

**Old Colony Route 24 Tech Hub**  
Strategy Development Meeting Minutes  
January 29, 2026

### **1. Call to Order and Welcome**

Mary Waldron, Executive Director of the Old Colony Planning Council (OCPC), called the meeting to order and welcomed participants. She noted this was the **second meeting** in an ongoing series focused on developing a collaborative strategy for the Route 24 Tech Hub.

Mary acknowledged the upcoming departure of Nick Giaquinto from OCPC to the Town of Norwell and thanked him for his continued contributions through the end of the project.

### **2. Introductions**

Participants introduced themselves, representing a broad cross-section of:

- Municipal planning and economic development
- Advanced manufacturing and private industry
- Workforce development boards
- Higher education and K–12 education
- Nonprofits and chambers of commerce

The diversity of representation was emphasized as critical to the success of the regional strategy.

### **3. Purpose of the Meeting**

Paul Umano outlined the meeting objectives:

- Recap key challenges and opportunities identified during the first strategy session
- Gather stakeholder input on workforce, education, industry, and municipal barriers
- Begin shaping priorities that can inform **short-term (90-day), mid-term, and long-term actions** under the Mass Tech Collaborative (MTC) framework

### **4. Recap: Key Challenges Identified**

Participants revisited challenges raised during the previous meeting, including:

- **Persistent misconceptions about manufacturing**, often characterized as “dirty, dangerous, and dead,” despite modern advancements
- **Workforce recruitment and awareness gaps**, particularly among students, parents, and educators
- **Transportation barriers** limiting access to job sites and training programs
- **Limited availability of credentialing programs** and hands-on training spaces
- **Lack of incubator or shared-use facilities** with appropriate equipment
- **Funding constraints**, with current OCPC funding supporting planning but not implementation
- **Competition from other regions** pursuing similar advanced manufacturing initiatives

## 5. Opportunities and Strategic Strengths

Opportunities discussed included:

- Developing a **coordinated branding, marketing, and PR strategy** to reshape public perceptions of manufacturing
- Earlier engagement with **middle school and high school students**, not solely high school or postsecondary
- Leveraging existing strengths at regional institutions, including:
  - Massasoit Community College
  - Stonehill College
  - Workforce development boards
- Creating clearer **entry points for underrepresented populations**
- Exploring long-term development of **shared training or incubator space**
- Aligning education, workforce, industry, and municipal partners into a cohesive ecosystem

## 6. Workforce and Education Perspectives

Key themes raised by speakers included:

- The importance of **soft skills**, adaptability, and critical thinking alongside technical skills
- Recognition that while technical needs vary by employer, **foundational manufacturing skills** can be taught broadly
- Strong support for:

- School-to-career pipelines
- Dual enrollment and early college programs (with better parent engagement)
- Career and technical education (CTE) partnerships
- The value of **hands-on learning**, including:
  - Tours of manufacturing facilities
  - Project-based learning (e.g., drones, robotics, clean energy)
- The need to better communicate the **cost, debt, and career outcomes** associated with manufacturing and technical pathways

## 7. Youth Engagement and PR Strategy

Participants emphasized:

- The need to involve **young people directly** in future discussions to inform outreach strategies
- Greater use of **social media and digital platforms** (e.g., Instagram, TikTok) as legitimate workforce and marketing tools
- Recognition that parents play a critical role in student decision-making and must be included in outreach efforts
- Interest in elevating **young ambassadors and alumni** who have successfully navigated manufacturing and technical career paths

## 8. Municipal and Land Use Considerations

Municipal representatives highlighted:

- Challenges in aligning zoning, permitting, and community perceptions with advanced manufacturing goals
- The risk of planned “technology” or “innovation” districts defaulting to warehousing or non-target uses
- The importance of educating property owners, boards, and the public about:
  - Modern manufacturing operations
  - Safety, sustainability, and economic benefits
- The value of proactive municipal engagement to support business attraction and retention

## 9. Regional and State Alignment

Discussion included:

- Opportunities to align with **Mass Tech Collaborative** priorities, including focus areas such as:
  - Youth
  - Veterans
  - Individuals with disabilities
  - Underrepresented populations
- Interest in inviting Mass Tech Collaborative representatives to future meetings
- Emphasis on treating the Tech Hub as part of a **regional ecosystem**, recognizing that workforce and industry cross municipal boundaries

## 10. Strategy Framework and Next Steps

Paul Umano reviewed the Mass Tech Collaborative framework, noting that the project is currently in:

- **Ecosystem Readiness Level (ERL) 2 – Strategic Planning**
- Moving toward **ERL 3 – Stakeholder Engagement and Innovation**

Proposed next steps include:

- Continuing recurring stakeholder meetings
- Exploring **topic-based focus groups**
- Identifying **3–5 near-term opportunities** that could be initiated within 90 days
- Developing measurable milestones and indicators of success
- Advancing a coordinated **marketing and branding strategy**
- Expanding and refining the stakeholder list

## 11. Closing Remarks

Mary Waldron reiterated the importance of collaboration, transparency, and inclusive engagement. She noted that meeting materials and minutes will be posted publicly and encouraged participants to invite additional stakeholders who should be at the table.

The meeting concluded with agreement to continue dialogue and refine strategic priorities in upcoming sessions.