

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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Good Deeds Recognition in Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic disaster have changed the lives of all of us over the past several months. It will likely continue to impact us into the foreseeable future. Sadly, this crisis has created untold hardships for many. It has, however, brought out the best in some people who went out of way to help someone, a neighbor perhaps, or made an extraordinary effort to respond to some aspect of this crisis. The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission would like to recognize those efforts and give our thanks. Please tell us of the Good Deeds you know of. It could be an individual, an organization, and agency. Tell us what they did that you think deserves recognition—a short paragraph is fine. We will announce those efforts at our regular public meetings. Our next meeting is coming up quick—September 17th so get your responses in soon.

E-mail them to Tom Matuszko at tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

Pavement Management and Assessment Services

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is offering pavement management services for our local communities. This service can help maximize budgets, assist with prioritizing paving projects and extend the useful life of roads. The cost for this service is eligible for Chapter 90 reimbursement. BRPC can customize pavement management programs to each community's needs.

As part of this service, BRPC will:

- Collect data about the current condition of your roads.
- Gather information about your budget, how you prefer to fix your roads, and your local priorities.
- Combine the information to recommended short term road repair program and estimate how the overall health of the community's roads will improve.

BRPCs pavement management system uses the Pavement Surface Evaluation and Rating (PASER) system. PASER is a 1 to 10 (poor to perfect) rating scale that applies to all road surfaces. BRPC uses the Roadsoft Pavement Management System to collect data and figure out the best ways for our cities and towns to spend scarce road funding. Contact BRPC today if you are interested in these services.

For more information, contact Senior Transportation Planner Eammon Coughlin ECoughlin@berkshireplanning.org, or x19.

BRPC's New Look

If you received any correspondences from us, you will notice a bit more color in our look. After decades of the old logo and stationary we've upgraded. We've also upgraded our website. Hopefully it will be easier to use. It's the same web address, www.berkshireplanning.org – check it out.



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission



BRPC

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BRPC + BOAPC Actively Seeking Persons with Lived Experience to Inform an HIV/Blood-Borne Pathogen Response Plan for Berkshire County

The Public Health Program at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) are working on a project that will develop a community response plan for Berkshire County that would provide a framework to respond to an HIV or other bloodborne pathogen outbreak at the local level.

The proposed project team will work with the existing emergency preparedness coalition and newly-engaged community partners, including people living with HIV (PLWH) and those who are actively working with injection drug users (IDU), to do a series of community workshops, design a blood-borne pathogen (HIV) community response plan, and to conduct a table top exercise (TTX) test for that plan.

We are actively seeking those with lived experience to better inform our community process and our community response plan. If you are a person living with HIV, or have lived experience regarding HIV or injection drug use, this project and your community would benefit from your knowledge and expertise. There are many ways to be involved – you can choose what best fits your comfort and knowledge levels. Stipends are available for your valuable contribution to this project.

Please reach out to Jennifer Kimball for more information at jkimball@berkshireplanning.org.

CPTC Trainings Go Virtual

CPTC's (Citizen Planner Training Collaborative) Fall workshop series will be virtual this year. Starting later this fall CPTC will offer a wide range of choices and because they will be virtual Berkshire County Planners will be able to attend whatever course is being offered. Below is a list of potential courses. Keep on the lookout this year's specific schedule and registration information. More information can be found at <https://masscptc.org/>.

- Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards
- Adopting and Revising Rules and Regulations
- Introduction to the Zoning Act
- Design Review
- Special Permits and Variances
- Drafting Zoning Amendments
- Introduction to Subdivision Control and ANR
- Fair Housing Laws
- Site Plan Review
- Zoning with Overlay Districts
- Vested Rights and Nonconforming Uses and Structures
- Creating Master Plans
- Zoning Exemptions
- Planning with Community Support
- Fair, Defensible Land Use Decisions
- Chapter 40B

Please contact Planner Phil Arnold for more information parnold@berkshireplanning.org.

Housing Choice Small Town FY 21 Capital Grant Program

The Housing Choice Small Town FY 21 capital grant program will open in mid-September for applications which will be due in early December. This program is exclusively for communities that have an annual population estimate of 7,000 or less from the US census. While the eligible use of funds will change, last year's program could only fund **capital** projects—construction, modernization, or major repair of physical infrastructure, acquisition of property or interests in property; long-lived equipment; or feasibility, engineering or schematic designs for capital projects. Awards will be made in early 2021 with projects needing to be completed by June 30, 2022. Maximum Grant award: \$100,000; there is up to \$1 million available for FY 21. More information about the Housing Choice Program can be found at <https://www.mass.gov/housing-choice-designation-and-grants>.

Berkshire County Small Business Recovery Fund

PLEASE SHARE THIS NEWS WITH SMALL BUSINESSES IN YOUR TOWN!

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission has been awarded \$45,000 by the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office through their Small Business Relief Partnership grant program. Through September 30th, The Berkshire County Small Business Recovery Fund will provide small for-profit businesses in Berkshire County with assistance in order to address fixed debt, payroll expenses, accounts payable, documented lost sales, and other working capital expenses incurred since March 23rd, 2020.

A full description of eligibility requirements, along with a link to the online grant application, can be found at: <http://berkshireplanning.org/projects/small-business-relief-partnership/>.

Please contact Laura Brennan for more information: lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org.

Mass Housing Partnership's MHP Western Mass Housing Conference

Virtual Zoom Series

Registration is now open for the Western Mass Housing Conference. Geared towards officials, volunteers and employees in small and rural towns in Western Mass, the conference has been redesigned as a weekly virtual series that will engage participants in discussion and problem solving around the development of affordable housing in the region. The weekly sessions are designed for municipal staff, officials, and volunteers, CDCs, regional planning agencies, and local advocates. Registration is free but you must register in advance for each session you'd like to attend.

Schedule and registration links

Zoning for Housing Diversity in Small Towns

When: Sept. 22, 2020, 12:00 - 1:15 p.m. [Register](#)

Playbook for Building Support for Community Engagement

When: Sept. 29, 2020, 12:00 - 1:15 p.m. [Register](#)

Pathways to Homeownership in Western Mass

When: Oct. 7, 2020, 11:00 - 12:15 p.m. [Register](#)

Supportive Housing for Chronically Homeless

When: Oct. 15, 2020, 12:00 - 1:00 p.m. [Register](#)

Bringing Affordable Senior Housing to Small and Rural Towns

When: Oct. 21, 2020, 11:00 - 12:15 p.m. [Register](#)

Distressed and Abandoned Properties

When: Nov. 5, 2020, 12:00 - 1:15 p.m. [Register](#)

CDBG Housing Rehab 101

When: Nov. 9, 2020, 12:00 - 1:15 p.m. [Register](#)

MHP works with communities to create innovative policy and financing solutions that provide affordable homes and better lives for the people of Massachusetts. A statewide public non-profit affordable housing organization, MHP works in concert with the Governor, the Department of Housing and Community Development and the state's other quasi-public housing organizations.

More information about these sessions can be found at <https://www.mhp.net/community/events>.

Contact Katie Bosse at kbosse@mhp.net or 857-317-8517.



BRPC

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New Staff!

We are pleased to welcome Beth Carroll as the Finance Office Assistant! Beth will help with the day to day financial transactions as well as assist with office administration activities, such as time sheets and contract administrations.

The Public Health Program is pleased to welcome our new Planner, Christine Ector. Christine has a Masters of Public Health from Boston University, with a concentration in environmental health, human rights and social justice and experience in public health communications and community engagement. She will be working in emergency preparedness and substance misuse work at BRPC, as well as on the From Gray to Green project.



BRPC COVID-19 Update

As Massachusetts continues to be in Step 1 of Phase III of the Administration's Re-Opening Massachusetts, the BRPC office remains partially open. A limited number of staff who choose to are in the office daily. Up to 10 staff are allowed at the same time. By prior appointment, small in-person meetings are allowed—still maintaining the appropriate physical separation. However, most of the BRPC staff is still working remotely. We are still conducting BRPC meetings virtually. The best way to communicate with staff is through email.

CALENDAR

All BRPC meetings are being held virtually. Check the BRPC Website for the meeting information.

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

<https://berkshireplanning.org/events/>

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September 17 - BRPC Full Commission meeting, 7:00 pm

October 1 - BRPC Executive Committee meeting, 4:00 pm

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Remember to check our inclement weather hotline to learn the status of a meeting at (413) 442-1521 X 5



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