

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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District Local Technical Assistance Projects Selected

BRPC received 25 requests for project assistance under the 2017 District Local Technical Assistance program and, we are very pleased to be able to provide support to all of them. There are three broad eligibility categories set by the state: Preparing for Housing, Preparing for Growth, and Regionalization. Under the Housing category, we will assist Adams, Great Barrington, and Lee in implementing 40R Smart Growth Overlay Districts. In all three cases, this involves housing redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized former mill buildings. Dalton will be assisted in reviewing a Housing Re-Development Plan for the Old Dalton High School. Hinsdale will be assisted in developing a strategy to combat housing blight which may prove to be a model useful elsewhere. Pittsfield will be assisted with mapping for an expansion of its Housing Development Incentive Program area from the downtown to include Tyler Street.

In the category of Preparing for Growth, both Dalton and Hinsdale will receive assistance in updating their Open Space and Recreation Plans. Clarksburg, Egremont, Mt. Washington, New Marlborough, North Adams, Washington, and Williamstown will all receive a variety of zoning bylaw assistance. Work will continue on a Brownfields Mapping Tool for Pittsfield and Sheffield will receive assistance in exploring non-taxable land options.

New Regional Projects include development of municipal options and tools related to the recreational marijuana legalization (requested by Sheffield), shared services exploration requested by Washington, and planning for broadband in the “cable only” towns and cities (requested by Williamstown). Continuation projects are support for the Rest of River Municipal Committee dealing with the PCB waste (requested by Lenox), the Berkshire County Education Task Force (requested by North Adams), pursuing establishment of a regional Economic Development District (requested by Pittsfield), and regional brownfields program support (requested by Pittsfield also). A request for Shared Economic Planner services from Lanesborough is also being supported by a Community Compact grant the town received last week.

For more information contact Executive Director Nat Karns (NKarns@berkshireplanning.org, or x 26), or Assistant Director Tom Matuszko, (TMatuszko@berkshireplanning.org, ex 34).

Complete Streets Update

This Spring, BRPC is wrapping up work on two Complete Streets Prioritization Plans in Clarksburg and North Adams. These plans will allow each community to compete for up to \$400,000 in construction funding for projects to improving biking, walking, traffic safety, and public transit during MassDOT’s spring funding round. BRPC has also begun work in the towns of Sandisfield and Lenox on similar plans; however, work will be finalized during the summer and fall. As part of the public process for these projects, BRPC conducted a focus group in North Adams and utilized an online data gathering and engagement system called Wikimapping in both North Adams and Lenox. Lenox also plans to hold a forum later this spring for additional feedback from the public.

For more information, contact Senior Planner Eammon Coughlin (ecoughlin@berkshireplanning.org or x 19) or Senior Transportation Planner Emily Lindsey (elindsey@berkshireplanning.org or x 12).

Board of Health Online Permitting

BRPC and the Berkshire Public Health Alliance have been working over the last year with several communities to develop a Board of Health online permitting website. The website allows for individuals and businesses to apply for various health permits, such as food establishment, septic installation, camps, lodging, demolition, body art, solid waste hauling and many more, online.

The website allows the local inspectors to review the application, request changes and schedule inspections. The inspectors also have tablets which allow them to complete necessary inspection forms in the field and sync forms with the application. As many of the permits are annual permits, the system allows automatic notification to the applicants when their permit is set to expire and allows them to renew it. The new system will ultimately allow the inspectors to spend less time in the office and more time in the field conducting inspections.

Currently the towns of Adams, Egremont, Great Barrington, New Marlborough, Washington, and Williamstown are online with several more going online over the next year. BRPC hired Full Circle Technologies to develop the site.

For more information on the program, contact Mark Maloy (mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org or ex 29).

Award Announcement: National Aging and Disability Transportation Center

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, in partnership with Age Friendly Berkshires, was recently awarded one of six national Innovations in Accessible Mobility grants funded by the National Aging and Disability Transportation Center (NADTC) and jointly administered by Easter Seals and the National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a).

The one year, \$49,000 grant will allow Councils on Aging and other social service agencies to transport older adults and those with disabilities who reside outside their usual jurisdictional boundaries to pre-arranged medical appointments. This means that individuals living in adjacent municipalities will have access to transportation that usually stops at the town line. The program will be evaluated to determine if there is an ongoing need for such services, with subsequent advocacy to the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority who administers the federal 5310 and state MAPP funding for vans, as well as to municipalities for municipal funding.

For more information, please contact Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager (lkittross@berkshireplanning.org or x 32).



Age Friendly Berkshires Action Plan Public Comment Sessions

Age Friendly Berkshires is asking for your feedback on the draft of a three-year, countywide Action Plan that will guide them in creating and age friendly community for people of all ages.

All members of the public are invited to come learn about the plan. In addition, suggestions and observations on the priorities laid out in the plan are encouraged. There are three upcoming opportunities for public comment and participation in the plan:

Monday, March 20, 2017 located at the Adam's Visitor's Center

3 Hoosac Street, Adams, MA
12:30 - 2:30pm

Tuesday, March 21, 2017 located at the Clair Teague Senior Center

917 South Main Street, Great Barrington, MA
1:00 - 3:00pm

Thursday, March 30, 2017 located at the Ralph Froio Center

330 North Street, Pittsfield, MA
8:30 - 10:00am

You may also access the plan on the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission webpage: www.berkshireplanning.org after March 8, 2017 and send written comments to lkittross@berkshireplanning.org.



Save the Date for the 2017 MAPD Conference!

The 2017 MAPD (Massachusetts Association of Planning Directors) Annual Conference will be held on June 15th and 16th in Pittsfield at the Crowne Plaza. Conference session proposals are due by Friday, March

17. For more information on the conference and call for proposals, please visit: <http://massplanningdirectors.org/>. MAPD Inc. is a not for profit membership organization of professional planners dedicated to facilitating the exchange of information, presenting planning perspectives to government, and promoting fellowship.

Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative: Strengthening the Capacity of the Berkshire County Recovery Community

The Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) is working with several community partners to bring Yoga and Mindfulness for Recovery, a community-based program to support people in all stages of recovery from addiction, to several locations throughout Berkshire County. Funding for these sessions are provided by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) and by the Central Berkshire Fund of the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation.

Open to all in recovery and free of charge, this six-session series that provides support, insight, practice and hope for people living substance-free and sober, and for those still struggling with the pull of addiction. Participants will learn practical strategies and tools to enhance sober living. All forms of addiction, all levels of sobriety time are welcomed. Each 90-minute session will include guided meditation, gentle yoga flow, deep relaxation, and supportive instructions on living yoga “off the mat.” Currently, there are three six-week sessions scheduled, two in Pittsfield at the George B. Crane Memorial Center, and one at the UNO Community Center in North Adams, with up to 3 more at additional locations to be scheduled through the end of 2017.

The group facilitator, Aruni Nan Futuronsky, is a senior faculty member at Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health. Aruni is a mindfulness and lifestyle coach specializing in addiction and behavior change, and the developer and director of the Yoga of Recovery program (which she has taught for 25 years). She has been living in recovery for 30 years.

By offering these classes, BOAPC will strengthen community partnerships, as well as bring attention to community assets such as the George B. Crane Center and the UNO Community Center. When community members see these spaces as safe, sober and supportive environments, they become a real asset to the emerging recovery community in Berkshire County. This community awareness can translate into the valuable resources needed to move prevention efforts forward, further supporting the sustainability of these and other recovery/supportive programs.

For more information about BOAPC, or to receive a registration form and flyer for one of these upcoming Yoga for Mindfulness and Recovery sessions, contact Senior Planner Jennifer Kimball (jkimball@berkshireplanning.org or x 37).

MassDOT Welcomes Input on Capital Investment Plan Using New Online Tool

MassDOT is in the process of updating the statewide Capital Investment Plan (CIP). The CIP is a collection of strategic transportation investments that are organized by priority areas including system reliability, asset modernization and capacity expansion. These priority areas not only create the foundation of the plan, they also serve as a vision for MassDOT whereas all Massachusetts residents and businesses have access to safe and reliable transportation.

The Capital Investment Plan being developed will cover fiscal years 2018 – 2022. MassDOT is eager to engage members of the public and stakeholders across the Commonwealth throughout the CIP update process, and encourages residents to submit their ideas and comments. As a means to solicit input, they have developed an online comment tool. Developing the CIP involves receiving a substantial amount of public comments. Last year, nearly 1,500 comments were received during the course of CIP’s preparation and the public engagement process. The high volume of comments and suggestions resulted in the development of the on-line comment tool. MassDOT encourages members of the public to submit comments or suggestions on transportation related projects or improvements using the online comment tool at this link: <http://massdot.maps.arcgis.com/apps/GeoForm/index.html?appid=32160d516c7c4a6cb7004208104617d3>

Following the initial round of public input, MassDOT will evaluate candidate projects and will publish a draft Capital Investment Plan. The draft CIP document is expected to be available for public review in May followed by its endorsement in June. BRPC will announce the availability of the draft document on our website when it becomes available.

For more information, please contact Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager (ckus@berkshireplanning.org or x 20).

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FFY 2018-2022 TIP Schedule

- March 21**—TAC preliminary draft TIP listing
- March 28**—MPO preliminary TIP listing
- April 18**—TAC endorsement/
recommendation
- April 25**—MPO release draft for public
comments
- May 16**—TAC endorsement/recommendation
- May 23**—MPO approval



**CPTC 16th Annual
Spring Conference
Registration now Open!**

The CPTC Spring Conference is the premier event for Massachusetts Citizen and professional planners. Seventeen

Workshops are offered on timely subjects and core topics important to Planning Boards and Boards of Appeals. The conference will be held on

Saturday, March 18, 2017

Registration fee of \$70

Information on all sessions:

<http://masscptc.org/conference/conference-2017-sessions.html>

Information on registration and online registration:

<http://masscptc.org/conference/conference-2017-regist-intro.html>

CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for updates, cancellations, recently posted events and agendas. berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar

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March 2 - BRPC Executive Meeting - 4:00pm

March 16 - BRPC Commission Meeting - 7:00pm

March 29 - Regional Issues Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

March 30 - 5th Thursday Training at the Country Club of Pittsfield, Topic: Stormwater Management Best Practices (Comprehensive Environmental Inc.)

April 16 - BPRC Executive Meeting - 4:00pm

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Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 15



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