

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

- *BRPC Public Health Program Engages in Another Successful Flu Vaccination Season*
- *Municipal Modernization: Are You Ready?*

PAGE 2

- *Sheffield and Great Barrington Receive FY16 Community Development Block Grant*
- *Age Friendly Berkshires: Aging in Place*
- *Medication & Syringe Disposal Locations in Berkshire County*

PAGE 3

- *BRPC's 50th Anniversary: A Tribute to BRPC's Chairs, Past and Present*
- *2016 Legislative Session – Zoning Act Changes*
- *2016 Legislative Session – Economic Development & Municipal Modernization Bills*

PAGE 4

- *MPO Adopts Public Participation Plan*
- *ADA Transition Plans Encouraged for All Communities*
- *Turnpike Toll & Fare Public Hearing*

BRPC Public Health Program Engages in Another Successful Flu Vaccination Season

Beginning in September, the Berkshire Public Health Alliance Public Health Nursing Program, in partnership with Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA), Fairview Hospital, and the Berkshire Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), is offering nearly 20 flu vaccination clinics in Berkshire County.

The Flu Vaccination Clinics will be conducted in eight Berkshire County municipalities who are contracted with the Berkshire Public Health Alliance Public Health Nursing program (Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington/Housatonic, Peru, North Adams and Washington). The clinics will be held in a variety of settings, including town halls, community centers, senior centers, schools, fire stations, and others, and at a variety of times from early morning to evening, serving the specific needs of each community. Clinics are free and open to the public. Alliance clinics never require an appointment, and although insurance info is requested to help sustain the program, identification and insurance are not required.

Each year, the Alliance staff, public health nurses, and partners work towards a goal of vaccinating 1,000+ people against influenza. The success of these clinics emphasizes what can be achieved when committed partners work together using a community-wide regional approach to ensure public health and wellness in our Berkshire cities and towns.

In addition to municipal contract fees for the public health nursing program, funding for these clinics is made possible through reimbursement from insurance billing and in-kind support through a partnership with Fairview Hospital. Vaccine is purchased privately, as well provided through the State Department of Public Health's Immunization Bureau (for children and the uninsured).

For more flu facts, visit www.cdc.gov/flu. For more information about the Berkshire Public Health Alliance Public Health Nursing Program, or to learn of upcoming flu clinics near you, please visit our webpage at: <http://www.berkshireplanning.org/major-initiatives/berkshire-public-health-alliance> or contact Mary Agoglia, RN-BC, MSN at berkshirealliancephn@gmail.com

For more flu facts, visit www.cdc.gov/flu. shot!

Municipal Modernization: Are You Ready?

On August 9, the Act to Modernize Municipal Finance and Government was signed into law. The Act, as it relates to construction projects and procurement changes, goes into effect on November 7 2016.

What does this mean for me?

The Act raises the threshold for small scale construction projects and materials from \$10,000-\$25,000 to \$10,000-\$50,000 and allows municipalities to save time and money by using the Operational Services Division's (OSD's) Statewide Contracts (SWCs). The Act also requires municipalities to post certain bid notices on COMMBUYS.

Why should I use SWCs?

Using SWCs may help save time and money since you do not need to develop solicitations, post notices, issue bids, evaluate responses, or execute contracts. OSD has done the work to bring the best value/best price to the contracts.

How should I prepare for the November 7 effective date?

There are a few activities you might consider undertaking now to ensure you will meet the new requirements when the legislation takes effect

1. Contact OSD's Local Government Enablement Team to set up a COMMBUYS account.
2. Attend COMMBUYS training to learn how to post notifications and bids and utilize SWCs to purchase goods and services
3. Recommend that your vendors register in COMMBUYS, which enables them to receive notices posted by you and other Commonwealth entities in their areas of business. Advise your vendors to visit COMMBUYS.com and click the "Register" link to begin.

For additional information on the Act, visit <http://conta.cc/2bkMLoz>

Sheffield and Great Barrington Receive FY16 Community Development Block Grant

Congratulations to the towns of Sheffield and Great Barrington on another successful CDBG grant application! On June 21, 2016, Governor Baker announced that Sheffield and Great Barrington will receive \$923,983 in funding from the MA DHCD Community Development Block Grant program. Overall, 34 Community Development Block Grants, totaling \$28 million, were awarded to a total of 57 cities and towns across the Commonwealth.

The grant in Sheffield and Great Barrington will continue the successful housing rehabilitation program that was begun in the two towns through a FY14 CDBG award, for which Great Barrington was the lead. The entire town of Sheffield is considered a target area and Housatonic is the target area within Great Barrington. This new program will provide housing rehabilitation for 14 units.

The grant will also fund the construction of accessibility improvements at the Sheffield Town Hall, which were designed under the FY14 grant with the assistance of a Design Review Committee made up of local citizens. The work of the DRC, along with that of Steve McAlister at Clark and Green Architects, was essential in developing a contextually sensitive set of designs & plans. These improvements will include the addition of a ramp along the south side of the building that allows visitors to enter the building close to the elevator, as well as two accessible parking spaces near the ramp and several other interior changes that greatly improve accessibility to Town Hall. Also included in the grant is a design project for new sidewalks and for circulation, drainage, and parking capacity improvements at the Housatonic Community Center.

For more info, contact Community Development Program Manager Patricia Mullins (pmullins@berkshireplanning.org or x17).

Age Friendly Berkshires: Aging in Place

A Spring 2015 survey of over 2,400 Berkshire County adults ages 50 and older found that 98% of respondents said it was important for them to remain independently in their own homes as they aged; 86% said it was "very important." Additionally, many older adults reported that they lived in homes that lacked age friendly and accessible features, and that they anticipated they would have to invest in these features to remain in their own homes.

To help address this need, BRPC, Age Friendly Berkshires, and their partners developed a workbook and training related to aging in place. The workbook walks homeowners through aspects of home renovation including conducting a home audit and assessment, selecting potential renovation options, selecting and working with a contractor, as well as list of resources to help with projects. The workbook was compiled from existing information, including available ADA and universal accessibility checklists. Local building officials, existing checklist resources, home renovation resources, and the PVPC Healthy Community Design Toolkit were indispensable resources that helped generate a list of potential renovation options for all areas of the home. State resources, including the Mass. Attorney General's Office and Office of Consumer Affairs and Business Regulation were particularly helpful in generating guidance for working with contractors. The training video, *Berkshire County Residential Aging in Place Training*, synthesizes the workbook, which is available for no charge on YouTube. With the video and workbook in hand, trainings can be held at Councils on Aging and other organizations on an ongoing basis and without the need for a trained trainer. Individuals can also use the resources on their own.

Also in response to the need for aging in place resources, contractors and other interested parties will have an opportunity to become Certified Aging-in-Place Specialists (CAPS). There will be a 3-day certification training on October 17-19, at Home Instead Senior Care, 66 Wendell Ave in Pittsfield. This training is geared toward anyone interested in working with and helping people remain safely and comfortably in their homes as they age.

For more information, contact Planner Eammon Coughlin (ECoughlin@berkshireplanning.org, or x19).

Medication & Syringe Disposal Locations in Berkshire County

The Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) is partnering with other community organizations to share county-wide medication and syringe disposal information. Don't wait to for a yearly Rx Roundup Day – dispose of your unused and unwanted medications as soon as possible.

Why? The data is clear: 70% of people 12 and older who misuse prescription drugs get them from family or friends. 75% of recent opioid addictions start with prescription opioids. Misuse of prescription drugs is a national epidemic with well over 18,500 deaths a year from painkiller overdoses. More people now die each year from accidental drug overdoses than in auto accidents. Don't be an accidental drug supplier by allowing others access to your medicines. Lock your medications up – and drop off unused and unwanted medications anytime at the police stations in Adams, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Lee, Lenox, North Adams, Otis, Pittsfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, and Williamstown.

If you are in need of sharps and/or syringe disposal, please visit the following locations:

BMC State TB/STD Clinics
510 North Street, Pittsfield
Hours: 8:00-4:00 M-F

Great Barrington Police Department
465 Main Street Great Barrington
Hours: 24/7

North Adams
location coming soon
Hours: TBD

If you would like more information about the Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative, like us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/BerkshireBOAPC/ or contact Senior Planner Jennifer Kimball, BOAPC Program Coordinator (jkimball@berkshireplanning.org or x37).

Prevent Misuse of Prescription Drugs



BOAPC
Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative



**Berkshire
Regional
Planning
Commission**

**1966-2016
Celebrating 50 Years**

A Tribute to BRPC's Chairs, Past and Present

On May 9th, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission celebrated its 50th year providing technical assistance and planning services to the 32 municipalities of the Berkshire region. To celebrate BRPC's 50th year, each issue of Common Ground in 2016 will reflect on the history of the Commission and highlight its accomplishments since its creation. Our last issue focused on some of BRPC's major accomplishments (and a few failures). This issue pays tribute to each of the past and present BRPC Chairs.

In its first 50 years, BRPC has had 23 chairs, from 15 different communities, spread from New Marlborough to Florida. Pittsfield has had the most (4), with Dalton, Lee, New Marlborough, North Adams and Peru all having had two. The Chairs provide a great service to the Commission, representing it in different forums, serving on all committees, and in providing overall policy leadership to the staff, including the Executive Director. Without good chairs, the Commission would not be as good as it is.

Chairs of the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, 1966-2016

Edward W. Shaw*	Pittsfield	1966-1967	Francis X. Spina	Pittsfield	1990-1992
Charles J. Driscoll	Lee	1967-1969	Wayne Burkhart	Monterey	1992-1993
Robert A. Acly*	Stockbridge	1969-1971	Lynn H. Wood	Egremont	1993-1995
Willard E. Busl*	North Adams	1971-1973	Robert W. Birch*	Lee	1995-1997
Ruth Alexander*	Florida	1973-1975	Thomas D. McCann	Richmond	1997-2000
William L. Kormanik	Alford	1975-1978	Lois A. Lenehan	Lenox	2000-2002
William R. Harrison*	Dalton	1978-1979	Samuel P. Haupt	Peru	2002-2006
Mary Ellen Ausman	Pittsfield	1979-1981	John P. Hickey	Lanesborough	2006-2009
George Osgood*	Great Barrington	1981-1983	James Mullen	New Marlborough	2009-2012
Harry L. Gustafson*	New Marlborough	1983-1985	Sheila B. Irvin	Pittsfield	2012-2016
Carl Nordstrom*	Peru	1985-1988	Kyle Hanlon	North Adams	2016-present
Clifton P. Green*	Dalton	1988-1990			

*deceased

2016 Legislative Session – Zoning Act Changes

The Economic Development bill that was approved on the final weekend of the 2016 legislative session (Acts of 2016, Chapter 219) contains two changes to timeframes which all Special Permit Granting Authorities and Building Commissioners need to be aware of. Section 29 lengthens the period during which construction or operations are protected from changes in zoning from the current six months to twelve months (Section 6 of Chapter 40A). Section 30 changes the maximum timeframe for exercising a Special Permit from two years to three years (Section 9 of Chapter 40A). This may entail changing bylaws or ordinances, permits or established practices in your community. The law takes effect immediately.

2016 Legislative Session – Economic Development & Municipal Modernization Bills

The General Court passed two major bills which affect all municipalities. The Economic Development bill can be found in the Acts of 2016, Chapter 219. The bill is fairly lengthy and covers multiple topics. Funding is authorized for multiple important programs for our communities. These include:

MassWorks	\$500 million
Industrial & Downtown Site Readiness	\$15 million
Incubator & Maker Space Building & Equipment	\$15.775 million
Public Infrastructure Grants	variety of earmarks
Brownfields Redevelopment Funds	\$45 million
Workforce Housing Trust Fund	\$25 million

Two notable projects listed in the Berkshires are \$75,000 for installation of fiber into the William Stanley Business Park and \$250,000 for engineering to replace the West Park Street bridge in Lee.

Major program changes include Urban Center Housing-Tax Increment Financing Zones, changes to Chapter 40R – Smart Growth Zoning District and a

new Starter Home District, and changes to Chapter 40V – Housing Development Incentive Program.

The Municipal Modernization bill can be found in the Acts of 2016, Chapter 218. “The Act is less about modernization, and more about making small, but important changes to a large number of local government practices” (thanks to BRPC's attorney, Ray Miyares, for the quote). Primary topics include: Procurement thresholds; Small construction projects and public works contracts; Expenditure of insurance funds; Special speed limits; Joint Powers agreements; Special Education funds; Other Post-Employment (OPEB) Liability Trust Fund; Chapter 61A (Agricultural) Land; and Parking.

Within these topics, there are changes of note. Of particular interest to BRPC and other regional planning agencies is an explicit authorization that state agencies may use our services without going through full-blown competitive procurement processes.



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

MPO Adopts Public Participation Plan

This June, the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) adopted a Public Participation Plan (PPP), which will guide the outreach and engagement throughout the regional transportation planning process. The Berkshire MPO's PPP outlines goals and principles for engaging the public across the region.

To read the Berkshire MPO's PPP, please visit: http://berkshireplanning.org/images/uploads/initiatives/BRPC_2016_PPP.pdf

ADA Transition Plans Encouraged for All Communities

Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires state and local governments to make their programs and services accessible to persons with disabilities. To avoid legal action, municipalities should complete a self-evaluation to pinpoint the facilities, programs, and services that must be modified or relocated to ensure compliance with the ADA, and then develop a transition plan which schedules and budgets for those modifications over a multi-year period.

For a factsheet about transition plans, visit berkshireplanning.org/reports-and-documents

Turnpike Toll & Fare Public Hearing

The MA Department of Transportation is convening public hearings on changes in the toll collection gantry locations and rates through the implementation of all electronic tolling along the Massachusetts Turnpike. A public hearing for the Berkshire's is scheduled for Thursday, September 15th at 6:30pm at the Highway District 1 Headquarters, located at 270 Main Street, Lenox MA 01240. Written comments will be accepted by MassDOT until Thursday, September 29th.

CALENDAR

Be sure to check out our online calendar for recently posted events and agendas.

berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar

September 1 - BRPC Executive Committee Meeting - 4:00p,

September 4 - MRC Flu Training - 4:00pm

September 8 - Berkshire Public Health Alliance Governing Board Meeting - 6:00-8:00pm

September 12 - Board of Health Orientation Class - 5:00pm

S
E
P
T
E
M
B
E
R

September 15 - Turnpike Toll & Fare Public Hearing - 6:30pm

September 15 - Walk a Mile in Her Shoes - 6:00pm

September 20 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) - 4:00pm

September 22 - BRPC Meeting - 7:00pm

September 27 - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - 4:00pm

October 6 - BRPC Executive Committee Meeting - 4:00pm

O
C
T
O
B
E
R

October 6 - Berkshire Bike Path Council - 6:00pm

October 17-19 - Certified Aging-in-Place Specialist (CAPS) Training - 9:00am - 5:00pm

October 18 - Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) - 4:00pm

October 20 - BRPC Annual Dinner - 5:00pm

October 25 - Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) - 4:00pm

Please consider receiving an e-newsletter—saving trees and energy costs in our region and beyond. E-mail SZaleski@berkshireplanning.org today to subscribe!