

# COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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## BRPC TO TRACK REGIONAL INDICATORS

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has begun a new program to track regional data and indicators in the areas of community social, environmental, and economic well-being. This effort will adsorb and expand upon the work of the former Berkshire Navigation group that primarily tracked social service indicators for the northern Berkshire region. BRPC will expand the geography countywide and define a set of shared community goals linked to state and local policies, public and non-profit programs, and expressed community aspirations towards which the indicators will measure progress.

The new program is currently in the planning stages and will be developed with the assistance of an 18-member steering committee of regional representatives in a variety of sectors. The committee will work to define an initial set of regional goals in a number of topic areas including energy, natural environment, economy and business, health, and education, among others. These draft goals will then serve as the basis for a broader community dialogue slated to begin in July.

*BRPC Contacts: Mark Maloy x29 and Amy Kacala x12*



## PICTOMETRY TRAINING

Massachusetts has purchased software and images from Pictometry for the entire state and is making them available to local municipalities free of charge. The state previously purchased imagery in 2003 and had the images reflow in 2008. Pictometry images are oblique aerial images (taken at an angle) that can be used in a wide variety of applications, including assessing, building inspection, planning and emergency services. The images allow the user to see all four sides of a building as well as to make distance, height, and area measurements. For more information on Pictometry, visit their website at [www.pictometry.com](http://www.pictometry.com). Several communities have already obtained the software and images, but if your community has not, please contact Mark Maloy at 413-442-1521 x 29 or [mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org).

### IN MEMORIAM FRANCIS BARKER

Francis Barker, formerly of Williamstown, passed away in January after a long illness. Frank had been Clerk of BRPC for during the transition of Executive Directors in 1993-1994 and had been instrumental in providing a focused mission for the organization. Frank had been active in Williamstown, serving as Chair of both the Conservation Commission and the Planning Board at various times. He also served as Chair of the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation for 12 years. He is survived by his wife, Anita Barker, who served on BRPC's Executive Committee from 1996 until resigning in 2008.

## DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is happy to announce the 2009 District Local Technical Assistance awardees. This state grant is designed to provide additional technical assistance from BRPC to member communities to support two types of projects:

**Land Use/Sustainable Development Selected Projects:** Individual communities working to pursue one or more of the ten Sustainable Development Principles defined by the state.

- ➔ **Mill Redevelopment in the Town of Adams:** BRPC will assist the Town in researching strategies and best practices to promoting high quality adaptive reuse of several mill structures in the town including ways to improve energy efficiency, integrate renewable energy, enhance pedestrian environments to integrate the structures into the downtown activity center, and implement green site design practices for stormwater management.
- ➔ **Open Space Residential Development Bylaw (OSRD), Town of Great Barrington:** Open Space Residential subdivisions are an excellent land use tool for communities to both allow development and retain open space and rural qualities of the landscape that contribute greatly to the character and appeal of the Berkshires. BRPC will assist the Town of Great Barrington as they complete their OSRD bylaw.
- ➔ **Future Land Use Scenario Creation, Town of New Marlborough:** Scenarios are a valuable tool to help communities discuss future growth patterns and the land use tools available to shape those patterns. This dialogue will occur as part of the Town's Comprehensive Plan development and will help set an agenda for future investment, actions, and regulatory changes in the Town.
- ➔ **Wind Energy Bylaw, Town of Peru:** BRPC has begun to experience strong interest from member communities on small-scale wind bylaws. BRPC will work with the Town of Peru to draft and adopt a wind energy bylaw for small-scale wind. This bylaw will then be able to serve as a model for other interested communities to consider and adapt to meet their specific interests and conditions.

**Regional/Municipal Coordination:** projects that will assist or involve the collaboration of two or more Berkshire communities.

- ➔ **Green Communities Act Implementation Assistance, Berkshire County:** Town managers requested education about the Green Communities Act and technical assistance to communities wishing to have energy audits completed by the state on their public facilities. Energy audits are a pre-requisite for communities to be eligible to apply for any grants that will emerge from the GCA program. BRPC strongly encourages its member communities to position themselves to take advantage of the municipal cost savings from energy efficiency as well as to be eligible to receive future grant investment from the state through the GCA. As part of this award, BRPC will assist member communities to complete energy audit applications (see box, right) and will host a dinner with a speaker from the state to inform on the GCA program requirements and potential grants.



### ENERGY AUDIT APPLICATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Does your community want to learn how to make its public facilities more energy efficient? We can help! BRPC can help guide you through the state Energy Audit Program process and complete the application on your behalf. State Energy Audit Program applications are due April 15 so don't delay. BRPC will assist as many communities as it can with the available grant funds on a first-come first-served basis.

To find out more or to sign your community up for energy audit application assistance, contact:

Lauren Gaherty 442-1521 x35  
Amy Kacala 442-1521 x12

- ➔ **Group Purchasing, Berkshire County Towns:** Town managers collectively requested BRPC help identify group purchasing options that towns can take advantage of to reduce municipal spending.
- ➔ **Broadband Planning for Southern Berkshire Region, Southern Berkshire Technology Collaborative (SBTC):** The SBTC is a coalition of 11 south county communities working to promote improved broadband service. BRPC will assist this effort through mapping broadband infrastructure and any regulatory barriers that will need to be addressed or avoided to help facilitate broadband service in the area.
- ➔ **Shared Service Arrangements, Towns of Lee, Lenox, and Stockbridge:** Municipal shared service arrangements are an excellent way to reduce costs while still providing the same level of service to the community. BRPC will explore shared service opportunities and potential savings for the three towns.

BRPC Staff Contact: Tom Matuszko x34



**NEW BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION COMMISSION GROUP (BCCG) FORMED**

An inaugural meeting of the Berkshire Conservation Commission Group (BCCG) —a new group that provides a forum for regional ConCom representatives to meet and share knowledge, experience, and resources— was held on February 4<sup>th</sup>. BCCG is part of the Conservation Agent Program, with some funding provided through the Natural Resource Damages program. BCCG meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of every month, at 7:00 PM at BRPC.

Each meeting will be facilitated by Terry Eucker, the Berkshire Conservation Agent, and highlight an emerging technical or practical information and resources for ConCom’s. The first meeting focused on introducing BCCG members to ‘OLIVER,’ the MassGIS online data and map viewer. The next BCCG meeting will be held on March 4th and will provide a practical “how-to” on determining whether a stream is perennial or intermittent.

Information about the BCCG, as well as meeting agendas and notes, can be found at [www.berkshireplanning.org/conservationagent/BCCG/](http://www.berkshireplanning.org/conservationagent/BCCG/).

*BRPC Contact: Sarah LaValley x28*



**BRPC OFFERS OPPORTUNITIES FOR BROWNFIELDS ASSESSMENT AND CLEAN-UP**

Applications for brownfields assessment are welcome! The Berkshire Brownfields Committee is accepting applications for assessment work for known or suspected contamination by petroleum or hazardous substances. Brownfields are properties which are suspected of being contaminated by petroleum or hazardous substances. Suspected contamination means that buyers or redevelopers may be reluctant to invest in a property until they understand the level of contamination and can make an informed business decision.

In addition, the Berkshire Brownfield Revolving Loan Fund (BBRLF) is getting underway. Through the BBRLF, BRPC will provide loans and subgrants with RLF funds to eligible borrowers and subgrantees at eligible sites for eligible clean up activities. The maximum loan amount will be \$200,000, not to exceed 80% of clean up costs. Applicants will be required to provide a 20% match. Loans are available to public, private, and non-profit entities. Sub-grants are limited to municipalities and non-profits. For more information contact BRPC or visit [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org) to download a site profile for or view information on the BBRLF.

*BRPC Contact: Melissa Provencher x 22*



**ASHUWILLTICOOK TRAIL TRAFFIC COUNTS**

BRPC will continue its program to count users on the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail on Saturday, May 2 and Tuesday, May 5. The data gathered will be used to gain a better understanding of what types of activities people most enjoy on the trail, and will help build a foundation for predicting future use. The data collected will also be used to advocate for greater trail development. Counts are taken three times a year – in May, July and September – at three locations: Berkshire Mall Road in Lanesborough, Farnam’s Road in Cheshire and Russell Field in Adams.

Volunteers are needed to help count! Volunteers are asked to commit to a two hour shift anytime between 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, May 2<sup>nd</sup> and from 7:30 to 9:30 a.m. and from 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 5<sup>th</sup>. This is a passive survey - volunteers are asked simply to record the number of one way trips they see. No experience is necessary and no survey work required.

To volunteer to help count trail users in May, please contact: Christine Neumann (413) 442-1521, ext. 16 [cneumann@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cneumann@berkshireplanning.org)

For more information on the Ashuwillticook Trail Count Program, including data from the 2008 counts, please visit [www.berkshireplanning.org/3/bike](http://www.berkshireplanning.org/3/bike)



**TIP AMENDMENTS**

At its March 6<sup>th</sup> meeting, the MPO will be voting on the latest round of TIP amendments, which were released for public review on February 3<sup>rd</sup>. The TIP amendment allows a series of both highway and transit projects on the list of projects to be funded by President Obama’s Economic Stimulus Package are to be added to year ‘09 of the FFY07-10 TIP. The transit projects involve acquisition of minibuses; the highway and bridge projects are as follows:

- Lee Bridge Replacement Old Pleasant Street over Housatonic River (\$4,459,490)
- Adams Route 116 Resurfacing and Retaining Wall Replacement (\$1,720,000)
- Lanesborough/New Ashford Resurfacing and Related Work on Route 7 (\$3,200,000)
- Cheshire Route 8 Resurfacing from Lanesborough Town Line to MM51 (\$1,230,000)
- Region Application of Reflectorized Pavement Markings on State highways (\$552,080)
- North Adams Downtown Roadway and Streetscape Improvements (addition of \$90,400)
- Lanesborough Connector Road Reconstruction, Resurfacing, Drainage Improvements (\$9,980,795)
- Lenox Route 7A, Kemble Street Reconstruction, Drainage Improvements (\$4,450,000)

*BRPC Staff Contact: Alison Church x20*

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**CPTC ANNUAL SPRING CONFERENCE**

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative's annual conference will be held Saturday, March 21 at Holy Cross College in Worcester. This all-day event features a variety of training topics for both new and seasoned planning board members. Please visit <http://www.umass.edu/masscptc/> for more information.

Please contact Sarah LaValley if you're interested in carpools to the conference.

**BRTA STUDY FINDINGS**

February through March, BRPC is convening a series of public meetings to present data, analysis and draft recommendations of its study of the BRTA Fixed Route Bus Service. At the end of March, BRPC will be concluding the report, including summarization of public comments made during the meetings and finalization of recommendations, for the BRTA Advisory Board. See the calendar (right) for meeting dates and locations.

**TIP SOLICITATION**

BRPC is compiling information to update the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) list. Municipalities that have projects on either the existing 4-year TIP or the supplementary TIP list must provide project status updates on the TIP Project Data Forms to BRPC no later than March 27, 2009 if they wish to have their projects included in the 2010 - 2013 TIP.

**APA WEB AUDIO SERIES**

BRPC will continue to host APA audio/web conferences, many of which offer CE credits. Check the calendar for dates and topics. \$15 at the door.

**CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS**

Otis Reservoir Dam Repair ENF  
Ashmere Lake Dam Repair FEIR



**CALENDAR**

**MARCH**

- 4 BRTA—North Adams**  
Heritage State Park, Shipper's Office,  
115 State St., 6:30 p.m.
- 6 MPO Meeting**  
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.
- 12 BRTA—Great Barrington**  
Mason Library, Community Room,  
231 Main St., 6:30 p.m.
- 17 2010 Census Berkshire Complete County  
Committee**  
Chamber of Commerce, 1:00 p.m.
- 18 APA Audio Web Conference**  
Designing for Water Conservation CM |1.5  
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m.
- BRTA—Adams**  
Town Hall, 8 Park St., 6:30 p.m.
- 19 BRPC Meeting**  
BRPC Office, 7:00 p.m.
- 21 CPTC Annual Conference**  
Holy Cross College, Worcester, 8 a.m.–4 p.m.

**APRIL**

- 1 Berkshire Brownfield Committee**  
BRPC Office 11:00 a.m.
- 2 BRPC Executive Committee**  
BRPC Office, 4:00 p.m.
- 15 APA Audio/Web Conference**  
Zoning for Transit-Oriented Development  
4:00 p.m.–5:30 p.m. CM |1.5
- 30 5th Thursday Dinner**  
Location TBD, 6:00 p.m.