

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 May 18, 2017
At the Lenox Town Hall**

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:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Pam Kueber – Lenox Delegate
Jim Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
James Mullen – New Marlborough Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
CJ Hoss – Pittsfield Alternate
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Carole Owens – Stockbridge Alternate
Sarah Hudson – Tyringham Alternate
Marilyn Wiley – Washington Delegate
Dana Bixby – West Stockbridge Delegate
Susan Puddester – Williamstown Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
John Garcia – Windsor Delegate

Staff Present:

Nathaniel Karns – Executive Director
Thomas Matuszko – Assistant Director
Marianne Snirzek – Office Manager
Clete Kus – Transportation Program Manager
Bill Compton – Senior Planner
Pat Mullins - Community Development Program Manager

Others Present:

Senator Adam Hinds
Andy McKeever – iberkshires

C. Approval of Minutes

1. March 16, 2017 Regular Meeting

Sarah Hudson moved to approve; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved with 6 abstentions.

2. January 19, 2017 Executive Session – and authorize release

Motion not needed (approved at prior meeting).

3. March 16, 2017 Executive Session – and authorize release

Rene Wood moved to approve; seconded by Sarah Hudson. Unanimously approved with 2 abstentions.

II. Comments from the Public – None

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

IV. Senator Adam Hinds

Senator Adam Hinds explained his priorities. Currently he is working on the Senate budget process. Hinds stated there needs to be more investment in the western part of the state because of the changes in the past twenty years, the decrease in population, the lack of internet, and the lack of public transportation. These changes impact our municipalities and school budgets and must be addressed. The state needs to double down on high speed internet and education funding. The lack of internet access does not allow people to work from home. This causes losses on housing sales. There is a full accounting of MBI on how money is spent and what is left. The proposed increase in energy cost is unacceptable. All these issues are being brought to the attention of the Governor. Western Massachusetts is economically distressed. Boston cannot compete with the Berkshires in terms of nature, quality of life and where you want to raise a family. In a couple of years, we should begin to see changes in Western Massachusetts based on the efforts.

The Senate version of the budget is very serious about investment in education. The foundation budget review and recommendation are based on a study done that shows schools are spending more on retirees benefits and special education than we think. The State needs to be compensating those expenses through the foundation budget. The Senate adopted the corrective measures needed for special education expenditures. The focus in on the "CommonWEALTH".

The biggest problem with the budget is the revenue is lower than the expenditures. We cannot balance the budget. We have more jobs but not more income. The increase in jobs are in the lower paying sectors. Tax code changes have affected the revenue dollars. The state should tax online sales and Airbnb. We need to convince the Governor that Arts, Tourism, and Cultural income does increase the impact on our economy. For every dollar spent on tourism there is seven dollars generated in hotel and food revenue.

Jim Lovejoy pointed out there is no strong vision for internet access. We should not set our sights too low, for economic development we need the best technology and set our sights higher. North Adams and Pittsfield will have substandard internet infrastructure. Time Warner / Spectrum does not meet the community's needs. There are five communities already working together on this issue.

Rene Wood brought up the issue that Berkshire County has no Boston news channel provided by Spectrum. Since money is being provided by MBI to Charter Berkshire County should have a Boston channel. Berkshire County is treated like we are from New York. Spectrum should not get away with giving Berkshire County residents a Springfield channel as an equivalent channel. Spectrum is also going to encrypt their signals because of cable theft. In the future, there will be a \$7.00 per TV charge for an encryption device after the first free year. There is no documented proof of cable theft.

Rene also mentioned how fundamental it is to the communities with no staff to receive BRPC's assistance provided through the District Local Technical Assistance funding. Rene requested Senator Hinds to get the approval of these funds. CJ Hoss also pointed out if zoning reform is passed there will be a greater burden on the communities who will need DLTA assistance from BPRC. Senator Hinds agreed on the importance but DLTA is a negotiation piece in the budget.

Senator Hinds also will be looking at legislation to provide local government additional taxing authority to generate more transportation revenue.

All thanked Senator Adam Hinds for coming and his efforts for Berkshire County.

V. Proposed Transportation Improvement Program for FY 2018-2022

The updated Transportation Improvement Program for the Berkshires which establishes which projects will receive the limited federal transportation funds in the region will be before the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization at its meeting on May 23rd.

Transportation Manager Clete Kus presented the staff recommendations for improvements to highways, intersections, sidewalks, pavement resurfacing, bicycle and pedestrian projects, and bridge improvements. Also presented was the Transit budget for new buses and maintenance of existing vehicles for fiscal years 2018 to 2022.

Clete explained to spend out all the money available for projects there are no scenarios for the commission to discuss and instruct the BRPC chair how to vote. Also, there are other projects that are not in the design process yet and could not be included in the recommended projects for FY 2018 to 2022.

Clete asked the Commission to recommend how the Chair should vote on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) at the MPO meeting on May 23th.

Jamie Mullen made a motion for the Chair to endorse staff recommendations in the updated Transportation Improvement Program as presented at the next MPO meeting; Rene Wood seconded. Approved with 1 abstention.

VI. Review of Draft 2017 Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy

Senior Planner Bill Compton presented key portions of the proposed CEDS to the Commission. For the past four years, we have only needed to provide annual updates; this is a new document reflecting considerable changes in what the U.S. Economic Development Administration is requesting and will keep the region eligible to apply for public works and other grants supporting economic development activities in the region, as well as be eligible for Economic Development District status.

Bill explained the CEDS document enables municipalities and organizations to access U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) grant funds. An approved CEDS is a prerequisite to receive funding from EDA.

The CEDS is a way for municipalities and organizations to share economic development projects and initiatives.

Bill pointed out Berkshire County's biggest loss is young adults, unemployment is down while at the same time the employment has shifted to lower paying jobs. Bill reviewed Berkshire County's strengths, weakness, opportunities, and threats.

Bill explained the region's ability to recover quickly, withstand or avoid a shock, i.e. a natural disaster or closure of a large employer.

There was a discussion on the strengths that Berkshire County is accessible to Boston and New York City via car however access via passenger train is not easy. Interstate Railroad for freight is a strength but passenger rail is a weakness.

After a discussion on strengths and weakness, the group requested the points be clarified in the final document. Nat also explained New England Homes Project will be added to the list of projects.

The Commission was requested to authorize the Executive Committee take final action on the CEDS at its June 1st meeting.

Rene Wood moved to authorize the Executive Committee take final action on the CEDS at its June 1st meeting; seconded by Susan Puddester. Unanimously approved.

VII. Approval of Letter on H. 1083 – An Act Extending the Approval Time for Approval Not Required Plans (sponsor: Rep. Cariddi)

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission requested that the Committee expeditiously support the bill filed by Representative Cariddi which provides for a small extension of time for action by local planning boards to act on so-called Approval Not Required subdivision plans.

Nat explained the current time limit is only 21 days and the bill would allow up to 45 days, which is not an unreasonable time to allow for review since some boards meet only once a month.

James Mullen moved to approve the Letter on H. 1083 – An Act Extending the Approval Time for Approval Not Required Plans with a correction; seconded by Sheila Irvin. Unanimously approved.

VIII. Approval of Letter on S.1993 – An Act Protecting Municipal Authority Relative to Airports (sponsor: Senator Tarr, co-sponsors: Senator Hinds and Representative Pignatelli)

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission requested that the Committee support the bill filed by Senator Bruce Tarr which protects municipal authority relative to airports. This bill serves to protect the home rule authority of municipalities to regulate the use of land within their boundaries for private, non-commercial airports.

Rene asked to change some of the verbiage. After a discussion, Kyle asked for a motion.

Jamie Mullen moved to approve the modified Letter on S.1993 – An Act Protecting Municipal Authority Relative to Airports with modification; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved.

IX. Adoption of FY 2018 Budget for the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Tom explained the proposed budget for FY 2018. The reason for the increase is for an additional planner to work on the Transportation and District Local Technical Assistance contracts.

For proposed revenues, Tom explained the revenue from EPA Brownfield, Community Development Block Grants and District Local Technical Assistance was included. Under expenditures, salaries increased due to pay scale changes, merit increases and the new planner position. Overall benefits increased slightly due to health and dental increases around 4%. Under operating expenses there is an increase to cover the costs of seeking/recruiting a replacement for Nat when he retires which he has announced will occur next year. BRPC plans to contribute \$45,000 towards Retirees Health Insurance. Also budgeted is \$15,000 for our reserve.

Kyle asked for a motion after there were no questions or discussion.

Sarah Hudson moved to approve the FY 2018 Budget for Berkshire Regional Planning Commission; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved.

X. Appointment to the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority Board

Kyle asked the Commission to reappoint Lisa Sloan of Lee to the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority Board.

James Mullen moved to reappoint Lisa Sloan of Lee to the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority Board; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved with 1 abstention.

XI. Report of the BRPC Nominating Committee – Officers for FY 2018

CJ Hoss reported the Nominating Committees nominations for the following slate of officers:

Chair	Kyle Hanlon
Vice-Chair	Sheila Irvin
Clerk	Marie Raftery
Treasurer	Charles Ogden

All four officers have agreed to serve another year. At the next Commission meeting after July 1st other nominations can be taken.

XII. Approval of Executive Committee Actions between March 16 and May 18, 2017

Sarah Hudson moved to approve all Executive Committee actions between March 16 and May 18, 2017; seconded by Rene Wood. Unanimously approved.

Kyle explained at the last Commission meeting Bob Bott from Mt. Washington requested the topic of increases in Health Care costs to our municipalities be reviewed. At the last Regional Issues and Executive Committee meetings it was decided this topic is a statewide issue and too big of an issue for BRPC to take on. Jim Lovejoy thanked BRPC taking the request under consideration.

Kyle announced the flyer for input for BRPC's 5th Thursday Dinner and presentation on large scale solar. All questions, concerns or your interests should be sent to Tom Matuszko, tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

XIII. Executive Director's Report

- A. MassDOT Capital Investment Plan 2018-2022 Berkshire Public Meeting – Tuesday, May 23rd, 6:30 p.m., MassDOT District 1, Lenox**
- B. Mass Association of Planning Directors Conference in Pittsfield – Thursday and Friday, June 15-16th, Crowne Plaza**
- C. 5th Thursday Dinner for Planning & Zoning Boards – June 29th, Large Scale Solar, Mazzeo's Ristorante, Pittsfield**
- D. District Local Technical Assistance – Status in State Budget for FY 2018**
Nat urged all to call or send emails to Senator Hinds and Senator Karen E. Spilka (D-Ashland), Chair of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means the importance of DLTA funding. Rene Wood suggested copying Senator Rosenberg.
- E. MassDOT Small Bridge Projects in Berkshires**
- F. Other – None**

XIV. Adjournment

Jamie Mullen made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Sheila Irvin. Unanimously approved. Adjourned at 9:05 pm.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Meeting Agenda
Draft Meeting Minutes March 16, 2017
Draft Executive Meeting Minutes January 19, 2017
Draft Executive Meeting Minutes March 16, 2017
Berkshire MPO TIP 2018 to 2022 Project List
Memo Draft 2017 CEDs
Letter RE: H.1083 Subdivision Law and docket No 391
Letter RE: S 1993 Airports and docket 1993
Memo Proposed FY2018 Budget
FY 2018 Projected Revenues
FY 2018 Projected Expenditures
Memo and Letter Appointment to Berk County Reg Housing Authority Board
Approval of Executive Committee Actions Memo
Letter to MEPA on Hoosac Valley Rail Service Ext SEIR
Drug and Alcohol Free Work Place Policy
Personnel Pay Plan
Executive Director's Report
MassDOT Capital Investment Plan Public Meeting Schedule
2017 MAPD Annual Conference Pittsfield June 15 to 16
CEDs presentation
2017 Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy