

Rural Policy Advisory Commission
FY 2015 Annual Report

This report of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission, established under Massachusetts General Law, Chapter 23A, Section 66 (G.L. c. 23A, § 66), is submitted to the Clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives for transmission to the Joint Committee on Economic Development and Emerging Technologies, pursuant to paragraph (g) below:

Section 66. (a) There shall be a rural policy advisory commission within, but not subject to the supervision or control of, the executive office of housing and economic development. The mission of the commission shall be to enhance the economic vitality of rural communities, defined as municipalities with population densities of less than 500 persons per square mile, and to advance the health and well-being of rural residents.

(b) The commission shall consist of the following 15 members: the speaker of the house of representatives, ex officio, or a designee; the president of the senate, ex officio, or a designee; the secretary of housing and economic development, ex officio, or a designee; 12 persons to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall be from the Berkshire regional planning commission, 1 of whom shall be from the Cape Cod commission, 1 of whom shall be from the central Massachusetts regional planning district commission, 1 of whom shall be from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 1 of whom shall be from the Martha's Vineyard commission, 1 of whom shall be from the Montachusett regional planning commission, 1 of whom shall be from the Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission and 1 of whom shall be from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. Commission members shall be persons with demonstrated interests and experience in advancing the interests of rural residents.

(c) Members of the commission may serve a maximum of 3 consecutive 3-year terms. Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term. The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice chair, a treasurer and any other officers it considers necessary. The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties. Members shall be considered special state employees for the purposes of [chapter 268A](#).

(d) The commission shall serve as a research body for issues critical to the welfare and vitality of rural communities and shall: (i) study, review and report on the status of rural communities and residents in the commonwealth; (ii) advise the general court and the executive branch of the impact of existing and proposed state laws, policies and regulations on rural communities; (iii) advance legislative and policy solutions that address rural needs; (iv) advocate to ensure that rural communities receive a fair share of state investment; (v) promote collaboration among rural communities to improve efficiency in delivery of services; and (vi) develop and support new leadership in rural communities. The executive office shall provide the commission with adequate office space and any research, analysis or other staff support that the commission reasonably requires.

(e) The commission shall meet on a quarterly basis at the discretion of the chair. Meeting locations shall rotate between Boston, Cape Cod and the Islands, central Massachusetts and western Massachusetts. Meetings shall be open to the public pursuant to sections 18 to 25, inclusive, of [chapter 30A](#).

(f) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any federal funds for any of the purposes of this section. The funds shall be deposited in a separate account

with the state treasurer, shall be received by the state treasurer on behalf of the commonwealth and shall be expended by the commission under the law.

(g) The commission shall annually, not later than June 2, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding year and its recommendations to the governor and to the clerks of the senate and the House of Representatives who shall forward the same to the joint committee on economic development and emerging technologies.

Activities to Date:

Appointment of Commission Members:

Speaker of the House or Designee
Representative Gail Cariddi

Senate President or Designee
Corinne Fitzgerald

Secretary of Housing and Economic Development or Designee
Undersecretary Chrystal Kornegay

Appointed by the Governor
Jay Coburn (Cape Cod Commission)
Wendy Hudson (Nantucket Planning and Economic Development Commission)
Nathaniel Karns (Berkshire Regional Planning Commission)
Trish Settles (Central Massachusetts Regional Planning District Commission)
Judy Terry (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission)
Bill Veno (Martha's Vineyard Commission)
Brian Bullock (At-Large)
Dave Christopolis (At-Large)
Donna Hamel (At-Large)
Konnie Lukes (At-Large)

Scheduled Inaugural Meeting: Friday, June 10, 2016, from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm at the Franklin Regional Council of Governments in Greenfield, Massachusetts.

Survey of Commission Members:

DHCD staff contacted commission appointees to gather information about their policy interests. In doing so, each member provided the top issue facing their community. The most frequent issues raised were affordable housing, broadband and the declining population in rural communities. Members also voiced their vision for the future of rural communities in Massachusetts and the collective goal to ensure that state policies do not have unintended consequences for their communities.