

# COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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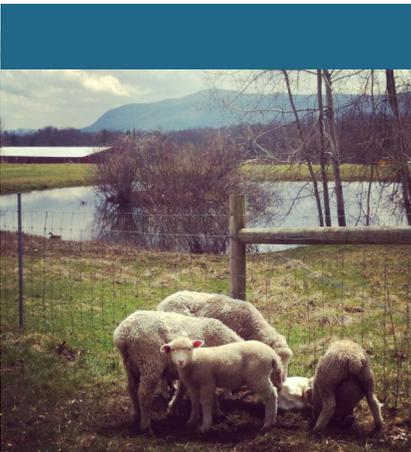
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## Sustainable Berkshires Regional Plan Adopted

On Thursday, March 20, the *Sustainable Berkshires* regional plan was adopted by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. It is the first regional plan developed and adopted since 2001, and was funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in partnership with the U.S. Department of Transportation and Environmental Protection Agency through the Sustainable Communities Initiative.

## North Adams Regional Hospital Closing Creates Transportation Challenges

Due to the closing of the North Adams Regional Hospital, northern Berkshire County residents must now travel to Pittsfield or Bennington for medical services. Recognizing the transportation needs associated with the closure, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) has been working with transportation providers to coordinate transportation services to the residents of Northern Berkshire County.

BRPC is coordinating the efforts of the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority, Berkshire Rides, Soldier On, County Ambulance, Berkshire Community Action Council (BCAC) and the Council of Aging to provide transportation options for medical services to the residents of Northern Berkshire County who do not have access to transportation or cannot afford bus/taxi fare.

A telephone help line has been established in North County to answer questions related to the closing of the hospital. Patients and family members in Northern Berkshire County should call **855-262-5465** for all questions related to medical appointments including transportation for medical services.

BCAC has established a temporary shuttle service offering no cost transportation for medical services. In the event no other transportation options are viable to those in need, BCAC will offer shuttle service to Berkshire Medical Center in Pittsfield as follows:

### From North County to BMC

- Depart Nassif's Pharmacy (North Adams) – 9:00 AM
- Depart Walmart (near Garden Center) – 9:15 AM
- Depart Big Y Adams – 9:30 AM
- Arrive at BMC (main entrance) – 10:00 AM

### From BMC to North County

- Depart BMC – 1:15 PM
- Arrive Big Y Adams - 1:45 PM
- Arrive Walmart – 2:00 PM
- Arrive Nassif's Pharmacy – 2:15 PM

### Evening Return Shuttle from BMC

- **Depart:** BMC at 4:45PM
- **Arrive:** Nassif's Pharmacy (North Adams) – 5:30 PM

BCAC Transportation Services can be reached at (413) 499-4420

**Staff Contact:** Clete Kus, x20 or [ckus@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:ckus@berkshireplanning.org).

## 319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Competitive Grant Program

This grant program funds projects that address prevention, control and abatement of nonpoint source pollution, and that attain environmental results by restoring beneficial uses and/or meeting or maintaining state water quality standards. This is a program that will fund large "shovel in the ground" projects that protect water quality. Forty percent local or state match is required. Grant deadline is May 30, 2014. For more information about this program visit the [www.commbuys.com](http://www.commbuys.com) or contact Jane Peirce at [Jane.Peirce@state.ma.us](mailto:Jane.Peirce@state.ma.us) or (508)-767-2782.

### MSPCA to Offer Funds to Address Beaver and Flooding Conflicts

Thanks to a grant from the Nion Robert Thieriot Foundation, the Massachusetts Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (MSPCA) is excited to again open application to the "Wildlife and Wetlands" project which funds the installation of a limited number water flow devices to address conflicts with beaver and prevent flooding related to beaver activity in communities throughout the Berkshires.

**What are the criteria?** A willingness (of all parties involved) to resolve problems non-lethally for the long term, a site that is conducive to flow device usage, and permission of the landowners and the local Conservation Commission to install water flow devices.

**How to request assistance?** Send a description of conflict site(s) and the limitations of the budget to the MSPCA for consideration. Starting in the spring, MSPCA will evaluate the sites to determine if they are conducive to flow device usage.

**Funding assistance:** The amount of funding offered to each applicant will depend on the number of requests, the amount of each viable request, and the ability of each requester to pay for part of the flow device, or the maintenance contract for the device, themselves.

**Deadline:** Requests will be accepted throughout 2014 until funding is exhausted. Requests will be considered in the order in which they are received. Submit ASAP, please.

**Send requests to:** MSPCA, Advocacy Dept, 350 S. Huntington Ave, Boston, MA, 02130 or [advocacy@mspca.org](mailto:advocacy@mspca.org) or voicemail 617-541-5104. Also check out their website: [www.mspca.org/beaverfunding](http://www.mspca.org/beaverfunding).

### Berkshire MPO FFY 2015–2018 TIP Development (Update)

The Transportation Improvement Program (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.

The development of the FFY 2015-2018 TIP follows a process whereby new transportation projects consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan are solicited from local communities. The projects are evaluated by BRPC and MassDOT staff and then assigned a priority score based on transportation and regional planning criteria. The project evaluation scores and preliminary draft TIP listing are next presented to the Transportation Advisory Committee and Metropolitan Planning Organization members for their preliminary review. Staff then prepares a draft TIP project listing based on project evaluation scores, the project's readiness and its fit within the funds available for Berkshire County for the four program years. This preliminary TIP project list will further be refined in response to comments from MPO and TAC members and then be released for public comment in the form of a draft TIP document.

The Berkshire MPO is set to release a FFY 2015-2018 draft TIP document at the May 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meeting. A 30 day public comment period will then follow. This document consists of a list of bridge, highway, transit, and bike paths projects to be implemented in Berkshire County. The draft TIP released for public comment will be posted on BRPC's website. At the conclusion of the public comment period, staff will address comments and prepare a final document for approval by the MPO.

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## New Rx Dropboxes Installed Throughout Berkshire County

Previously, safe disposal of medications posed a challenge for Berkshire County residents. The Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) Steering Committee has identified an education campaign regarding proper disposal of prescription medications as its primary pilot prevention strategy. BOAPC believes that encouraging the proper disposal of unused prescription opioids help stem the tide of new addicts. Seventy percent of people 12 and older who abuse prescription drugs get them from family or friends (SAMSHA, 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health).

District Attorney David Capeless, in an April 8 press conference, stated that “We are experiencing a public health crisis, nationally, in the Commonwealth and here in Berkshire County. It’s heroin addiction caused by overreliance on prescription medication to treat pain.” From 2000 to 2008, prescriptions for opiates in the Berkshire grew 450 percent. Twenty percent of Massachusetts residents have been prescribed opiates at some point. Those who legitimately receive prescriptions for opioid medications often receive far more doses than needed. When these unneeded and unused medications sit in medicine cabinets, they become ripe for misuse by friends and family members.

Purchased with forfeiture funds from the District Attorney’s office, new prescription medication or “Rx” dropboxes have been ordered and installed throughout Berkshire County. These dropboxes are located in the (staffed, 24-hour) police departments in the municipalities of Williamstown, North Adams, Adams, Pittsfield, Dalton, Lenox, Lee, Sheffield, and Egremont . An additional box is on order for Stockbridge. These are in addition to the boxes already present in Great Barrington, North Adams, Pittsfield, Sheffield, and Williamstown.

Billboards around town listing new RX drop locations will be installed in North, Central, and South County. If you would like more information regarding where to dispose of your unused or unwanted prescription medications, please contact your local police department.

Year Two of the BOAPC grant will begin on July 1, 2014, with new interventions and strategies planned for the prevention of abuse of prescription drugs and heroin in Berkshire County. **If you have any questions regarding, or would like to become involved with, the Berkshire Opioid Abuse Prevention Collaborative, please contact Public Health Program Manager Laura Kittross at (413) 442-1521 x37.**

## Town to Kick-off Brownfields Planning Project Focused on Mills

The Town of Lee has been awarded an Environmental Protection Agency Area-Wide Planning Grant to assist with community involvement, and to research planning and implementation strategies related to reuse of the mills. This project will focus on the four closed mills just north of the downtown – Eagle, Columbia, Greylock, and Niagra (Lenoxdale) - and the surrounding area. BRPC has been working with the Town to lead the project and has selected the consulting team of The Cecil Group, Tighe & Bond, and FXM to assist with the project. A Stakeholders Group has been formed and their first meeting was held in mid-April. Now, the project will be brought to the public through the first in a series of public meetings.

BRPC will be looking to the community to become involved so that the resulting plan will be a locally-driven plan that considers multiple community goals. The overall goal of the project is to lead to environmental health and protection, in conjunction with economic development and job creation.

The Brownfields Area-Wide Plan will include:

- Strategies for reusing the high priority brownfield sites;
- Information on how assessment and cleanup of those sites will be influenced by the reuse strategies; and
- Plan implementation strategies, which identify specific actions for next steps and specific resources needed

The date and location for the first public meeting are pending. The meeting will be held in late May. Please visit [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org) for the meeting date and location, which will be posted soon.

**Staff Contact: Melissa Provencher, x22 or [mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org)**

## Berkshires Tomorrow, Inc.

Berkshires Tomorrow, Inc., a 501(c)(3) tax-deductible non-profit, has been formed to provide an tax deductible organization, related to BRPC, in order to advance implementation of *Sustainable Berkshire* and other priorities of the Commission. The formal purpose of Berkshires Tomorrow is intended for “improving and enhancing the quality of education and learning opportunities for the general public and local officials, and planning and integrating innovative methods and technologies into regional and local education and governance, in Berkshire County, Massachusetts, and other regions in the United States.” This is not actually a new non-profit but a transition of an inactive non-profit created by Western Mass Connect, the Berkshire Learning Initiative, which was offered to BRPC. The Officers and Executive Director of BRPC are the Board of Directors, ex-officio, of Berkshires Tomorrow.

**Staff Contact: Nat Karns, x26 or [nkarns@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:nkarns@berkshireplanning.org)**

## Good Luck, Amy Kacala!

We bid “adieu” to Senior Planner Amy Kacala at the end of April. Amy has been with BRPC since November 2008 and led the *Sustainable Berkshires* planning effort, resulting in adoption in March of the region’s first regional plan since 2001, as well as development of Berkshire Benchmarks, the New Marlborough Master Plan and the North Adams *Vision 2030* plan which is on track for final adoption in early May. She was heavily involved in *Keep Berkshires Farming* and provided significant assistance to Great Barrington in development of its master plan. She also had a strong role in providing Green Communities Technical Assistance, in the Tri-Town Shared Services project support and in managing the District Local Technical Assistance program at least one year. We wish her all the best in her future professional career.

## North Adams Vision 2030 Ready for Adoption

After three years of stakeholder engagement and public participation, the first comprehensive plan for North Adams in nearly forty years is ready for adoption. The plan reviews existing conditions, and provides goals, policies and strategies for seven topics: Economy, Open Space and Recreation, Historic Preservation, Infrastructure and Services, Food and Health, and Land Use. The plan is consistent with the recently adopted Sustainable Berkshires regional plan, while containing content specific to the North Adams vision and long-term goals. The final public hearing and open house were held on April 29 at City Hall, and the adoption vote is scheduled for May 12.

To take a look at the plan, please visit  
<http://vision2030.wp.northadams-ma.gov/>.

For questions regarding the plan, it’s development and it’s ongoing implementation, please contact City Planner Mackenzie Greer at the Office of Community Development, (413) 662-3000 x3025 or [mgreer@northadams-ma.gov](mailto:mgreer@northadams-ma.gov).

## CALENDAR

*Be sure to check out our  
online calendar for recently  
posted events and agendas.  
[berkshireplanning.org/  
events/calendar](http://berkshireplanning.org/events/calendar)*

### MAY

- 1: Finance Committee
- 5: Regional Issues Committee
- 14: MA-APA Inclusionary Zoning Workshop
- 15: Commission Meeting
- 20: MPO
- 29: 5th Thursday, Planning for Climate Change

### JUNE

- 2: Regional Issues Committee
- 5: Executive Committee
- 24: MPO

