

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

IN THIS ISSUE

PAGE 1

- *Tennessee Gas Northeast Energy Direct Pipeline Update*
- *Community Compact*

PAGE 2

- *Climate Change Adaptions—Berkshire County 2015*

PAGE 3

- *Great Barrington Awarded \$842,569 in CDBG Funding*
- *Planning Board Resource Guide Now Available*
- *Municipal Conflict Resolution Needs Survey*
- *Did Your Sign Bylaw Survive the Supreme Court's Decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert?*
- *Seeking Licensed Contractors for the Great Barrington-Sheffield Housing Rehabilitation Program*

PAGE 4

- *Hellos and Goodbyes*
- *Invitation to Annual Dinner*
- *Calendar of Events*



MASS MoCA, North Adams

Tennessee Gas Northeast Energy Direct Pipeline Project Update

Tennessee Gas's NED project continues in the FERC pre-permitting process. On Friday, August 28th, FERC announced that the deadline for comments concerning the scope of the required Environmental Impact Statement would be delayed beyond the previously set deadline of August 31st. On the 31st, FERC formally announced that the deadline would be at least a month later but the formal date would be set in the coming week. BRPC continues to work with Cheshire, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lenox, Pittsfield, Richmond, Washington, and Windsor, as well as Rensselaer County, NY, and the three directly impacted towns there, Nassau, Schodack and Stephentown. Tennessee Gas has indicated they will formally file their permit request on October 23rd, which will commence the more formal permitting process and will take at least a year.

For more information, contact Executive Director Nat Karns (nkarns@berkshireplanning.org or 413-442-1521, ext. 26), Assistant Director Tom Matuszko (tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org or ext. 34) or Senior Planner Melissa Provencher (mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org or ext. 22).

Community Compact

In January 2015, Governor Baker issued Executive Order 554, which established the Community Compact. The Community Compact is a voluntary, mutual agreement entered into between the Baker-Polito Administration and individual cities and towns in Massachusetts.



In the Compact, a municipality agrees to implement at least one best practice, self-selected from the following categories: Education, Energy and Environment, Financial Management, Housing and Economic Development, Information Technology, Regionalization/Shared Services, Transportation and Citizens Safety. The chosen best practice(s) should be specific to the municipality and reflect areas where improvement is needed. The municipal leader submits an online application, which is consequently reviewed by the Division of Local Services. Once the application is approved, the municipal leader and Lt. Governor Karyn Polito sign the Compact agreement. The Commonwealth provides technical assistance to the community to aid in implementation of their chosen best practice(s).

The Commonwealth offers incentives to communities that enter into a Compact, including priority status on various grant applications, including the Mass-Works Infrastructure Program, and a special grant program specifically for Compact communities.

Applications are accepted on a rolling basis. All cities and towns in Massachusetts are eligible to sign a Compact, and smaller communities may wish to consider a regional Compact Agreement. Each Compact Agreement has a two-year lifespan.

For more information, please visit www.mass.gov/ccc.

Climate Change Adaptations - Berkshire County 2015

There is global consensus: climate change is real and already having consequences in every country in the form of increasing temperatures, rising sea levels, more severe storm, flooding and droughts, biodiversity loss and new and re-emerging diseases. The Berkshires are not immune to these forces; in recent years we have experienced increased frequency and severity of storms, loss and/or shifting of habitat for such emblematic species as the Sugar Maple, an increase in the number of extreme heat days and an explosion in the number of tick-borne diseases.

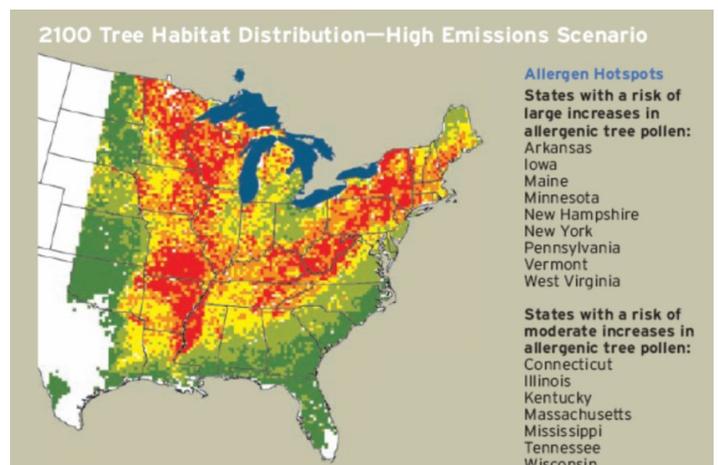
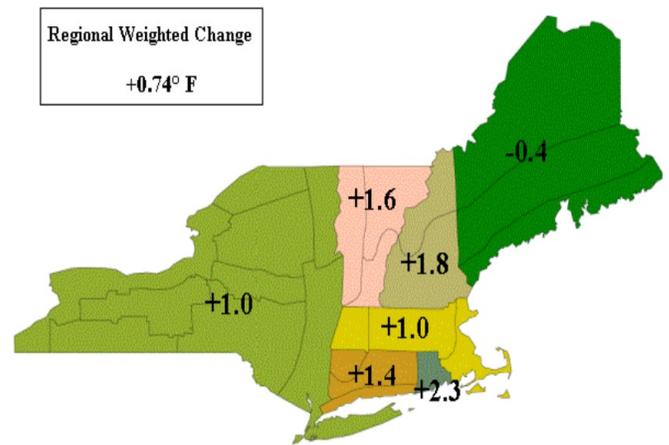
BRPC has received a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention through the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to assess the likely impacts of climate change in Berkshire County, recommend prevention and adaptation strategies and engage community officials and leaders in a coordinated effort to build resiliency, implement practical adaptations and minimize the financial, environmental, and social costs of climate change. This is a quick summary of some of the likely climate change impacts and possible adaptation strategies. We invite all interested individuals and organizations to join us in the collaborative process to create a Berkshire consensus on Climate Change.

- ◆ **Tree Damage:** More trees will likely die as the temperature zones change and diseases and insects that kill native species move into the area. Dead trees and extreme weather will mean communities need to be diligent in trimming problem trees on along roads and selecting new types of trees to plant.
- ◆ **Heat Exhaustion:** The highest death rates occur on the 3rd day of heat waves as exhausted humans and animals are less able to deal with the effects of extreme heat. More heat waves will likely mean that workers and the public will need to adopt new heat precautions as well as drink plenty of fluids. Emergency Management resources will be needed for cooling centers and monitoring shut-ins without air conditioning.
- ◆ **Allergies:** Plants that produce allergens and toxins will likely grow faster and be more toxic. Workers and the public will need to recognize, limit contact and wash immediately when exposed to allergens such as pollen and ragweed and toxic plants like Giant Hog Weed, Wild Parsnip, and Poison Ivy. (See image below)
- ◆ **Flooding:** Floods can destroy homes, businesses and infrastructure such as bridges and culverts; cause mold and bacteria growth; contaminate wells and food crops; cause septic systems to fail and disrupt transportation and businesses. Cholera, salmonella and other contaminants could cause food to be unsafe. Flood maps need to be updated; culverts, bridges and dams made flood ready; workers and the public educated on the risks of crossing flood waters; and a joint capacity built by Public Safety, Building Inspectors and Public Health to respond to the impacts of flooding, contamination and molds.
- ◆ **Contaminated Water Supplies:** Flooding and warmer, wetter weather may result in contamination of private and public water supplies. Water from rivers and lakes will be especially vulnerable to flood contaminants, extreme bacteria growth and toxins from algae blooms. Current water treatment systems may not prevent drinking water contamination. DPWs may need to update emergency plans, divert run-off away from water supplies; and have redundant methods for notifying the public in emergencies.
- ◆ **Disease Outbreaks:** New and re-emerging diseases carried by mosquitoes, ticks and other vectors have been increasing. Familiar diseases such as Lyme are already epidemic in the region. New diseases such as SARS, Ebola and MERS are developing every year and are only a plane ride away. It is essential to improve disease surveillance and investigation as well as public health nurse capacity to respond to these disease outbreaks and prevent our medical system from being overwhelmed.
- ◆ **Sustainability:** Finally we all need to do our part to reduce, reuse, recycle, compost, prevent and prepare for climate change impacts.

For more information please contact smartin@berkshireplanning.org.

Image (above): New England and New York Temperature Changes (°F) Between 1895 and 1999, NERA, 2010.

Image (at right): 2100 Tree Habitat Distribution (High Emissions Scenario), Staudt et al., 2010.



Great Barrington Awarded \$842,569 in Community Development Block Grant Funding

The Town of Great Barrington is pleased to announce that it is the recipient of an \$842,569 Community Development Block Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The grant award will fund Phase A of the Front Street Drainage Improvement Project, which will correct drainage issues in Housatonic Village, and will also allow for the continuation of the existing housing rehabilitation program in Housatonic. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission will be administering this grant on behalf of the town.

Planning Board Resource Guide Now Available

The guide is a simple resource book providing an overview of the major responsibilities given to municipal planning boards in the Massachusetts land use process. The Planning Board Resource Guide is available on our website:

<http://berkshireplanning.org/reports-and-documents/planning-board-resource-book-2015/>

Municipal Conflict Resolution Needs Survey

BRPC and the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority (BCRHA), which provides mediation services and conflict resolution training, are hoping to learn more about the needs and interests of Berkshire County communities, specifically related to conflict resolution, consensus building, and facilitated conversations. BRPC and BCRHA will be conducting a brief survey seeking information on the needs of communities in Berkshire County regarding municipally based conflicts that may occur. For more information contact Tom Matuszko, tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

Did Your Sign Bylaw Survive the Supreme Court's Decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert?

During a summer of headline grabbing decisions by the Supreme Court of the United States on marriage equality and healthcare, the less publicized decision in Reed v. Town of Gilbert, (No. 13-502)(2015) has significant implications for local sign bylaws. Prior to the decision in Reed it was permissible for a local government to classify signs (e.g. political signs, ideological signs, temporary directional signs) and regulate each classification of signs differently based upon objective factors unrelated to the message of the sign. Stated differently, so long as the local sign bylaw regulated all political signs in the same manner it was considered permissible even though the local bylaw might regulate political signs different than, for example, ideological signs. Now after the Reed decision the classification of signs in a local sign bylaw will be interpreted as the local government regulating the sign based upon its content or message, which is presumptively unconstitutional. In light of the Reed decision municipalities are encouraged to review their local sign bylaws and determine if it complies. Because the Reed decision is a departure from the general understanding of what constituted permissible sign regulations under the 1st Amendment it is quite likely that many local sign bylaws will need attention.

The Supreme Court's decision is posted online at http://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/14pdf/13-502_9olb.pdf.

Staff Contact: Brian Domina (ext. 14).

SEEKING LICENSED CONTRACTORS

For the Great Barrington-Sheffield Housing Rehabilitation Program

MA Licensed Contractors are needed immediately for the **Great Barrington-Sheffield CDBG Housing Rehabilitation Program**, for roofing, septic repair, asbestos removal, chimney building and repair, electrical repair, gas and oil burner service, general carpentry, foundation repair, insulation, lead paint removal, plumbing, siding, and more.



Minority- and women-owned firms are encouraged to apply.

For more information or to access an application, please visit our website at:

<http://tinyurl.com/CDBG-Contractor>

or call (413) 442-1521 ext. 17.

Funding for this program is provided by the Massachusetts Community Development Block Grant and administered by the Department of Housing and Community Development, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, and the Towns of Great Barrington and Sheffield.



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Hellos and Goodbyes

Judy Wagner, Office Assistant at BRPC since 2007, resigned in July to become the Administrative Assistant to the Town Manager in Dalton. Judy, we wish you success in your new position!

BRPC also says goodbye to Planner **Jaclyn Pacejo**. Jaclyn will be moving to Boston in order to be closer to family. Jaclyn joined the agency in 2013, working primarily on housing and community development projects. She has served as a core staff person for the Great Barrington-Sheffield Housing Rehab Program. Thanks for your hard work and dedication, Jaclyn!

Ryan Fajardo, a Williams College junior majoring in Economics and Sociology, served as a summer intern at BRPC. Ryan assisted with a variety of economic development and master planning activities. Thanks for your assistance, Ryan!

In July BRPC welcomed back **Shannon Zaleski**. Shannon joined the administrative staff in 2012 as an intern from Berkshire Community College. Shannon graduated from BCC's business program in 2015 and will serve as BRPC's new Office Assistant.

CALENDAR

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

SEPTEMBER

- Sep 3rd - Executive Committee
- Sep 15th - Transportation Advisory Committee
- Sep 17th - Commission Development Committee
- Sep 17th - Full Commission
- Sep 29th - MPO

OCTOBER

- Oct 1st - Executive Committee
- Oct 15th - BRPC Annual Dinner
- Oct 20th - Transportation Advisory Committee
- Oct 27th - MPO

Join us for Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's 49th Annual Meeting & Dinner with Keynote Speaker Lt. Governor Karyn Polito

Thursday, October 15, 2015 at the Pittsfield Country Club

- 5:15-6:15 PM Social Hour
- 6:30-7:00 PM Lt. Governor Karyn Polito
- 7:00-8:00 PM Dinner
- BRPC Comments, Awards and Dessert



Contact Shannon Zaleski at szaleski@berkshireplanning.org or (413) 442-1521 ext 10 for more information or to RSVP

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