

COMMON GROUND

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1:

2013-2016 TIP & UPWP PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD BEGINS

2012 BERKSHIRE BURN PERMITS A SUCCESS

PAGE 2:

DLTA PROJECT UPDATES

PAGE 3:

TOWN OF LEE AWARDED EPA BROWNFIELDS CLEANUP GRANT
BRPC PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES OFFERED

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES: CONSERVATION & RECREATION ELEMENT AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

PAGE 4:

5TH THURSDAY WRAP-UP: VILLAGE CENTER ZONING

BERKSHIRE PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE UPDATE

WE NEED YOUR HELP

CALENDAR

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

2013-2016 TIP & UPWP PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD BEGINS

BRPC's 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and 2013 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) began 30-day public comment periods on June 4, 2012. Please visit BRPC's transportation planning website for more information and to view the draft documents. Please send comments by July 3, 2012.

The TIP is a prioritized, multi-year program for the implementation of federally funded transportation projects in Berkshire County. The TIP implements the region's long-range transportation plan by programming federal-aid funds for transit, highway, bridge, transportation enhancement, bike paths, safety, and air quality improvements. Even though the TIP contains \$58,694,139 for highway and bridge improvements and \$13,643,956 for public transportation operations and improvements, there were more than \$160 million dollars worth of projects submitted in competition for the available funds.

STAFF CONTACT: Anuja Koirala at akoirala@berkshireplanning.org or x18

The 2013 UPWP describes all of BRPC's transportation planning activities for the next federal fiscal year (October 1 – September 30). It also includes activities that have other federal, state, and/or local funding sources for transportation planning areas. It spells out the ongoing planning activities, planning studies and technical support projects including detailed budget information about BRPC's transportation planning. The 2013 UPWP contains more than six thousand (6,000) hours of staff time for projects like bike path planning in North Adams, Williamstown, and Lee, a U.S. 20 corridor analysis through the Town of Lee, and Road Safety Audits.

STAFF CONTACT: Clete Kus at ckus@berkshireplanning.org or x20

2012 BERKSHIRE BURN PERMITS A SUCCESS

For the second year in a row the BRPC has offered communities the opportunity to be part of Berkshire Burn Permits Program. This year there were 6,484 permits issued for the nine participating communities. This is up from the 2,261 permits that were issued last year with six participating communities. The participating communities include: Becket, Great Barrington, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Peru, Pittsfield, Richmond and Stockbridge.

During the burn season of January 15th to May 1st, this program allows residents of participating communities to go online to www.bcburnpermits.com to fill out the required application information. An electronic burn permit is then issued instantly, saving not only the resident the trip town hall or the fire department, but it frees up fire department staff to take on other responsibilities. The online portal allows the fire departments to keep closer track of issued permits by creating a database of application information. The price of this service is split evenly between all participating communities. This year the service was \$111 per community. Visit www.bcburnpermits.com to learn more about this program today.

BRPC considers this a success and if municipalities are interesting in this service for your community for the 2013 burn season, they should contact BRPC today.

STAFF CONTACT: Sara Lafayette at slafayette@berkshireplanning.org or x19

HAPPY CAMPING



DLTA PROJECT UPDATES

REGIONAL FARM ACTION PLANS: Partnering municipalities have requested assistance with the development of five sub-regional action plans for supporting local farms. This countywide effort that includes community volunteers in four teams that focus on a grassroots-driven planning process centered on local agriculture and community food security by gathering original survey data and analysis on regional food supply and demand.

DALTON BUSINESS PARK DEVELOPMENT: Dalton requested assistance with the development of two small business parks in its M.G.L. Chapter 43D district to increase opportunities for economic growth by creating additional space for commercial/industrial development. BRPC has begun the process of organizing stakeholders (Dalton, Pittsfield, private property owners) and is looking to schedule a meeting in July to achieve consensus on the path forward for a Memorandum of Understanding.

EGREMONT VILLAGE CENTER ZONING: The Town of Egremont has requested assistance with the development of a zoning amendment to create a village center district. The Planning Board and BRPC anticipate beginning work on the project in July 2012.

LEE DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: The Town of Lee requested assistance for economic development planning to ready the downtown area, mainly the West Side, to accept economic growth. BRPC and town officials held a kick-off meeting and agreed upon a scope of work. The town has re-convened its Downtown Task Force to assist with this work. BRPC and the Downtown Task Force have begun reviewing existing plans to identify the most pressing planning needs related to the focus area.

HOUSATONIC VILLAGE REDEVELOPMENT PLANNING: Great Barrington requested assistance with re-development planning for Housatonic Village to encourage economic development and growth. BRPC will work cooperatively to complete an inventory of the village, identify barriers to economic growth, and implement solutions to remove these barriers. BRPC has completed a survey and analysis of the village pattern and presented the “draft” findings to the Planning Board for comments. An existing conditions summary is underdevelopment to identify barriers to economic development.

NEW MARLBOROUGH VILLAGE CENTER ZONING: The Town requested assistance with zoning amendments to create five village center districts to ease permitting difficulties for residential and commercial uses, to allow mixed uses and to promote infill development. The Planning Board and BRPC held two meetings to discuss the revised village center zoning. BRPC has written several revisions to the village center zoning bylaw based upon these discussions.

WEST STOCKBRIDGE VILLAGE CENTER ZONING: The Town requested assistance with the zoning amendments to update its current village center zoning bylaw to encourage economic development in village areas by increasing opportunities for parking and encouraging mixed uses. BRPC and members of the Planning Board sub-committee met to discuss the specific issues with the current village and the zoning bylaw. BRPC completed an inventory of the existing village and presented the findings to the full Planning Board. BRPC has begun work on drafting amendments to the existing zoning bylaw to remedy issues identified.

ENHANCED REGIONAL COOPERATION: The participating towns have requested assistance with identifying possible areas of municipal cooperation with the objective to identify areas of cooperation that might result in cost savings to municipalities. Initial work on this project has begun including the development of a draft survey to assess areas where communities are already working together has been prepared. A presentation has been made to the Berkshire County Selectman’s Association.

WIREDWEST LEASE AGREEMENT: WiredWest (a 22 town municipal lighting plant cooperative seeking to increase broadband access in Western MA) requested assistance with the development of a co-location agreement that each member municipality will need to execute in order to obtain broadband service over the WiredWest municipal fiber optic network. BRPC is researching lease agreements and has been working with a 2 member sub-committee on developing the lease agreement.

PITTSFIELD-LENOX WASTEWATER REGIONALIZATION: Lenox and Pittsfield requested assistance researching the feasibility of a regional wastewater system to determine the benefit from the formation of a regional wastewater system that takes into account projected capital costs of upgrades to the individual systems. BRPC provided initial comments on the Pittsfield wastewater system engineering study and distributed a “road map” to the steering committee for feedback.

SAVOY SCHOOL COST-BENEFIT ANALYSIS: Savoy requested assistance with conducting a neutral cost-benefit analysis of its elementary school to provide information to help determine the cost effectiveness of closing the local elementary school and sending its elementary students to a regional school. The Board of Selectmen appointed a 9 member study committee to oversee the cost-benefit analysis. An outline for the study has been develop and BRPC is currently conducting research.

PUBLIC REGIONAL ENERGY ENTITY: Participating municipalities requested assistance to research the costs and benefits of forming a public regional energy entity. The BRPC Regional Issues Committee sent a letter to each town suggesting that an article be placed on its 2012 annual town meeting warrant, allowing residents to express interest in municipal aggregation of electricity. BRPC also developed and sent a draft warrant article to interested towns. BRPC has conducted initial follow-up with the towns adopting the warrant article and continues to explore the possibility of creating a regional energy entity.

MUNICIPAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES: Lenox requested assistance with identifying municipal performance measures so that municipalities can equally compare operations and finances. BRPC has met with the Town Managers/Administrators group to discuss the project, conducted initial research on performance measures and met with Department of Revenue staff.

HOUSATONIC RIVER RESTORATION FUNDING MECHANISM: Participating municipalities requested that BRPC work cooperatively with all stakeholders to ensure that the selected cleanup plan is protective of human health and safety, to identify possible restoration funding mechanisms and to provide comments on the EPA Remedy Proposal. BRPC has secured a “draft” socio-economic impact study for the impacted municipalities, provided comments to the consultant for their final report and feedback on the draft EPA/Mass DEP Cleanup Strategy.

STAFF CONTACT: Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or x14

TOWN OF LEE AWARDED EPA BROWNFIELDS CLEANUP GRANT

The Town of Lee has been awarded a \$100,000 Brownfields Cleanup Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency to cleanup petroleum contamination on an abandoned residential property in the downtown area. The Town acquired title to the property through a tax foreclosure proceeding and intends to cleanup the contamination on the property and raze the current structure to position the site for redevelopment. BRPC staff wrote and submitted the successful grant on behalf of the Town. If your community has a municipally owned brownfield or suspected brownfield site, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has the knowledge and resources to assist you.

STAFF CONTACT: Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or x14

BRPC PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT SERVICES OFFERED

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is offering pavement management services for our local communities. This service can help maximize budgets, extend the life of our region's roads, and is eligible for Chapter 90 reimbursement. BRPC can customize pavement management programs to each community's needs.

As part of this service, BRPC will:

- Collect data about the current condition of your roads.
- Gather information about your budget, how you prefer to fix your roads, and your local priorities.
- Combine the information to recommended short term road repair program and estimate how the overall health of the community's roads will improve.

The BRPC pavement management system uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system. PASER is a 1 to 10 (poor to perfect) rating scale that applies to all road surfaces. BRPC uses the Roadsoft computer program to collect data and figure out the best ways for our cities and towns to spend scarce road funding. Contact BRPC today if you are interested in these services.

STAFF CONTACT: Doug Plachcinski at dplachcinski@berkshireplanning.org or x16

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES: CONSERVATION & RECREATION ELEMENT AVAILABLE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW

The Sustainable Berkshires regional plan is nearing completion of its Conservation and Recreation Element. This important element identifies the long-term goals for supporting and enhancing conservation of healthy land, water, and habitat areas while accommodating and growing the range of outdoor recreation opportunities. The element is divided into three main sections:

- **Land Acquisition and Management:** This section reviews the many groups involved in land conservation in the Berkshires and sets goals and strategies for how they can continue to make the most of limited resources to achieve the region's land acquisition and management objectives.
- **Habitat and Biodiversity:** This section provides an overview of the habitat and biodiversity of the region and identifies a number of goals for how to continue to be good stewards of the rich environment that helps define the Berkshires as a unique and beautiful place. This includes a conservation framework which will serve as a regional guide for priority land acquisitions for habitat protection in the future.
- **Outdoor Recreation:** This section reviews the wide range of outdoor recreation opportunities afforded by the landscape that offer numerous health and economic benefits to the region. Goals in this section focus on how to improve, expand, and connect recreation events and opportunities and engage more residents and visitors of all ages in their use. This section contains a recreation framework that highlights three main spines or systems that have national or international significance but are also larger scale initiatives prized and championed locally: Appalachian Trail and other Long Trails, the Western New England Greenway bike path, and the river-based blueway system centered on the Hoosic and Housatonic Rivers.

The goals and policies established in this document were based in the input received at two conservation and recreation forums held in November 2011 as well as specialized input from environmental, land trust, state, sportsmen, wildlife, and conservation groups active across the region. The draft element will be available for public review at www.sustainableberkshires.org in July. Visit the project website to sign up to receive an e-mail alert when the draft is posted. Stay tuned for a public workshop designed to ensure the goals capture all of the regions objectives in these areas and your priorities for implementation.

STAFF CONTACT: Amy Kacala at akacala@berkshireplanning.org or x12

SAVE THE DATE: BRPC ANNUAL MEETING

The BRPC Annual Dinner is scheduled for Thursday October 18, 2012 at the Pittsfield Country Club. The evening's speaker will be Congressman John W. Olver. Keep your eyes peeled for more information in the coming months!



Presorted
Standard
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 121
Pittsfield, MA

5TH THURSDAY WRAP-UP: VILLAGE CENTER ZONING

BRPC held its second 5th Thursday Dinner of 2012 on May 31st at the ITAM Lodge in Pittsfield. Ms. Danielle McKahn of the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission gave a presentation on village center and downtown zoning that was well received by the sixty people in attendance. BRPC is currently working with the towns of New Marlborough, Egremont and West Stockbridge on village center zoning projects. If you are interested in exploring the concept of village center zoning for your community please feel free to contact BRPC staff for more information.

STAFF CONTACT: Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or x14

BERKSHIRE PUBLIC HEALTH ALLIANCE: UPDATE

The Berkshire Public Health Alliance (BPHA), a group of 21 Berkshire County municipalities working together to improve the delivery of public health service, is operational. Starting July 1, 2012 BPHA will provide inspectional services to two towns and public health nursing services to four towns. BPHA received grants from the Department of Public Health (District Incentive Implementation Grant) and Executive Office of Administration and Finance (Community Innovation Grant) to help launch this effort. The long-term goal is to be self-sufficient through providing a variety of public health services throughout the Berkshires. Previously Susan Timberlake was hired as the Program Director to help build this program. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, along with the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association, helped create this effort. BRPC continues to serve as the fiscal agent. For more information go to www.berkshirepublichealth.org. Municipalities wanting services or information should contact Susan Timberlake at programmanager@berkshirepublichealth.org

WE NEED YOUR HELP

BRPC is trying to reduce costs to produce this newsletter. One of the simplest ways to do so is to send it out digitally. If you are receiving a paper copy of this newsletter and would like to or be willing to receive it digitally, please provide your current e-mail address to Judy Wagner at jwagner@berkshireplanning.org or x10. Help us achieve our goal of 100% digital distribution by December 31, 2012!

CALENDAR

All meetings held in BRPC office unless otherwise noted.

JULY

- 4 **BRPC Offices Closed**, 4th of July Holiday
- 5 **Executive Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 10 **MPO Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 19 **Sustainable Berkshires Consortium Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.

AUGUST

- 9 **Executive Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 16 **Sustainable Berkshires Consortium Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 21 **TAC Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 28 **MPO Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS
None at this time.