

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
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NATHANIEL W. KARNS
Executive Director

APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

**Thursday March 16, 2017
At the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Office
1 Fenn Street, Suite 201, Pittsfield, MA 01201**

I. Call to Order

A. The meeting is called to order at: 7:00 PM

Chair Kyle Hanlon reminded all per the open meeting law, BRPC records all meetings. Others may record the meeting after informing the chair. Any documents presented must be left with the chair at the meeting.

B. Introductions/Roll Call

The following Commission members are present:

John Duval – Adams Alternate
Malcolm Fick – Gt. Barrington Delegate
Jack Hickey – Lanesborough Alternate
Bob Bott – Mt. Washington Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
CJ Hoss – Pittsfield Alternate
Marie Raftery – Stockbridge Alternate
Sarah Hudson – Tyringham Alternate
Susan Puddester – Williamstown Delegate
John Garcia – Windsor Delegate
Timothy Crane – Windsor Alternate

Staff Present:

Nathaniel Karns – Executive Director
Thomas Matuszko – Assistant Director
Clete Kus – Transportation Program Manager

Others Present:

William Ennen – Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development
Gabriel Sherman – MassDOT
Olivia Schneider – Berkshire Courier

C. Approval of Minutes of Commission Meeting of January 19, 2017

Sarah Hudson moved to approve with a correction; seconded by Jack Hickey. Unanimously approved with 2 abstentions.

II. Comments from the Public – None

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – Bob Bott requested the Regional Issues Committee consider the issue of increases in Employee Health Care Cost. Communities are seeing increases between 16 and 17%. Mt. Washington as well as other Berkshire County communities are concerned with this large expense that continues to increase. Next year the cost could increase 9%. Bob asked for a study of what each community is doing, what are the options for Berkshire County communities and what can be done to control cost. Marie Raftery, Chair of the Regional Issues Committee agreed to look at the problem.

IV. Massachusetts Freight Plan Presentation

Gabriel Sherman, Freight Plan Coordinator in the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning, gave a presentation on the State Freight Plan. Gabe gave the background and objectives that will fulfill all the federal requirements, express the vision for a freight system and raise awareness of freight's role in the economy. The timeline from August 2016 to July 2017 was reviewed with the Commission. The freight plan looks at the economy, logistics, transportation including infrastructure and policies and regulations. MassDOT's goals and priorities are reliability, modernization and expansion. Gabe shared problems relating to transportation with the information they gathered. Gabe explained the Massachusetts Freight Advisory Committee has 16 members from public and private sectors including shippers, carriers and multiple levels of government. The committee provides feedback, insight and develops recommendations based on future scenarios. There will be a Freight Advisory Committee Meeting at Pioneer Valley Planning Commission on April 24, 2017. Gabe urged people to attend.

The following comments were made:

Bob Bott asked how does Massachusetts compare to other states as a shipper. New York and New Jersey are the biggest but as New York and New Jersey become more congested the Port of Boston is growing. Gabe explained Massachusetts is encouraging the free flow of freight. John Duval asked if the state is encouraging more trains than trucks or all freight movement. Gabe pointed out there is a concurrent rail plan going on that is looking at rail movement. The Freight Plan is to identify problems and make recommendations. Specific projects and the cost are not part of this plan. Nat asked about bridges with weight limits and detours. Does the plan get down to the details? Nat thought if a few critical bridges were identified and dealt with then this would reduce problematic bridges that lead to long detours.

Bill Ennen commented on the positive impact of the opening of the CSX terminal in Worcester. He asked if any new projects are proposed that will have a big scale impact. Gabe explained the Port of Boston received a Tiger grant for dredging that will allow larger ships in the Boston area.

Any comments or other questions can be sent Clete Kus at ckus@berkshireplanning.org.

V. Last Mile Broadband Status Report

Bill Ennen, the Executive Office of Housing & Economic Development's Community Liaison for the Last Mile, gave a presentation on the status of the efforts to provide broadband to the unserved towns in western Massachusetts and answered questions. Bill handed out a chart of 19 communities and their status. There is not one solution for all communities. Bill stays connected with each community to work through their questions and suggest options for their town. The basic question for a town that currently does not have broadband is if the network for broadband will it be constructed and owned by the town or done by a private provider?

Bill explained the state asked private providers to put bids for proposals to build networks for towns. An example is a New York provider, Mid-Hudson, submitted a proposal to Tyringham. Some providers are national providers while others are local providers. Bill pointed out towns need to keep all options open.

The biggest change is the Baker administration will be releasing funding at one time instead of in stages to towns. In the past funding was released for planning first and then communities had to wait for funding for implementation. Bill stated in the future there will be a grant where towns who want to build their own network can apply for funding. The state is committed to every town.

Each town needs to make choices on their needs and cost involved to make it affordable for the users.

Nat asked Bill to comment on the access to the middle mile. The schools and hospital have benefited from the middle mile. Where it has not worked is for the private sector to hook up to the middle mile. The state needs to go back and look at how to do this correctly. The expense to hook up to the middle mile is too costly and that problem needs to be fixed.

VI. Consideration of Comments on the FY 2018 State Budget

The Commission was asked to approve the draft comment letter on a few key parts of the State Budget to inform our legislative delegation regarding items which are very important to the Commission and the work we do.

Jack commented the letter does a very good job of explaining our concerns and suggested we get the letter to our elected officials.

Jack Hickey moved to send the letter; seconded by Marie Raftery. Unanimously approved.

VII. Approval of Executive Committee Actions between January 19, 2017 and March 16, 2017

Jack Hickey moved to approve all Executive Committee actions between January 19, 2017 and March 16, 2017; seconded by Marie Raftery. Unanimously approved.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Promotion of Jennifer Kimball to Senior Planner

B. District Local Technical Assistance – Projects to Receive Assistance in 2017

C. MassDOT Online Comment Tool for Capital Investment Plan

Nat pointed out the deadline for online comments.

D. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative 16th Annual Spring Conference – Saturday, March 18th, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester

E. MassMoves Western Massachusetts Workshop – March 28th

F. 5th Thursday Dinner for Planning & Zoning Boards – March 30th, Stormwater Management Best Practices, Country Club of Pittsfield

G. Federal Budget Potential Issues for BRPC

Nat commented on threats we are seeing. We have not heard anything regarding Transportation Planning and Public Health Funding yet. We are concerned with disaster preparedness work that is funded through the Department of Homeland Security and natural disaster preparedness funded by FEMA. We have heard mixed messages about the Environmental Protection Agency and our Brownfield programs. The Water Quality and Assessments are likely not to survive. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) and Lead Removal programs funded from HUD are zeroed out in the President's budget proposal. Housing Rehab programs will go away which would increase homelessness. We have not heard about the Economic Development Programs funded through EDA.

H. Succession Planning for the Executive Director

Nat commented his retirement timeline is Sept 1 this year to Sept 1 next year.

I. Other – Tom announced DLTA award letters are being sent out.

IX. Executive Session – Actual Litigation Regarding Rest of River Clean-up

Kyle asked for a Motion to go into Executive Session to discuss legal strategy for actual litigation regarding the EPA Rest of River Clean-up and GE's appeal of the EPA's Clean-up. Such discussion, if held in open meeting, may have a detrimental effect on the legal position of BRPC's legal action with EPA and GE. As the Agenda for the meeting states, we expect to adjourn from Executive Session and do not expect to reconvene in regular session. Only Commission Delegates and Alternates, and Executive Director Karns may remain in the room for the Executive Session.

Malcolm Fick moved to go into Executive Session and we will not return to regular session; seconded by Sheila Irvin.

Vote to go into Executive Session must be by roll call vote;

Clerk Marie Raftery called the roll by town/city to go into Executive Session.

Marie read all 32 municipalities:

Adams	yes
Gt. Barrington	yes
Lanesborough	yes
Mt. Washington	yes
North Adams	yes
Pittsfield	yes
Stockbridge	yes
Tyringham	yes
Williamstown	yes
Windsor	yes

Staff Present: Nathaniel Karns – Executive Director

The Commission was in Executive Session.

X. Adjournment

Adjourned

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Meeting Agenda
Draft Meeting Minutes
Approval of Executive Committee Actions Memo
Executive Director's Report
Massachusetts Freight Plan
Draft Letter FY2018 State Budget
DLTA 2017 Projects Received (updated 2.9.2017)
MassDOT 2018-2022 Capital Investment Plan
CPTC 2017 Conference Schedule
Western Mass Moves Workshop
BRPC 5th Thursday Dinner Stormwater In Your Community
Timeline for Hiring The Executive Director
Massachusetts Freight Plan Presentation