



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, July 16, 2020

Virtual Meeting as allowed by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order dated July 16, 2020 suspending certain provision of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20.

I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement

A. The meeting was called to order at: 5:06 p.m.

Chair Kyle Hanlon started the meeting by reading a statement regarding the Open Meeting Law. BRPC records all meetings. Others may record the meeting after informing the chair. Any documents presented must be left with the Chair of the meeting.

B. Roll Call:

Kyle Hanlon, Chair
Sheila Irvin, Clerk
John Duval, Vice Chair
Malcolm Fick, Treasurer
Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair
Rene Wood, Commission Development Committee Chair
Buck Donovan, At-Large
CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair

Others Present: none

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director, Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager

II. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on June 4, 2020

CJ Hoss moved to approve the minutes of the June 4, 2020 meeting which was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Buck Donovan, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon. CJ Hoss and Rene Wood abstained.

III. Financial Reports

A. June Expenditures Report

Rene Wood moved to approve the June expenditures report which was seconded by Sheila Irvin. It was approved by roll call vote from Buck Donovan, John Duval, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Accounts Receivable Report

Tom reported many of the aged receivables were paid.

C. Line of Credit Report

The line of credit was not needed over the last month. Tom reported cash flow is currently good.

D. Other – none

IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues – Rene reported there is a bill to allow governors to have mandatory quarantines related to COVID-19. Cities and towns could impose fines to enforce the quarantine.

V. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Accept a Grant (After the Fact) from the Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to accept a grant from the Western Regional Homeland and Security Advisory Council and enter into related agreements with its fiscal agent, the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, to conduct an exercise series exploring how to hold public vaccination clinics during a pandemic. The Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council has approved a grant of up to \$33,000 to allow the Public Health Program to review existing Emergency Dispensing Site Plans, conduct a Tabletop exercise in the summer and then hold three or more seasonal flu clinic drills in the fall to test the plan. Senior Planner Sandra Martin, MEP, MPH, smartin@berkshrieplanning.org is the contact.

Roger Bolton moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to accept a grant (after the fact) from the Western Regional Homeland and Security Advisory Council. The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin. It was approved by roll call vote from Buck Donovan, John Duval, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Other – none

VI. Committee Reports

A. Environmental Review Committee

Roger Bolton reported the Environmental Review Committee met twice. The committee reviewed the request for a waiver of the Mandatory Environmental Impact Report on the removal of the Becker Pond dam in Mount Washington. The draft comments are to be reviewed for approval the Commission meeting.

Tom reported there is another dam removal in Hinsdale that may need to be reviewed by the Environmental Review Committee.

B. Other – none

VII. Executive Director’s Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 6/1/2020 to 6/30/2020

- Massachusetts Attorney General Office- Small Business Relief Partnership - \$45,000
- Lanesborough – Inspection Services 2020- \$8,000
- Dalton – Inspectional Services 2021 – Fee for Service
- Lee Community Center Survey - \$9,750
- Becket Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$3,500
- Cheshire Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$4,310
- Clarksburg Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$2,785
- Dalton Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$5,809
- Egremont Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$2,137
- Great Barrington Public Health Nursing Service 2021 - \$5,788
- North Adams Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$9,453
- Otis Public Health Nursing Services 2021 - \$2,500
- Peru Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$2,000
- Williamstown Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$6,393
- Lenox Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$4,655
- Lee Public Health Nursing Services 2021- \$5,423
- Stockbridge Public Health Nursing Services 2021 - \$2,500
- Middlefield Public Health Nursing Services 2021 - \$2,500
- Washington Public Health Nursing Services 2021 - \$2,000
- Egremont Public Health Inspectional Services 2021 - \$10,250
- Berkshire United Way – Berkshire Benchmarks - \$10,000
- Richmond Shared Economic Development Planner - \$11,875
- Adams Shared Economic Development Planner - \$20,000
- Gt. Barrington Shared Economic Development Planner - \$25,000
- Lanesborough Shared Economic Development Planner - \$10,000
- Lenox Shared Economic Development Planner - \$29,750
- FDA – Regional Food Safety Strategic Plan and Inspections - \$69,950
- DPH - COVID-19 Emergency Funds for Municipalities - \$50,000
- DPH – Public Health Shared Services Year 2 - \$47,709

Grants and Contracts Not received - None

B. Staff Updates

Christine Ector will be the new Public Health Planner. Christine will be involved in several public health program projects, primarily those related to the Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Coalition (BOAPC), the Pittsfield Gray to Green Policies, Systems and Environmental Change Project and the Public Health Emergency Preparedness (PHEP) funding, as well as support to other Public Health Program projects including Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA) and the County Health Initiative.

Planner Peg McDonough was laid off as of July 1, 2020. Peg was the lead staff person for Age Friendly Berkshires. While we received a substantial grant to initiate this effort, funding to sustain it, and her position was difficult to obtain. We are continuing to maintain Age Friendly Berkshires at a base level.

C. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

There was an update of BTI activities from 5/1/20 through 5/26/20.

- The BTI received \$18,000 from the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) (MA COVID-19 Fund) for Farmer Market Match. This grant supports the Berkshire County Market Match program, which helps make farmers markets more affordable by increasing the purchase power of households receiving assistance via SNAP, HIP, WIC, Senior FMNP, etc.

D. East-West Rail

At the June 10th meeting of the East-West Rail Advisory Committee the Advisory Committee was asked to narrow down the 6 initial alternatives to a final 3 for greater analysis. Through coordination with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and Franklin Regional Council of Governments it was agreed to eliminate those alternatives that included bus service from Pittsfield. Also agreed was the elimination of the extremely expensive alternative of a true high-speed service along the turnpike. Instead a "hybrid" alternative was proposed which would improve travel time from Springfield to Worcester. MassDOT should be conducting an analysis for presentation for late summer or early fall.

E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission

The June 25th meeting of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission, RPAC, had a presentation about the Welcoming and Belonging Franklin County effort to address racial justice issues (and possibly help stem the population loss in the county), had a discussion with a member from the MA Food System Collaborative about food security, heard a presentation from Dan Seiger Undersecretary for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

about his agency's efforts on rural economic recovery, and prioritized items to be included in the proposed Economic Development Bond Bill.

F. New Look

We started using our new logo on July 1st to get a more consistent "branding" image. We will be launching our new website in a few weeks.

G. Other – none

VIII. Old Business

A. Executive Director Review

BRPC's Bylaws require "On an annual basis, the Executive Director shall prepare a review of his/her accomplishments for the preceding year and goals for the upcoming years as part of his/her performance evaluation by the Executive Committee." At the last Executive Committee meeting, it was decided to conduct this review at the July meeting. A brief written summary was provided prior to the meeting. Due to members not having enough time to review Tom's summary it was decided the Executive Directors Review will be done at the next Executive Committee meeting.

B. BRPC Office Operations

Per the Governor's guidance, the BRPC office can open at 50% capacity, with the caveat that if work can be done from home it should be done from home. Most staff continue to work from home, but more and more staff have chosen to work in the office. Tom reported he is in the office 2-3 days per week. When staff are in the office they are strictly adhering to best practices. Meetings are still being held remotely. The transition from desktop computers to laptop computers will be completed over the next few weeks. All staff will be working on laptops while they are in the office (with a docking station) which will minimize disruption if we need to go back into an extended lockdown in the future

Tom reported that with the purchase of laptops and docking stations, BRPC is more prepared if there is a need to go fully remote again. We also installed Plexiglas on cubical walls for increased protection. The landlord has been installing a security access system to the Fenn Street doors. Staff will have key fobs instead of keys. Also, in September 2021 our current office space lease expires. If BRPC is awarded new grants we will need to hire more staff. We are looking at our needs for space or shared space. The thought is to redo our telecommuting policy to allow staff to work from home a couple of days and work a couple days in the office. Staff would have staggered schedules to allow for shared workspace.

C. Other - none

IX. New Business

A. Educational Program

Given the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic, it may be several months before we will be able to conduct in-person trainings, such as 5th Thursday dinners. The American Planning Association (APA) produces a wide range of educational material on a range of topics.

Given the recent heightened awareness of racial and social equity, Tom proposed that this year's educational effort focus on racial and social equity, diversity, and inclusion through participation in APA videos and other material. APA is planning a Voices of Equity in Planning Video Series. The first video in APA's new multi-part series, Voices of Equity in Planning, includes interviews with public- and private-sector planners across the country, whose work has centered on equity for years.

APA also has a Diversity and Inclusion Training series (see attached summary.)

There is a cost for the training material. For instance, the Diversity and Inclusion Training series costs:

- \$340 for 10 participants
- \$680 for 20 participants
- \$900 for 30 participants
- \$1,200 for 40 participants
- \$1,500 for 50 participants

Tom proposed that instead of subsidizing the 5th Thursday dinners, that BRPC make this training available for BRPC staff, professional planners in the region and Delegates and Alternates. The Executive Committee was asked if they agreed Tom would work with staff to come up with a more defined work plan.

After a discussion all agreed staff and Executive Committee members could do these trainings first. Then the trainings could be offered to the Delegate and Alternates. Delegates and Alternate could share with their communities the information.

B. Yearly Meeting Schedule

The meeting schedule for FY21 was agreed on with the Commission Development Committee meetings note to be changed to will meet as needed.

C. Kusik Award

The Kusik Award (which recognizes an outstanding contribution to planning) has traditionally been awarded at the BRPC Annual Meeting. Earlier this year the Executive Committee canceled the Annual Meeting. The Executive Committee decided to postpone the Kusik Award this year. Instead it was decided at Commission meetings to recognize organizations or individuals who have emerged as leaders during the COVID crisis. Organizations who distributed food or provided free meals was one idea. Listening to recognitions and acceptance statements is very informative.

D. September Commission Meeting

At this point in time it is hard to project what is going to be important in 8-9 weeks. We might have more information about the East-West rail, and a final FY21 state budget.

After a discussion it was decided that one topic should be the State Budget. Another agenda item could be an open discussion about how communities want to work with BRPC.

E. Other – none

x. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:57 pm by a motion made by Roger Bolton and seconded by Malcolm Fick.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of June 4, 2020
- June Expenditures Report
- June Accounts Receivable Report
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo – Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Unapproved Minutes of the Environmental Review Committee of July 7, 2020
- Christine Ector - Resume
- East West Passenger Rail Study Advisory Committee Update Final Alternatives Feedback