



Common Ground

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Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission

Ashuwillticook Extension To North Adams and Williamstown Moving Forward

The City of North Adams and BRPC have each received grant funds to develop an extension of the popular Ashuwillticook Rail Trail. The funds will be used to produce a Feasibility Study and Design to extend the Ashuwillticook from its current terminus in Adams northward to North Adams and then westward to Williamstown. This northwestward extension is envisioned to be approximately 10 miles in length. Once the northern extension is added to the current Ashuwillticook, the region will be able to boast of a highly accessible, immensely popular 21-mile multi-use trail. The project will further the region-wide goal of a Berkshire Bike Path, a continuous bike/pedestrian path running through Berkshire County, from the Connecticut border to the Vermont border.

The City of North Adams received a Recreational Trails Grant from the Department of Conservation

(Continued on page 2)



The lovely Ashuwillticook will soon be extended from Adams into North Adams and Williamstown thanks to two recent planning and design grants.

Also Inside this Issue:

The Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy gets under way. *(See CEDS, page 5)*

BRPC Developing GIS-based Viewshed Analysis using Digital Elevation Models. *(See Viewshed Analysis, page 2)*

Welcome to new Senior Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala. *(See Transportation, page 3)*

Wahconah Park Partner Chip Elitzer to Speak at Annual Dinner; Jim Bouton Possible, Too

The storied endeavor to remake Pittsfield's historic Wahconah Park into a "national tourist attraction" will be the topic of the keynote speech at this year's annual dinner. One of the project's lead partners, Donald B. "Chip" Elitzer of Great Barrington, will regale the Commission with the intriguing and ongoing tale of shepherding one of the region's biggest revitalization projects from vision, to proposal, to development and beyond. Former Yankees pitcher Jim Bouton of South Egremont may join his partner Elitzer at the dinner to add his own colorful insights, many of which will likely touch on themes from his highly publicized and much critiqued book *Foul Ball*. The talk promises to be a captivating occasion with valuable lessons for everyone interested in the region's processes of planning, politics and preservation.



Chip Elitzer (left) and Jim Bouton

Mr. Elitzer, 56, formed Elitzer Associates, Inc. as a private investment bank in 1984. In addition to conventional corporate finance and merger & acquisition assignments, his firm has sponsored and participated in leveraged buy-outs, acted as management's representative in management buy-outs, and arranged substantial refinancings and going-public transactions for corporate clients.

Prior to forming his own firm, Mr. Elitzer was Vice President in Corporate Finance at Rothschild Inc., where he structured and financed all leveraged acquisitions undertaken by Rothschild as principal or

(Continued on page 2)

Viewshed Analysis with GIS

One of the applications that GIS is being used for at BRPC is to map the viewsheds of prospective developments. Viewsheds are defined as the area on the ground that is visible from a specified point. Using digital elevation models, two points are defined as being visible to each other if a straight line can be drawn between them without being obstructed. Digital elevation models can only approximate real surfaces; they cannot reproduce them with complete accuracy. Therefore any result will only be approximate and not an absolute. Viewsheds can be used for numerous applications in regional planning. Some of these uses include determining from where a large proposed subdivision or resort, wind turbine or cell tower can be seen. Determining viewsheds can also be used to assist in preserving scenic views.

For a proposed development, once the height and location are determined, the viewshed can be calculated, showing from where in the region it can be seen. It must be remembered that these delineations are only approximations and that the only way to verify the visibility of a development is to go into the field and examine the potentially visible area. In terms of cell towers and wind turbine developments, it needs to be noted that even if the hill that they sit on is not

visible it doesn't mean that the tower will not be visible. Determining a more accurate viewshed for wind turbines and cell towers can only be done by raising a large balloon at the exact location and height. However this will only provide a good estimate of the viewshed close to the site as the balloon will fade rapidly from view with distance. Using a balloon will also allow the public to easily determine if they will be impacted by the development. Neither the balloon nor the GIS delineated viewshed is perfect and meets all the needs, however using them in conjunction can assist in reviewing proposed developments. *Contact: Mark Maloy*

Annual Dinner *(Continued from page 1)*

agent during his eight-year tenure. He was also active in public equity offerings, private debt placements, and venture capital financings. In the venture field, he raised private equity capital for companies in various industries, including biotechnology, computer peripherals, semiconductors, specialty chemicals, and metal fabrication.

Prior to Rothschild, Mr. Elitzer was an officer of the Chase Manhattan Bank, a management consultant to the Ford Foundation, and the developer of a consumers' and producers' cooperative in the Amazon jungle (Brazil). He holds an M.P.A. (1974) from Princeton University and a B.A. (1969) from Dartmouth College. He also studied philosophy, politics, and economics at Oxford University on a Reynolds Fellowship.

Mr. Elitzer is the founder and chairman of the Berkshire Hills Technology Fund, established in 2000 to ensure that all students, teachers, and administrators in the Berkshire Hills Regional School District (K-12, serving the towns of Great Barrington, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Housatonic) have home-based computers connected to the Internet, and to fund a competitive annual grants program for the creative use of technology in the classroom. The first four rounds of grants have supported 46 projects by 75 BHRSD teachers.

Mr. Elitzer is also a Director of the Berkshire South Regional Community Center, recently constructed in Great Barrington, and on the Board of the Williamstown Theatre Festival.

He and his wife, Cindy, and their three sons have been full-time residents of Great Barrington since 1996. Daniel is a sophomore at Pomona College, Sam is working and studying on an Israeli kibbutz, and Jacob is a sophomore at Monument Mountain Regional High School. *Contact: Nat Karns*

Ashuwillticook Extension Update *(Continued from page 1)*

and Recreation, and BRPC received a National Scenic Byway Program Grant from the Federal Highway Administration, which will be administered by MassHighway. The City of North Adams, the towns of Adams and Williamstown, the Berkshire Bike Path Council and BRPC are partners in this cooperative effort.

The project will include the hiring of a consultant to develop a detailed Feasibility and Preliminary Design Study for the extension of the Ashuwillticook, from Adams to Williamstown. The design study will be of a level consistent with a 25% design site plan. The consultant will evaluate several route alternatives and, with input from local residents and officials, select the most advantageous route. The consultant will then develop typical design plans and cross-sections, identification of environmental impacts and mitigation, identification of potential parking areas and estimates of cost, and confirmation of ownership of the preferred route. It is expected that the project will take two years to complete.

In addition to the northern extension, there are continued efforts to bring the Ashuwillticook southward through Pittsfield. For information on bike/pedestrian trail development throughout the county, contact Peter Falcier at BRPC; for more detailed information on the northern extension of the Ashuwillticook, contact Lauren Gaherty at BRPC. *Contact: Lauren Gaherty*

TRANSPORTATION UPDATE

- Federal transportation funding for the next six years is still awaiting approval. The U.S. Senate and the House of Representatives passed separate versions of the bill, both of which would increase funding; however many issues, especially the overall amount, remain to be worked out in a conference committee of both chambers before the bill goes to the President, who has threatened to veto anything that exceeds the White House's funding limit. Meanwhile, Congress passed a temporary extension of the previous authorization, so that funds could be appropriated for 2004. The appropriations bill included a \$1.25 million earmark for corridor access management on Route 8 in Lanesborough and Cheshire.
- The annual process of preparing a Transportation Improvement Program for the next five years has begun. BRPC staff is working closely with the Transportation Committee, member communities and Mass. Highway staff to assemble the information needed to apply a new set of project evaluation criteria.
- Requests are starting to come in from communities interested in having traffic counts done by BRPC this summer. So far the towns of Sheffield, Otis and Mount Washington have responded to BRPC's offer of this free service.



**Welcome Senior Transportation Planner
Anuja Koirala**

Introducing Our New Sr. Transportation Planner...

Ms. Anuja Koirala has joined the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) as Senior Transportation Planner. She has a Master's degree in Civil Transportation Engineering from the University of Kentucky and another Master's of Transportation Planning from the School of Planning and Architecture in New Delhi, India. Prior to joining BRPC she worked as a Transportation Planner with Wilbur Smith Associates in Raleigh, NC. She has more than three years of experience in Transportation Planning and with transit projects. Her technical specialties are in Regional and Corridor Transportation Planning, Transit Operation and Analysis, Traffic Simulation and Impact Studies, Access Management, Transportation Demand Modeling and Geographic Information System Analysis. She will work on the Southern Berkshire Community Transit Study and South Street Alternative Study.

Term of the Month

Functional Classification

All roads in the country are classified according to the functions they serve, based mainly on relative traffic volumes, but also on their importance in getting travelers from one place to another on a regional level. Functional classification is used as the basis for determining eligibility for federal highway funds and is also a factor in traffic capacity analysis and traffic modeling. The majority of road mileage nationally and in the Berkshires is classified as local, meaning that the main function is access to local destinations. In general, local roads are not eligible for federal funds and are not specifically used in the regional traffic model. The highest functional classification is Interstate Highway, which in the Berkshires is represented only by the Massachusetts Turnpike (I-90). The remainder of the roads in the Berkshires are classified as arterial or collector roads, and further classified as to whether they are in urban or rural areas.

Programs, Projects and Grants

PB and ZBA Land Use Decision Writing Workshop

The Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) and Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) are co-sponsoring a workshop to explain the finer points of writing clear and defensible planning and zoning board decisions and conditions. On Thursday, May 20, 2004, Alan Seewald of the Amherst law firm Seewald, Collins & Jankowski will present a course called *Writing Reasonable and Defensible Decisions* at the Hotel Northampton in Northampton, MA from 7 to 9 PM. Joining Mr. Seewald by video link will be a panel of experts in land use law, including Robert Mitchell, Planning Director for the Town of Amherst; Robert Ritchie, Assistant Attorney General; and Judith Cutler, municipal attorney with Kopelman & Paige. The session will conclude with a brief question and answer period.

Attendance at this seminar by planning or zoning board members and/or staff is an eligible MIIA Rewards activity (I. Public Officials Liability, D. Municipal Board Training, Activity 4). Attendance is limited to three people per community. Interested board members can get copies of the seminar registration form from BRPC or they can call MIIA contact Mary DeLai directly at (800) 374-4405 x250. *Contact: Joellyn Warren*

Where in Berkshire County is...



...this town hall, the highest elevation town hall in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts?

Stay tuned to the next issue of *Common Ground* for the answer.

Proposals for Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant Program Due June 2, 2004

The Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) has issued a Request for Responses (RFR) for the Federal Fiscal Year 2005 Section 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant Program. Proposals are due on June 2, 2004.

Section 319 of the Clean Water Act of 1987 was established as a national program to control nonpoint sources of water pollution. Each year the DEP, in conjunction with the U.S. EPA, provides 319 funds for projects that address prevention, control, and abatement of nonpoint source (NPS) pollution, and that attain environmental results by restoring beneficial uses and/or meeting or maintaining state water quality standards. The U.S. EPA defines NPS pollution as that which is "caused by diffuse sources that are not regulated as point sources and are normally associated with precipitation and runoff from the land or percolation." Projects addressing stormwater impacts that are not covered by EPA NPDES stormwater permits or that supplement activities being carried out under and EPA NPDES stormwater permit are eligible for funding, provided they meet all other 319 eligibility guidelines.

DEP encourages applications from all Massachusetts watersheds. Specifically, DEP encourages proposals that will implement Massachusetts' Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) analyses, or that will implement recommendations made in Diagnostic/Feasibility (D/F) studies for waters that do not meet Water Quality Standards. DEP has added one new project category this year. Consistent with EPA guidelines, the Department is soliciting proposals for the development of Watershed-based Plans to support the development and implementation of TMDLs. In addition, DEP is encouraging the implementation of two specific types of BMPs for noxious aquatic plant impairments.

The RFR has been distributed electronically using the Commonwealth Procurement Access & Solicitation System (Comm-PASS). Copies of the RFR can be obtained at <http://www.Comm-PASS.com>, or by contacting Jane Peirce at (508)767-2792.

All proposals must be submitted to: Jane Peirce, 319 RFR Coordinator, DEP, 2nd Floor, 627 Main Street, Worcester, MA 01608 and received no later than 5 p.m., Wednesday, June 2, 2004. *Contact: Melissa Jette*



Berkshire Economic Development: CEDS, 2004 Projects, Priorities, Evaluation & Action Plan

PROJECTS FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

In the next few weeks the Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee will be issuing a request for projects — and potential project ideas — for consideration by the Committee for development and implementation as part of the Berkshire region’s CEDS Action Plan. That request will come in the form of an *Initial Project Brief*, a rewritten (and simplified) version of the Project Profile used by the CEDS Committee to solicit projects in 2001.

Essentially this new form will allow project developers or proponents (BOX below) in the region the opportunity to put their project (or projects) *on the table for regional prioritization for development, implementation and collaboration on funding sources.*

This will also mark the continuation of a concerted effort to systematically collect together the wide variety of projects important to the regional economy being discussed and developed by its municipalities, CDC’s and other public agencies. Coordinating these with projects developed by non-profits or the private sector meeting a wide variety of needs related to, or supporting economic development goals, and prioritizing them will result in a single focused Vision and Action Plan for the Berkshire region.

This is a *comprehensive strategy* – and links between the public and private sectors and activities and programs of public and private non-profits are very much a part of the regional economic picture. Agencies or non-profits with a focus on and expertise in all facets of the regional economy — workforce programs, housing development, or business outreach and support services — are a vital component of the overall regional strategy.

Both federal and state agencies have placed increasing emphasis on achieving regional economic goals by partnering and leveraging projects and programs of various types. The operation and performance of any regional economy is a complex system of interconnected places, populations and employers, and types of economic activities — and the Berkshire regional economy is no exception.

The CEDS Committee, representing the region, will sort through projects in various stages of development from conceptual to total project readiness (bolstered by feasibility, financial, and marketing studies, etc.), assess their expected benefit to the region and their readiness to proceed. Projects and project concepts or ideas will be prioritized, arrayed on a timeline, and become part of an ongoing Berkshire CEDS Action Plan. This Action Plan — with its assessment of regional priorities and project benefits, needs, and funding requirements — is expected to become a significant resource for and directive to state legislators, and state and federal agencies for regional funding priorities and consideration of other types of assistance or regional improvements.

THIS IS A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY LINKS BETWEEN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS AND ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE NON-PROFITS ARE VERY MUCH A PART OF THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC PICTURE.

INITIAL PROJECT BRIEF

The Initial Project Brief (2 pages) will elicit fairly standard introductory information from project proponents. All Project proponents (public or private) will be required to have on board a “municipal sponsor,” an official representing the community in which the project will be located.

Key questions will focus on how a project meets the region’s priority economic development goals or affects and improves the region’s competitive advantage. The Project Brief will seek details and an explanation of what stage of “readiness” for implementation or development the project is in to help place projects on the Action Plan timeline. Additional questions will pertain to project funding and identification of potential or committed funding sources. The overall project description and cost

WHO CAN SUBMIT PROJECT PROPOSALS & IDEAS?

The *Initial Project Brief* will be distributed to: Berkshire Municipal Officials (Mayors and City Councils, Town Administrators and Select Boards, Development Offices); Community Development Corporations and IPDC’s; Public and Private Non-Profits, and Private Sector organizations in cooperation with local government with jurisdiction over the project area.

ON THE WEB: www.berkshireplanning.org (mid-May)

outline will be followed by critical questions on project effects – what the region expects to see in benefits from employment and wages resulting from the project.

Since the Initial Project Brief is also intended to open up opportunities to gather project ideas – or early stage concepts — for future regional projects that could provide economic development benefits or improve the region’s environment for economic growth and development, a wide array of regional organizations in the region (BOX pg 1) will be encouraged to use this process and form to put ideas into the mix for potential consideration and future development as well.

HOW WILL PROJECTS BE EVALUATED?

Included with the Brief will be an outline of 10 guidelines for development (often called the “Smart Growth Principles” — BOX at right) promoted by the Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development.

Why the focus on these principles from the outset? Because they will serve as the threshold for evaluation of projects. Projects or project ideas that demonstrate attention to these principles from the initial planning stages on will find fewer hurdles to overcome in the overall assessment process and compatibility with longstanding regional environmental, community and economic goals.

Beyond Sustainable Development: Evaluation

Once projects have been identified through the *Initial Project Briefs*, the Committee will begin a process of determining where projects fit on the CEDS Action Plan timeline. Determining what project needs are and how and by whom these can be addressed will be major factors affecting how projects will be prioritized for follow through activities related to funding and implementation.

A project’s effect on overall regional employment and income will be a primary focus of project evaluation:

- *Number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs estimated to be added (or retained) by the project;*
- *Wages and occupations of those jobs.*

A particular focus will also be on the location of projects in Berkshire County: matching and encouraging suitable projects in communities or areas of the County with historically higher rates of unemployment, lower income levels, or shrinking job opportunities.

Other important aspects of the evaluation process will focus on how projects meet regional goals relevant to building a more sustainable regional economy:

- Promoting opportunities for innovation and incubation of small businesses in expanding clusters

Sustainable Development Principles:

The Massachusetts Office for Commonwealth Development lists the following 10 principles to guide development throughout the Commonwealth:

- 1. Redevelop first.**
- 2. Concentrate development.**
- 3. Be fair.**
- 4. Restore and enhance the environment.**
- 5. Conserve natural resources.**
- 6. Expand housing opportunities.**
- 7. Provide transportation choice.**
- 8. Increase job opportunities.**
- 9. Foster sustainable businesses.**
- 10. Plan regionally.**

More detailed explanations of these principles can be accessed on the MA Office For Commonwealth Development website at:

<http://commpres.env.state.ma.us/content/ocd.htm>

and sectors, manufacturing, and economic base industries;

- Expanding workforce development opportunities;
- Ensuring regional competitiveness by a continuous commitment to provision of/upgrade of infrastructure and the supply of adequate, prepared, available sites and buildings;
- Supporting new entrepreneurial opportunities and activities and existing businesses with necessary financial and management expertise;
- Addressing other conditions in the region which act as barriers, or unnecessary hindrances to regional competitive advantage (whether regulatory, politically, or institutionally driven).

Practical questions relating to implementation and management capacity will also affect a project’s placement on the CEDS Action Plan as well — prioritized projects must demonstrate full “readiness” to go. □

CEDS ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan answers the question “How do we get there?” and is based primarily on long-term goals.

The Action Plan describes activities and groups them into programs designed to achieve the desired results and to turn potential for improvement into reality.

The CEDS Strategy Committee has the central role of overseeing development and implementation of the Action Plan.

LEADING QUESTIONS FRAMING EVALUATION

The CEDS Process suggests the following 4 questions to guide comparative evaluation of projects and decisions on project prioritization:

What are the activities and what are their expected benefits?

Which activities address the area's greatest need or best enhance the region's competitive advantages?

Does this project contribute directly and significantly to one or more of the regional goals or strategic directions identified?

Do these activities represent the best use of limited resources?

Does this project build on known resource strengths and comparative advantages of the Berkshires?

Will this project result in permanent improvement in the basic intraregional growth dynamic, the diversity of economic opportunity, and the resiliency of the regional economy?

Can this project be fully and effectively implemented in a relatively short time? Longer time frame suggested?

Does, or can, this project have a mutually reinforcing link with another proposed project?

Will the activities have positive economic, environmental, and social impacts?

Will this project be environmentally sustainable over the long run?

Who will benefit from this project directly or indirectly?

REGIONAL COMPETITIVE STRENGTHS

Innovative, entrepreneurial and creative culture

Highly talented professionals, in many fields, attracted to region's quality of life, many as second home owners

*Strong rate of traded cluster establishment formation**

**Traded clusters describe linked industries in a region which outperform other sector groups*

— Briefing to the Governor & Cabinet, Berkshire Regional Competitiveness Council (December, 2003)

REGIONAL COMPETITIVE WEAKNESSES

Dependence on shrinking traditional manufacturing economy

Disproportionate share of economy in clusters that are losing national share/shrinking

Employment growth slower than state, national average

Lack of a clear strategy for regional economic development

Perception that neither local leaders nor state leaders have articulated a clear, or at east unified, strategy

Many related entities, but no development organization or development plan for entire region

— Briefing to the Governor & Cabinet, Berkshire Regional Competitiveness Council (December, 2003)

2004 CEDS COMMITTEE

Rich Vinette, Chairman

<i>Members*</i>	<i>Organization</i>
Al Bashevkin	Northern Berkshire Community Coalition
Blair Benjamin	MASS MoCA
David Bissailon	Berkshire Chamber of Commerce
Heather Boulger	Berkshire County Regional Employment Board
Jim Canavan	North County Community Development Corp.
Donna Cesan	Town of Adams
Sam Haupt	Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Denise Johns	Berkshire Applied Technology Council
Matt Kerwood	Pittsfield City Council
Al Marden	City of North Adams
Bill Mulholland	Berkshire Community College
Cheryl Nolan	Westside Neighborhood Initiative
Sharon Palma	Southern Berkshire Chamber of Commerce
Yvonne Pearson	Downtown, Inc.
Richard Rilla	Berkshire Plastics Network-Ironman Machine
Gary Schiff	Banknorth
Vicki Singer	Berkshire Enterprises
Eleanore Velez	Berkshire Latin American Council
Rich Vinette	Lee Community Development Corporation

***Other organizations expecting to name members are listed below:**

- Berkshire Medical Systems
- City of Pittsfield Town of Dalton
- CDC of Southern Berkshire
- Berkshire Competitiveness Council
- MASS College of Liberal Arts

Clearinghouse Reviews

The following comments were submitted under the direction of the Clearinghouse Review Committee between February 4, 2004 and April 30, 2004.

- Berkshire Wind Power (Hancock). Comments on Notice of Project Change submitted March 2, 2004.
- 120-day Waiver Request (Egremont). Comments on land acquisition submitted March 3, 2004.
- 120-day Waiver Request (Williamstown). Comments on land acquisition submitted March 3, 2004.
- Ashmere Lake Management Plan (Hinsdale/Peru). Comments on the adequacy of the plan submitted March 5, 2004.
- Generic Environmental Impact Review for Eutrophication and Aquatic Plant Management (state-wide). Comments on adequacy submitted March 9, 2004.

BRPCConnections

<i>Web Site</i>	www.berkshireplanning.org
<i>Electronic Mail</i>	BRPC@berkshireplanning.org
<i>Chair</i>	Samuel Haupt
<i>Executive Director</i>	Nathaniel W. Karns, AICP
<i>Assistant Director</i>	Thomas Matuszko, AICP
<i>Transportation Manager</i>	Andrew Lenton
<i>Senior Planners</i>	Joellyn Warren Bryan Boeskin Lauren Gaherty Anuja Koirala Melissa Jette
<i>Planner</i>	Ravindra Wijesundera
<i>Traffic Planner</i>	Mark Maloy
<i>GIS Coordinator</i>	Pete Falcier
<i>Associate Planners</i>	Leigh Anne Adams Kate McNulty-Vaughan
<i>Planning Associate</i>	Carolyn LeBlanc
<i>Bookkeeper</i>	Debbie Polito
<i>Secretary</i>	Joyce McGuire
<i>Office Administrator</i>	Sari Calame
<i>Planning Interns</i>	Douglas Holmes

Date

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Wed—May 5—Executive Committee meeting—BRPC offices— 3:30 PM

Thurs—May 20—Full Commission meeting—BRPC offices— 7:30 PM

Wed—June 2—Executive Committee—BRPC Offices—3:30 PM

Thurs—June 17—Annual Dinner—Country Club of Pittsfield— 6:00 PM



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