

New BRPC Officers for FY 2007

At the June 15th Annual Meeting, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission elected its officers for the upcoming year:

Chair - John P. Hickey, Lanesborough

Vice Chair - Sarah Hudson, Tyringham

Clerk - James Mullen, New Marlborough

Treasurer - Charles P. Ogden, Egremont

Request for Committee Volunteers

With every new fiscal year, we reorganize the BRPC committees, soliciting new members and developing their work programs for the year. We encourage both Commission members and interested citizens with appropriate backgrounds to volunteer to be involved in our committees. The committees are:

- Clearinghouse Review Committee – Reviews staff draft comments on developments and state projects going through the MEPA review process and makes final recommendations to the Commission or Executive Committee.
Chair: James Mullen
- Commission Development Committee – Reviews how the Commission, as a policy body, is operating, works to increase delegate and alternate involvement and to improve the Commission's ability to serve all of our communities.
Chair: Rene Wood

- Finance Committee – reviews the Commission's financial status on a quarterly basis, prepares the annual budget and recommends the community assessment rate annually (at least two new Finance Committee members are needed).
Chair: Charles Ogden
- Regional Issues Committee – focuses on key regional issues and planning related legislation which may affect the region and our municipal governments.
Chair: Anita Barker
- Transportation Committee – focuses on transportation planning activities in the region and makes final recommendations to the Commission.
Chair: Sam Haupt

If you are interested in serving on any committee, contact Nat Karns at 442-1521 ext 26 or at nkarns@berkshireplanning.org.

2006 Charles Kusik Award Winner

This year's Charles Kusik Award recipient is Peter J. Lafayette, who led the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation from 1980 until 2006. Peter developed rental and condominium housing projects, special needs housing, and economic development projects throughout Berkshire County. He started the successful Good Samaritan Homeownership Program, initiated community development consulting services for small towns in the Berkshires, and led the planning effort for the revitalization of downtown Pittsfield.

Residents Speak out in 5 Berkshire County Towns

Berkshire County is facing new and unprecedented development of its rural countryside, which is threatening to change the character of the region. Although the population of the county remains stable, the development of new subdivisions, condominium communities and large-lot single family homes has continued to increase. Many local residents are concerned about the loss of historic farmlands and forested hillsides to residential housing developments that are often out of scale with local surroundings.

BRPC is working with the towns of Becket, Dalton, Hinsdale and Lanesborough to develop Open Space and Recreation Plans. Funding from the Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant Program is supporting the work. As part of the planning process, town-wide surveys asked residents to speak out about future development and open space protection. In all four towns, residents stated that rural character and the abundance of natural resources were the main reasons for living in their communities. In addition to the surveys, public forums are being held in each of the towns to allow residents to state their needs, concerns and ideas.

Clearinghouse Reviews

- 120 Day Notice Waiver Request for DCR Land Acquisition (Clarksburg)
- Notice of Project Change for Silk Mill Dam Removal (Becket)
- Environmental Notification Form for Urgent Repairs to Byron Weston Mill Dam #1 (Dalton)

Calendar

July 12	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
July 26	Regional Issues Committee	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
August 8	MPO Meeting	2:00 p.m.	BRPC
TBD	Full Commission Meeting	TBD	BRPC
September 21	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC

DCS Grants

The Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS) awards grants to municipalities for conservation and parkland acquisition and construction. The following grants are available from DCS: Self-Help Grants for conservation land acquisition; Urban Self-Help Grants for parkland acquisition, development, or renovation; and Land and Water Conservation Fund Grants for any of the above.

To be eligible for a grant, communities must have an Open Space and Recreation Plan. Lands acquired through the Self-Help program may include wildlife, habitat, trails, unique natural, historic or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farmland. Compatible passive outdoor recreational uses such as hiking, fishing, hunting, cross-country skiing, bird observation and the like are encouraged. Public access is required. The Urban Self-Help Program assists cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any town with a population of 35,000 or more year-round residents or any city regardless of size that has an authorized park/recreation commission and conservation commission is eligible to participate in the program. Communities that do not meet the population criteria listed above may still qualify under the "small town," "regional," or "statewide" project provisions of the program. Grants are available for the acquisition of land and the construction, restoration, or rehabilitation of land for park and outdoor recreation purposes, such as swimming pools, zoos,

athletic playfields, playgrounds and game courts. Public access is required. The Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development, or renovation of park, recreation, or conservation areas. Applications are due August 1, 2006.

Contact: Melissa Cryan, (617) 626-1171, melissa.cryan@state.ma.us or Jennifer Soper, (617) 626-1015, jennifer.soper@state.ma.us

New Associate Planner

A new Associate Planner, Sarah Izatt, will be joining the staff on July 5th. Sarah has a Bachelors of Science degree in Geography and Regional Planning, as well as Environmental Science, from Westfield State College. She has been a member of the Southampton Planning Board since May 2003 and is Southampton's Alternate on the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission. She also was Southampton's representative on the Barnes Aquifer Protection Advisory Committee from 2003-2005 and was on the Southampton CDPC.

TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM FACES FUNDING CHALLENGE

The Draft 2007-2010 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) is now available for public review, and comments until mid-August. The TIP is an annually updated four-year plan for federally funded transportation projects in the region, based on anticipated funding and regional priorities.

Because federal highway funds allocated to the region have remained flat while construction costs have risen dramatically, and because the fifth year has been eliminated, several worthy road projects programmed in the current TIP must be selected for removal.

Also available for public review and comment is the Draft Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) for transportation planning, which establishes regional priorities for managing the present and planning the future. The proposed emphasis is on providing an open and comprehensive process, preserving the capacity and condition of the existing transportation system, improving safety, advancing development of the regional bike trail network and other recommendations of the Regional Transportation Plan, and improving mobility for disadvantaged Berkshire residents. BRPC Contact: Andrew Lenton



Jack Hickey, new chair of the BRPC with BRPC Senior Planner Melissa Jette.