming increasingly limited.

5. Consent Agenda:

- a. **Contracts:** Chairwoman Clarner referred Commissioners to the contracts listed in the packet and read each contract for approval.

Be it resolved that the SRPEDD Commission authorizes the Chairman, Treasurer, Officers, and Executive Director, as appropriate, to negotiate and execute the following contracts:

1. With the town of Dighton to create a Route 138 Corridor/Pathways study for an amount not to exceed \$61,000.
2. With the town of Marion to support the Town in implementing its MVP 2.0 Grant for an amount not to exceed \$26,670.05.
3. With LEC Environmental Consultants, Inc. To provide continued rare/endangered species consulting services related to the review of the proposed river channel restoration project by Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program (NHESP) and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Services (USFWS) for an amount not to exceed \$12,000.
4. With the town of Rehoboth to update the Open Space and Recreation Plan for an amount not to exceed \$12,950.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the contracts listed above and dispense with the reading. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

6. Committee Reports:

- a. **Finance Committee:** Mr. Hills mentioned The Finance Committee met on April 15, 2026, at the SRPEDD office (88 Broadway, Taunton) and via Zoom. The March 18, 2026, Finance Committee

meeting minutes were approved; the Treasurer's Report for March 2026 was received and accepted; and the voucher warrant for expenses in the amount of \$68,150.66 (paper checks plus employee expense reports paid via ACH) was approved.

In addition, the Finance Committee received and accepted the March 2026 month-end general journal entries and reviewed the OPEB trust account statement from Charles Schwab for March 1-28, 2026.

The Finance Committee also reviewed and referred to the revised FY 2026 agency budget to the SRPEDD Commission. Finally, the Finance Committee reviewed and referred to the SRPEDD Commission the proposed staff salary adjustments and advancements to be effective July 1, 2026, reflecting an increase in total salary expenditures of 2.8%.

The Personnel Committee meeting was also called to order following the Finance Committee meeting on April 15, 2026, at SRPEDD.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Finance and Personnel Committee report. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

- **FY'26 Q3 Budget Update:** Mr. Hills referred Members to page 8 of the FY'26 Budget updated. Mr. Walker provided additional detail and they entertained questions from the Members.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the FY'26 Q3 Budget update as presented. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

- b. Joint Transportation Planning Group:** Ms. Estrela-Pedro referred Members to page 10 and minutes from the Joint Transportation Planning Group meeting held on March 11. She mentioned key takeaways included amendments to the FFY 2026–2030 Transportation Improvement Program, as well as ongoing work to develop the FFY2027–2031 Plan, which is currently out for a 21-day public comment period. She entertained questions from Members and asked for a motion to place the report on file. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if the Taunton River Trail was on the TIP. Ms. Estrela-Pedro mentioned the project has been programmed with statewide funding, but it was pushed out due to a cost increase. She mentioned she would be happy to talk offline if he would like.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Transportation report. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

- c. Environmental Subcommittee:** Ms. Tinger referred Members to page 16 of the packet and the Environmental Program Update. She highlighted a few upcoming trainings and events scheduled for next month. The first, ClimateTech, scheduled for May 4–5 is on the subject of advancing climate technology, and it will bring together voices from technology, policy, finance, and business to drive climate impact initiatives. She mentioned the second event was the Environmental League of Massachusetts' Earth Night, to be held on May 21. The purpose of this event is to celebrate ELM's ongoing work to advance effective climate leadership. Lastly, she explained the third conference is the Environmental Design Research Association Conference, taking place May 27–30. This year's theme, "Embracing Regional Sustainability Networks for People and Places," will focus on how environmental design, research, and practice can connect communities, landscapes, and regional systems to foster resilient, inclusive, and vibrant places. She also discussed information on the New

Bedford Riverwalk project, which aligns with SRPEDD's Regional Resilience Plan priorities related to waterfront resilience, environmental protection, and environmental justice. Ms. Tinger mentioned the Environmental Department has also been busy on a number of other fronts, including including OSRPs, Hazard Mitigation Planning projects, Green Communities initiatives, watershed planning, and the Assawampset Pond Complex project highlighted in the newsletter. Last month, the department submitted six Eco One Stop applications and an additional DER application to support community environmental priorities. She mentioned that the team is also continuing work related to BESS and solar regulations by pursuing funding opportunities and providing requested technical assistance to member communities. Lastly, additional projects underway include an MVP 2.0 project for Marion, consulting services for rare and endangered species, and the finalization of the Rehoboth OSRP. Ms. Tinger entertained questions from the Members.

7. Old Business:

- a. **Technical Assistance:** Mr. Walker referred Commissioners to the monthly update on projects contained in the packet on page 17. He mentioned that he and fellow staff are available to discuss any projects and provide guidance or answer any questions via email or by calling the office.

A motion was made and seconded to approve the Technical Assistance report. VOTED UNANIMOUSLY.

- b. **501(c)(3) Update:** In continuation of the earlier discussion last meeting about ongoing information-gathering and research aimed at the potential establishment of 501(c)(3) non-profit arm aligned with the regional planning mission and under the oversight and direction of the SRPEDD Commission, and referring attendees to the overview and proposed timeline memo on the subject included on the last paper of the packet, Mr. Walker mentioned that staff are preparing to follow-up with detailed questions posed by Commissioners of comparable-sized MA RPAs with established 501(c)(3) entities, including MAPC, PVPC, BRPC and others, in response to feedback to date. Per the draft memo included in the packet, staff should be able to complete these follow-up interviews in the next couple of months and return with a side-by-side comparison outlining key categories and considerations. The intent is not only to address any and all questions raised, but for the detailed information to serve as a springboard for further discussion and inform next steps. Mr. Walker closed by reiterating that the team very much appreciated the thoughtful discussion at the last meeting and looked forward to continuing the conversation.

8. **New Business:** Chairwoman Clarner thanked Mr. Walker for the update and the SRPEDD staff for their work and informative updates.

9. **Roundtable: Opportunity for Commissioners to provide updates on local topics, projects or matters of regional interest:** Chairwoman Clarner stated if any Members have any future topics they would like to discuss at future meetings to please inform her or Mr. Walker.

Mr. Slavin raised concerns about the financial situation and challenges currently being faced by municipalities across the state.

Mr. Whitin asked about feedback from the state regarding the Integrated Land Use Study and the potential impact on local priorities. Mr. Walker provided an update on the state's response, noting that in response to feedback received EOEEA has shared it is amending the scope and timeline for the project.

10. Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 P.M. The next Commission meeting will be held on April 22, 2026 at 6:30 PM on Zoom.

Respectfully submitted,

Gloria Saddler, Secretary

Date: 5/27/2026