

COMMON GROUND

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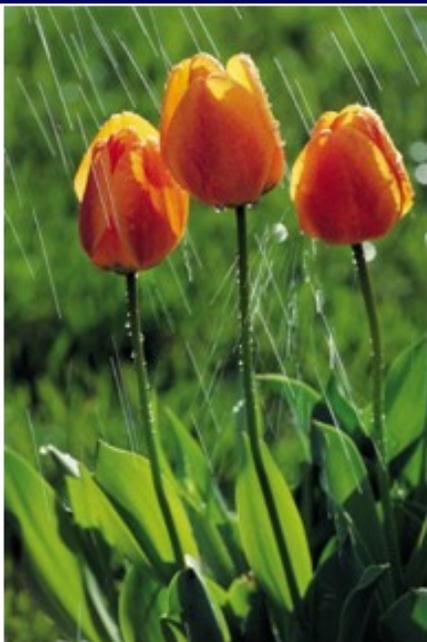
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A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

2012 DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AWARDS ANNOUNCED

An impressive twenty-six municipalities will directly benefit from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's 2012 District Local Technical Assistance Program. BRPC will work cooperatively with participating municipalities on fourteen proposals that support municipal partnerships or support planning activities that affect priority development areas, as identified by the municipality. Six of the fourteen projects address priority development areas within a municipality and the remaining eight projects support municipal partnerships and regionalization. We look forward to working with the participating municipalities on the following projects:

Priority Development Areas

Village Center Zoning Bylaws (New Marlborough, Egremont, West Stockbridge)
Downtown Redevelopment (Lee, Great Barrington)
Business Park Development (Dalton)

Municipal Partnerships & Regionalization

Regional Farm Action Plans
Enhanced Regional Cooperation
Broadband Regionalization - WiredWest
Regional Wastewater System
Savoy School Cost-Benefit Analysis
Regional Public Energy Entity
Municipal Performance Measures
Rest of River Cleanup

For additional information on these projects please visit www.berkshireplanning.org to read the complete project summaries.

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

CALL FOR TRANSPORTATION PROJECTS

The Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) has issued call letters for the FY 2013-2016 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). These letters provide important information related to this solicitation including available funding, the application process and the TIP Development schedule. The development of the TIP is a process by which federal transportation funds are allocated to major road, street, highway and public transportation projects within Berkshire County. Projects on local or residential streets do not qualify for federal transportation funds and cannot be considered for the TIP.

Municipalities that are interested in submitting or sponsoring projects must complete and submit project data forms by March 12, 2012. Project evaluations will be conducted in April, followed by a comment period in June concluding with endorsement and adoption by the Technical Advisory Committee and MPO in July.

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

BERKSHIRE HAZARD MITIGATION PLANNING

The Berkshire County Hazard Mitigation Plan was submitted to FEMA for their review in July 2011. FEMA reviewed the plan and sent comments to BRPC in January. These comments have been addressed and the plan resubmitted to FEMA. We are now awaiting the final approval from them. Once they approve the plan, we will be contacting the 19 participating communities to have them formally adopt the plan. Once the communities adopt the plan, they will be eligible for grant funding from FEMA for hazard mitigation projects.

In addition to the ongoing Berkshire County Hazard Mitigation Plan, BRPC has begun work with six new communities to add them to the plan. These communities are Cheshire, Clarksburg, Hinsdale, Mount Washington, New Ashford and West Stockbridge. BRPC will be meeting with these communities several times over the next few months to review their hazards and come up with mitigation actions.

STAFF CONTACTS: Mark Maloy (for the Berkshire County Hazard Mitigation Plan) at mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org or x29 and Lindsay Errichetto (for the six communities) at lerrichetto@berkshireplanning.org or x28

NORTH ADAMS, IS IT WALKABLE?

Students from the Williams College Environmental Studies Planning Workshop, with guidance provided by BRPC Planner Mackenzie Greer, embarked on an ambitious mission this fall. They set out on foot to learn firsthand about the “walkability” of North Adams. There are many attributes which make a place walkable including overall safety, sidewalks, crosswalks, aesthetics and how well places of interest are connected. The areas studied included Downtown and the adjacent residential neighborhoods of Church Street, Ashland Street/MCLA, UNO and State Street. Methods used included numbered rankings for blocks of the streets, on-site observations, informal interviews with community members and detailed interviews with stakeholders.

The survey says – North Adams is a very walkable city! While there are potential improvements in each area, from very small changes to larger ones that will take time to implement, overall the well-connected streets and proximity of these neighborhoods to essential services create a very walkable physical form. A walkable community allows residents and visitors to reduce their dependence on vehicles, get in exercise during daily routines, and provide access to important needs for everyone. The information collected and recommendations made will be included in the City’s current comprehensive planning effort, North Adams Vision 2030.

Make sure to reach out to BRPC if you’re interested in walkability in your community!

STAFF CONTACTS: Mackenzie Greer at mgreer@berkshireplanning.org or x32

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES UPDATE

The Sustainable Berkshires Regional Plan effort continues to move ahead through its first stages. The website now has an improved format. Visit www.sustainableberkshires.org where you’ll find general (click on About), topic-specific (click on The Plan>Plan Topics), or similar information grouped (click on The Plan>Maps, Process, etc.). Information will continue to be added as it is produced, so please check back often.

Beyond learning more about the project in general, the following information is also available on the website: topic specific maps plus materials and summaries from the Visioning workshops (July, 2011), the Historic Preservation forums (October, 2011), and the Conservation and Recreation forums (December, 2011).

Sign up for email updates on the website, and if you use Facebook, please “like” Sustainable Berkshires! As always, if you prefer information in another format, contact BRPC staff by phone to make a request.

STAFF CONTACTS: Mackenzie Greer at mgreer@berkshireplanning.org or x32

BE GREEN: REQUEST YOUR ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER TODAY

Request to be part of our electronic newsletter mailing by contacting Judy Wagner at jwagner@berkshireplanning.org or x10!

CONTRIBUTE TO THE IRENE AFTER ACTION REPORT

BRPC is facilitating the Berkshire County Tropical Storm Irene After Action Report and Improvement Plan for the Western Massachusetts Regional Homeland Security Advisory Council. This interdisciplinary report is aggregating a variety of data, experiences, best practices, and areas to build upon from a uniquely regional response perspective. Actively involved within this process are members from all three of Berkshire County's Regional Emergency Planning Committees, numerous municipality representatives, several critical community partners, as well as state-wide agencies. Our final report will be integrated with our contiguous region's after action reports providing a comprehensive analysis of the entire Western Massachusetts response. If you are interested in participating please contact BRPC before the end of March.

STAFF CONTACT: Lindsay Errichetto at lerrichetto@berkshireplanning.org or x28

COMMUNITY INNOVATION CHALLENGE GRANTS UPDATE

Keep your eyes peeled! The Community Innovation Challenge Grant Program recipients will be announced at the beginning of March. The selection criteria includes projects that are innovative, have the potential for the greatest impact, provide significant cost savings or other tangible benefits, have demonstrated feasibility of successful implementation, and have potential applicability to other local government entities. Several Berkshire communities applied for these funds.

STAFF CONTACT: Thomas Matuszko at tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org or x34

BRPC BIDS ADIEU TO TERRY PLANTIER EUCKER, THE BERKSHIRE CONSERVATION AGENT

With regret, BRPC says goodbye to Terry Plantier Eucker. Terry has served as the Berkshire Conservation Agent since the program's inception in 2002. She was instrumental in its establishment and spent countless hours to make it work. Terry has tirelessly served as an important technical resource for Berkshire County municipalities to implement the Wetland Protection Act. She worked in 21 towns in the county as well as in several in adjoining counties. She is leaving the Berkshire Conservation Agent Program, BCAP, and the area to pursue another career opportunity. BRPC hopes to continue the BCAP program but will be hard pressed to find a replacement with Terry's dedication. We wish her and her family the best of luck!

BRPC WELCOMES LINDSAY ERRICHETTO

We welcome Lindsay Errichetto as a new Planner. Lindsay has ten years of progressively responsible leadership positions with several social services agencies in the region, including the Berkshire Community Action Council, the Berkshire County Chapter of the American Red Cross and Big Brothers Big Sisters of Berkshire County. With dual undergraduate degrees from UMASS and a Masters of Public Administration from Westfield State University, Lindsay brings a breadth of experience and skills to BRPC. Initially she will be working on projects pertaining to emergency communications, hazard mitigation, as well as after action disaster reporting before getting more involved in housing and neighborhood planning. You can reach Lindsay via email at lerrichetto@berkshireplanning.org or at x28.

PUBLIC MEETING UPDATE ON COORDINATED PUBLIC TRANSIT-HUMAN SERVICES TRANSPORTATION PLAN

This plan update focuses on the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, older adults and persons with low income, while making recommendations on how to improve transportation for these three demographic groups. It is being updated to retain the region's eligibility to receive federal funding and address the growing needs of human services transportation users. It also fulfills the federal requirements under the Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) in 2005.

The public meeting is schedule for Tuesday March 20, 2012 at 1:00 p.m. in the BRTA Conference Room at 1 Columbus Avenue in Pittsfield.

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



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UPCOMING EVENTS

SPRING 2012 CPTC CONFERENCE

On Saturday March 17, 2012 at Holy Cross College in the Hogan Center the CPTC will be holding their Spring 2012 Conference. Keynote address will be given by Gregory Bialecki, the Secretary of the Massachusetts Office of Housing & Economic Development. A wide range of topics for the conference include the basics and the latest “hot” topics. Visit the CPTC website to learn more about the conference and register today (www.umass.edu/masscptc/).

UPCOMING 5TH THURSDAY DINNER: MARCH 29, 2012

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission will hold a 5th Thursday dinner on March 29, 2012 at Mazzeo’s Ristorante in Pittsfield. The featured speaker is attorney Don Dubendorf who will discuss the very timely issue of “Permitting Solar Photovoltaic Projects.” The local permitting of solar photovoltaic projects is confusing and riddled with uncertainty. Attorney Dubendorf will attempt to provide some clarity on this issue by discussing what communities can do, what communities might do and what communities cannot do to regulate solar photovoltaic systems. Please see the event flyer or www.berkshireplanning.org for additional information. We hope you will join us. Contact Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or x14 to RSVP today!

GRANTS

NEW ROUND OF CULTURAL FACILITIES FUND GRANTS AVAILABLE

Governor Deval Patrick has allocated a new appropriation for the Massachusetts Cultural Facilities Fund. This funding source allows the Massachusetts Cultural Council and MassDevelopment to support capital projects in the arts, humanities and sciences that create jobs, educate adults, and improve the quality of life in communities across the state. Guidelines, deadlines and details about these programs and grants can be found at www.massculturalfacilities.org. Public information sessions have been scheduled across the state.

CALENDAR

All meetings held in BRPC office unless otherwise noted.

MARCH

- 1 **BRPC Executive Committee Meeting,** 4:00 p.m.
- 15 **BRPC Full Commission Meeting,** 8:00 a.m.
- 17 **CPTC Spring Conference,** Holy Cross College
- 20 **Coordinated Public Transit-Human Services Transportation Plan Update Public Meeting,** 1:00 p.m. (BRTA Conference Room, 1 Columbus Avenue in Pittsfield)
TAC Meeting, 4:00 p.m.
- 27 **MPO Meeting,** 4:00 p.m.
- 29 **5th Thursday Dinner,** 5:30 p.m.

APRIL

- 5 **BRPC Executive Committee Meeting,** 4:00 p.m.
Berkshire Bike Path Council Meeting, 6:00 p.m.
- 6 **BRPC Offices Close at Noon,** Good Friday
- 16 **Floating Holiday,** Patriot’s Day
- 17 **TAC Meeting,** 4:00 p.m.
- 24 **MPO Meeting,** 4:00 p.m.

In case of inclement weather, please call (413) 442-1521 ext. 15 to learn if your meeting is still scheduled.

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

Hinsdale Bridge Replacement Over Cady Brook (ENF)