

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
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KYLE HANLON, Chair  
SHEILA IRVIN, Vice-Chair  
MARIE RAFTERY, Clerk  
CHARLES P. OGDEN, Treasurer

NATHANIEL W. KARNS  
Executive Director

**APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING**

**Thursday July 27, 2017  
At BRPC Office**

**I. Call to Order**

**A. The meeting is called to order at 5:30 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.

Robert Ronzio informed the chair he would be recording the meeting.

**B. Introductions/Roll Call**

The following Commission members are present:

Robert Ronzio – Becket Delegate  
Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate  
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate  
Caleb Darby – Dalton Delegate  
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate  
Kenn Basler – Monterey Delegate  
James Mullen – New Marlborough Delegate  
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate  
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate  
Roger Kohler – Sandisfield Alternate  
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate  
Marie Raftery – Stockbridge Delegate  
Sarah Hudson – Tyringham Alternate  
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate

Staff Present:

Nathaniel Karns – Executive Director  
Marianne Sniezek – Office Manager  
Lauren Gaherty – Senior Planner

Others Present:

Andy McKeever – iberkshires  
Kate Fletcher - Stockbridge

Kyle welcomed new members to the Commission.

**C. Approval of Minutes May 18, 2017 Regular Meeting**

Rene Wood moved to approve; seconded by Jamie Mullen. Unanimously approved with 1 abstention.

**II. Comments from the Public – None**

**III. Delegate & Alternate Issues –** Rene Wood discussed the 5<sup>th</sup> Thursday presentation on Large Solar. The presenter discussed the laws the state is changing regarding the state's Solar Program. Rene reviewed the changes that would have an affect on the municipality's ability to negotiate solar agreements with developers. Rene asked if a letter would be written on behalf of the Commission on any negative impacts? After a discussion, it was decided no motion was needed and the Executive Committee could review and approve a letter at its August 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting.

**IV. Election of BRPC Officers for FY2018**

The Nominating Committee proposed the following slate of officers for FY 2018:

Chair:	Kyle Hanlon, North Adams Delegate
Vice Chair:	Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield Delegate
Clerk:	Marie Raftery, Stockbridge Delegate
Treasurer:	Charles Ogden, Egremont Alternate

Kyle announced nominations will be taken from the floor. There were no nominations from the floor.

Jamie Mullen moved to accept the nominations for the FY2018 slate of officers; seconded by Sarah Hudson. Unanimously approved.

Nat announced only Delegates could authorize the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the Commission for fiscal 2018. Please vote and sign the authorization form.

**V. Endorsement of Committee Chair and At-Large Executive Committee Member Appointments for FY 2018**

Kyle announced he did not have Committee Chair and At-large Member appointments finalized. The list will be ready for endorsement at the next meeting.

**VI. Approval of letters on Land Use Reform Legislation**

Nat explained the Regional Issues Committee reviewed old and new bills at multiple meetings. The Regional Issues Committee decided a separate letter should be sent to each Committee Chair since the bills are in different committees. Nat reviewed major sections in the bills with the Commission's comments.

Kyle thanked all on the Regional Issues Committee and the town planners who worked on this review. Jamie thanked Nat for preparing the detailed summary.

Kyle ask for a motion for the following letters:

**A. H.2420 – An Act Building for the Future of the Commonwealth (Representatives Kulik and Peake)**

**B. S.81 – An Act Promoting Housing and Sustainable Development (Senator Chandler)**

**C. S.94 – An Act Improving Housing Opportunities and the Massachusetts Economy (sponsor: Senator Rodriques)**

Rene asked to bold or move the Commissions comments to the top of the paragraph. Rene suggested to stress the financial impacts, these changes are unfunded mandates. Rene commented on the Certificate Program for Municipalities. Rene felt the more affluent communities would get certified and other communities would not receive state grants if they did not get certified. Rene also suggested to include BRPC's Analysis spreadsheet comparison as an attachment to the letters. Roger commented the opposing language should be stronger and he also opposed the Certificate Program for Municipalities. Kate Fletcher asked for a comment to be added to the

Approval Not Required Subdivisions section about the negative impacts caused by encouraging strip development on tourism and our economy.

After a discussion, Kyle asked for approval of the motion.

Jamie Mullen moved to approve letters with the suggested changes to the language and to include the attachment; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved.

**VII. Approval to Summit Grant Application to the Department of Energy Resources for Affordable Access Regional Coordination (AARC) Program**

The Commission is requested to authorize the Executive Director to apply to DOER's new Affordable Access Regional Coordination Grant Program and to sign any resulting agreements or contracts. We are applying to DOER for this new program in order to build BRPC's capacity to serve as a resource to municipalities or other community-based organizations to increase energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities for low income households in the county. This application will also provide training and education to local housing organizations and housing unit owners to promote access to affordable energy efficiency and renewable energy opportunities, such as maximizing incentive and rebate programs and streamlining renewable projects such as community solar or third party solar PV. The State has become aware that while individual homeowner, large business, and community-wide energy efficiency and renewable energy programs have been very successful across the state, the lower income population and landlords who provide many small-scale rental units are not taking advantage of the energy programs which are available. This new program is intended to build regional and local capacity to do so. No BRPC or local match is required. The grant application requires board approval.

Senior Planner, Lauren Gaherty, explained the Energy Grant application that must be submitted by September. This is a new grant for regional planning commissions and councils of governments to address the following Energy Issues:

- High electricity cost
- Housing – Rent burdened – 30% or more of renter's income goes to rent
- Help low to moderate income and the aging population access the grant funds who do not spend money on energy savings.
- The grant will help reach renters, landlords, homeowners and small businesses to access the funds.
- Help link people to the current initiatives and social services

BRPC would partner with other agencies and organizations such as Boards of Health, Elder Services, Councils on Aging, and Berkshire Community Action Council to save energy that will save money.

Lauren also pointed out that in the future renewable energy, such as solar, could be an option. BRPC would first would connect people to the existing programs.

Kenn Basler, Monterey Delegate, pointed out the DOER program goes well with the CDBG program their town was awarded. Low to moderate income homeowners who do not have the income to maintain their homes or the pride to ask for help. In Monterey, some homes are heated with electricity. Lauren commented that oil is the heat source in the hill towns and oil cost per square foot in rural areas is the highest. In Monterey, some homes are heated with electricity. Landlords own multiple properties and do not know how to access programs.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director to apply to DOER's new Affordable Access Regional Coordination Grant Program and to sign any resulting agreements or contracts; seconded by Jamie Mullen. Unanimously approved.

**VIII. Approval of Executive Committee Actions between May 18, 2017 and July 27, 2017**

Rene Wood moved to approve all Executive Committee actions between May 18 and July 27, 2017; seconded by Roger Bolton. Unanimously approved.

## IX. Executive Director's Report

### A. Staff Changes at BRPC

We have lost Senior Transportation Planner Emily Lindsey to the “accompanying partner” problem as her boyfriend, despite trying, was unable to find suitable employment in his field in the area and she has relocated to Denver to work at the Denver Regional Council of Governments. We also as part of the new fiscal year have made some internal reorganizations to clarify responsibilities and chain of command. The modified organization chart is attached. Assistant Director Tom Matuszko directly leads Community Planning efforts, and the Public Health Program Manager, Laura Kittross, and Environmental & Energy Program Manager, Melissa Provencher, report directly to him. Transportation Program Manager Clete Kus, Community & Economic Development Program Manager Pat Mullins, GIS, IT, and Data Program Manager Mark Maloy, and Office Manager Marianne Sniezek report directly to me, as does Tom as Assistant Director. Senior Planner Eammon Coughlin has moved over to Senior Transportation Planner, replacing Emily Lindsey. We are currently recruiting for a Senior Planner with a focus on zoning, land use and community planning and a new Transportation Planner.

Nat informed all that BRPC also is advertising for a full-time Program Associate to work on CDBG contracts and other Community & Economic Development projects. Another Planner position has been posted to support the Age Friendly Berkshire initiatives.

### B. Ridership Survey for Berkshire Regional Transit Authority

Given the high level of interest in improving public transportation in the Berkshires, the BRTA is doing an on-line ridership survey which may be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YYLJ6T9>. Please share this in your communities and with as many people as possible.

### C. Status of District Local Technical Assistance, Community Compact, and Efficiency and Regionalization Programs in FY 2018 State Budget

I am very pleased to report that DLTA was level funded at \$2.8 million and Community Compact and Efficiency and Regionalization programs at \$2.0 million each in the final state budget which was signed by the Governor. This was as he had requested and the House supported, with the Senate again not funding it but the Conference Committee did finally support the full amounts. Given the revenue issues in this year's budget, we feel very lucky that these programs were deemed worthy of continued support and thank Senator Hinds and Representatives Pignatelli, Marks, and Farley-Bouvier (as well as the late Representative Cariddi) for their strong support during the process. And thanks to our local officials and delegates and alternates who also voiced support directly to the delegation and the budget conference committee members.

### D. New Planning Board Member Training – 6:30 p.m., Thursday, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor Conference Room at BRPC

### E. Recreational Marijuana Workshop for Municipal Officials – (tentatively Thursday, August 31<sup>st</sup>, Lenox Town Hall)

With the passage of the new recreational marijuana legislation last week, and the pending action by Governor Baker on it, the clock is going to be moving fast for local actions on this topic and for at least one purpose, your community should already have this on your agenda. We are working hard to organize a workshop for local officials as quickly as possible. Tentatively we hope to hold the workshop on Thursday evening, August 31<sup>st</sup> at Lenox Town Hall. Please pencil that in on your calendars and we will get definitive information out as soon as possible on the workshop. Assistant Director Tom Matuszko is taking the lead in our office and can be contacted at [tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org) or 442-1521, ext. 34.

Rene commented this workshop will happen in the evening.

**F. Nominations for 2017 Charles Kusik Award**

Nominations are due for the annual Charles Kusik Award which is to be presented at our 2017 Annual Meeting, scheduled for Thursday, October 19th. Nominations are due no later than September 1st so that the Executive Committee can discuss them at its September meeting. A copy of the nomination form is attached.

Nat reported no nominations forms have been received to-date.

**G. Special Berkshire Transportation Studies in FY 2018 State Budget**

As you may have seen reported in the news media, the final FY 2018 State budget contains two directives to MassDOT for transportation studies over the coming several months. Representative Pignatelli was successful in directing MassDOT to study the possibility of creating an interchange between Lee and Westfield on the MassPike (presumably in Becket, Otis or Blandford) and Senator Hinds was successful in directing MassDOT to study the possibility of establishing seasonal train service between Pittsfield and New York City. We will be discussing these with MassDOT staff in the coming couple of weeks and they will be an agenda item for the next MPO meeting (probably in September). The turnpike interchange would also require involvement by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission as Blandford is within their transportation planning jurisdiction. For further information, contact Transportation Program Manager Clete Kus at [ckus@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:ckus@berkshireplanning.org) or 442-1521, ext. 20.

**H. EPA Brownfields Assessment Program Awards in the Berkshires**

We are very pleased to announce that BRPC was very successful again in the strong competition for EPA brownfields assessment funds, with a region-wide grant of \$300,000 and grants to Great Barrington and North Adams of \$300,000 each. These are 1% of the total number of grants awarded nation-wide and represent 1.6% of the funding nationwide. This is the second year in a row that BRPC has had direct responsibility for 3 successful grants. Environmental & Energy Program Manager Melissa Provencher deserves almost all the credit for this success. For information on BRPC's Brownfields Program, contact Melissa at 442-1521, ext. 22 or [mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org).

Nat explained North Adams and Gt. Barrington received grants. The BRPC regional assessments program was funded. Lee and Adams will continue using last year's funds. Pittsfield did not apply for a grant.

**I. Municipal Hazard Mitigation Program Awards in the Berkshires**

BRPC will be working with Adams, Dalton, Hinsdale and Sheffield on updating their Natural Disaster Hazard Mitigation Plans, with funding from the Federal Emergency Management Agency to the towns. Having an up-to-date Hazard Mitigation Plan is a prerequisite for some FEMA grant programs. The project manager will be Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty. For information on this program, contact Lauren at 442-1521, ext. 35 or at [lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org).

**J. Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program Awards in Berkshires**

Four Berkshire municipalities were awarded these grant funds, from a new state program, to help them identify and prepare for climate change impacts which can be expected. The four towns are Adams, Lanesborough, Monterey and Williamstown. Senior Planner Lauren Gaherty prepared all but Monterey's application and will be working with at least Adams and Lanesborough in identifying their climate change vulnerabilities and developing strategies to overcome them. For information on this program, contact Lauren at [lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lgaherty@berkshireplanning.org) or 442-1521, ext. 35.

**K. 2017 Community Development Block Grant Awards in Berkshires**

Congratulations to Adams, Becket, Monterey and North Adams on their successful applications for CDBG funding in the 2017 round. BRPC staff developed the Becket application, working closely with Town officials, especially Town Administrator Ed Gibson. The work will focus on housing rehabilitation. It is not too soon, if your community has an interest in this grant program, to begin work on developing a competitive application for 2018! For further information on the

CDBG program or the applications, contact Community & Economic Development Program Manager Pat Mullins at [pmullins@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:pmullins@berkshireplanning.org) or 442-1521, ext. 17.

L. **Other** – none

**X. Adjournment**

Jamie Mullen made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved. Adjourned at 6:55 pm.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Meeting Agenda

Draft Meeting Minutes May 18, 2017

Letter RE: H.2420 – An Act Building for the Future of the Commonwealth

Letter RE: S.81 – An Act Promoting Housing and Sustainable Development

Letter RE: S.94 – An Act Improving Housing Opportunities and the Massachusetts Economy

Approval to Submit Grant App to DOER Affordable Access Regional Coordination Program

Approval of Executive Committee Actions Memo

Letter RE: BRPC Supports adoption of H. 2932 Act Establishing the Mohawk Trail Woodlands

Partnership

Executive Director's Report

BRPC Organizational Chart July 2017

New Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals Member Training

Nomination Form – Charles Kusik Award for Outstanding Contributions to Planning

Del and Alt Yearly Authorization for Executive Committee to Act on Behalf of the Commission

FY18 Meeting schedule

Comparison of Land Use Reform