



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, October 1, 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: 4:00 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

John Duval, Vice Chair

Sheila Irvin, Clerk

Malcolm Fick, Treasurer

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair

Rene Wood, Commission Development Committee Chair

Others Present: Nancy Socha Stockbridge Delegate, Tammy Daniels, iberkshires staff, Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Planning Board

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director, Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager, Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager

II. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on September 3, 2020

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2020 meeting which was seconded by Rene Wood. It was unanimously approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

After the minutes were approved, the Chair allowed Laura Kittross to give a presentation on proposed legislation regarding Public Health. That item is more fully described later in these minutes.

All welcomed Nancy Socha the new delegate from the Town of Stockbridge.

III. Financial Reports

A. September Expenditures Report

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

Tom reported no issues with the 90-day aged receivables.

Kyle will inquire on the aged receivable for North Adams. There are a few communities that overpaid the assessments. BRPC will issue refund checks. We are following up on a few communities that have past due assessments.

C. Line of Credit Report

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

D. Other – Tom reported our landlord suspended BRPC’s rent increase in our lease agreement due to COVID-19.

Rene Wood moved to send a thank you letter to the landlord from the Executive Committee which was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

V. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Submit Grant Application U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment funding in the upcoming grant round and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. Tom reported we have exhausted the funding from the previously awarded assessment grant and are currently in the process of closing that project. There are currently no funds available for site assessments; however, several potential sites have been identified that could benefit from environmental site assessments for both hazardous and petroleum contamination. The maximum grant award is \$300,000, and we anticipate requesting \$200,000 in hazardous funds and \$100,000 in petroleum funds. No local match is required, and a limited amount of administration is now allowed under Brownfields Grants. Staff contact: Melissa Provencher, mprovencher@berkshrieplanning.org.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a grant application to U.S. Environmental Protections Agency for Brownfields Assessment and authorize the Executive Director to enter into necessary contracts and agreements. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General Promoting Cultural Humility in Opioid Use Disorder Treatment Grant program and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant opportunity is an offering from the AG Office to fund innovative solutions to improve the ability of Opioid Use Disorder treatment providers to address the complex and specific needs of their patients. Grant applications can be for an amount up to \$100,000. The specific budget is still being determined. There is no match required. Staff contact: Jennifer Kimball, jkimball@berkshireplanning.org.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a grant application to the Office of the Massachusetts Attorney General Promoting Cultural Humility in Opioid Use Disorder Treatment Grant program and authorize the Executive Director to enter into necessary contracts and agreements. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS)

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Massachusetts Collaborative for Action, Leadership, and Learning 3 (MassCALL3) Substance Misuse Prevention Grant and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant opportunity is a continuation of Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (SAPC) funding we currently have and provides multi-year funding (up to \$125,000/year for 9 years). Under the services described in this grant, communities will be able to build capacity, develop a strategic plan to implement existing evidence-based strategies, or design innovative approaches that adhere to the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF). No match is required. Tom explained this grant is for Staff to continue Opioid prevention. Staff contact: Jennifer Kimball, jkimball@berkshireplanning.org.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Massachusetts Collaborative for Action, Leadership, and Learning 3 (MassCALL3) Substance Misuse Prevention Grant program and authorize the Executive Director to enter into necessary contracts and agreements. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

D. Other - None

VI. Committee Reports

A. Environmental Review Committee

National Grid (NEP) had submitted an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) with a request for a Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Hoosic Riverbank Stabilization and Erosion Control Project in the Town of Adams. The Project's goal is to protect existing electrical utility infrastructure near the Hoosic River where bank erosion poses an imminent threat to the integrity of multiple transmission line structures. Comments are due October 23, 2020.

Roger explained there is no public money involved, the utility company will pay the expenses. Roger also reported there is no hazardous waste involved.

Tom reported the virtual site visit will be October 6th. The next Environmental Review Committee meeting will be October 21, 2020 at 4pm.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Environmental Review Committee to submit comments on the Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Hoosic Riverbank Stabilization and Erosion Control Project in the town of Adams which was seconded by Malcolm. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on September 14, 2020. The main topic of the meeting was a presentation about the Resilient Lands Initiative. Comments about that proposed initiative were prepared and approved by the Full Commission on Thursday September 24, 2020. Draft minutes were in the meeting materials. Tom reported the next meeting is scheduled for October 22, 2020.

C. CEDS Committee

The CEDS Committee met on September 10, 2020. The main topic of the meeting was to confirm / amend the priority projects and other information to be included in the 2020 CEDS update. Draft minutes were in the meeting packet.

Tom reported the 2020 CEDS Annual report will need to be voted on by the Commission at the November meeting. Tom also reported on the two grants for the Economic Development District and the EDA grant, BRPC has not received any word on the applications.

D. Other:

Commission Development Committee – Rene suggested if needed the Commission Development Committee could word smith any possible changes to the values statement.

VII. Executive Director’s Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 9/1/2020 to 9/30/2020

- DPH – Berkshire Opioid Addiction Prevention Collaborative - \$25,000
- DPH - Opioid Abuse Prevention - \$75,000
- FRCOG – Public Health Emergency Preparedness - \$150,909
- FRCOG – Berkshire & Franklin County Medical Reserve Corps - \$44,112
- Savoy – Public Health Nursing Services - \$2,000
- Washington – Public Health Inspection Services - \$3,825
- Windsor – Public Health Inspection Services - \$7,650
- Windsor – Public Health Nursing Services - \$2,000

Grants and Contracts Not received - None

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

Below is an update of BTI activities from 8/26/20 through 9/28/20.

- Approved a software lease agreement with BRPC for 48 Subscriptions of Microsoft Office 365 for FY2021 totaling \$7,200.

C. Staff Updates

An update was given on the open position for an Environmental Planner. The part-time offsite Specialist position to serve as Project Facilitator for the Berkshire Remote Learning Initiative (BRLI) was hired as a contract position.

D. East-West Rail Update

The East-West Passenger Rail Study Advisory Committee meeting was Wednesday, Sept. 30, from 1:00 to 2:30 p.m. During the meeting, analysis of the final three study alternatives was presented, including updated ridership, cost estimates, and community and environmental impacts. Next steps to complete the Study, including the Draft and Final Report, were discussed, <https://www.mass.gov/east-west-passenger-rail-study>.

Tom reported he was disappointed that the study did not do any collaboration with CSX. The Advisory Committee will provide comments. There also was a discussion about the article in the Berkshire Eagle regarding the very low benefit cost ratio.

E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The next meeting of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission is tentatively scheduled for October 9, 2020.

F. Culvert & Small Bridges Work Group Report

Through Senator Hinds' leadership, the Culverts and Small Bridges Working Group was convened to identify and evaluate the costs and benefits of existing environmental rules and regulations, engineering standards, and permitting processes and their impact on the replacement or repair of deteriorated or substandard culverts and small bridges. A report which contains the recommendations was finally released. We are trying to set up a virtual "5th Thursday" gathering to explain the report which can be accessed here, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-culverts-and-small-bridges-working-group-report/download>.

G. Culvert Grants

The Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game's Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant Program helps municipalities replace undersized and deteriorating culverts with crossings that meet improved design standards for fish and wildlife passage, river health, and storm resiliency. Becket was awarded \$65,000 for engineering and design work for a culvert replacement on Center Pond Brook. Alford was awarded \$15,000 to complete planning and data collection work to replace a culvert on a tributary to the Green River.

H. MVP Grants

The Municipal Vulnerability Program provides grants to communities to plan for impacts from climate change, and then once planning is complete, grants to implement improvements. Cheshire, Mount Washington, Otis, Stockbridge, and Richmond were recently awarded planning grants. Great Barrington,

Williamstown (on behalf of the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership) and Windsor were awarded action (implementation) grants.

I. Site Development Grant Program

MassDevelopment has a new round of funding under its Site Readiness Program. The program offers grants to finance land acquisition, feasibility studies, master planning, environmental permitting, site improvements, and other work. It is geared toward boosting investments in industrial and commercial projects and supporting the conversion of abandoned sites and facilities. Responses are due by Nov. 12, 2020.

<https://www.massdevelopment.com/what-we-offer/real-estate-services/site-readiness/>

J. Unemployment Data

The MassHire Berkshire Workforce Board has compiled a useful data set on labor statistics, including unemployment, on their webpage, <https://masshireberkshire.com/Labor-Market/>. The Board also commissioned a report regarding the impact of COVID-19 on Berkshire County Industries

K. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Fall Virtual Workshops

The Fall schedule for the CPTC trainings has not yet been released.

L. Orientation for new BRPC Members

The orientation for new members has not been scheduled yet.

M. Shared Street and Spaces Grant Award

The Shared Streets & Spaces program through MassDOT provides technical and funding assistance to help Massachusetts cities and towns conceive, design, and implement tactical changes to curbs, streets, on-street parking spaces, and off-street parking lots in support of public health, safe mobility, and renewed commerce. Pittsfield received \$238,826.50 to support new dedicated cycling facilities, curb extensions, one-way streets, outdoor seating areas for restaurants, and improvements to intersections to make them more welcoming. West Stockbridge received \$141,358.60 to convert several downtown public and private spaces for safe outdoor gathering and dining, establish expanded walking and bicycling routes, install new traffic calming measures, mount new wayfinding and integrate public art.

N. Attorney General's Small Business Relief Partnership Grant Program

The Attorney General's Small Business Relief Partnership Grant Program was established to help small businesses address fixed debt, payroll, accounts payable, lost sales, lost opportunities, and other working capital expenses

incurred by the COVID-19 pandemic. BRPC’s grant provided a total of \$45,000 to the following 16 companies in 10 municipalities.

Applicant	City / Town	Award Amount
DeMarsico's Wine Cellar, LLC	North Adams	\$3,000.00
Kinderhof Waldorf School	North Egremont	\$3,000.00
Maplewood B&B	Hinsdale	\$3,000.00
Berkshire Paint and Sip	Pittsfield	\$2,991.40
Eastgate Inn B&B	Lenox	\$2,492.78
Tamarack Hollow	Windsor	\$3,000.00
Greylock Works	North Adams	\$3,000.00
Klo Organic Beauty	Williamstown	\$3,000.00
Animagic Museum	Lee	\$3,000.00
Woodstock South	Adams	\$3,000.00
Cedar Tree Investment Group	Pittsfield	\$3,000.00
Prado del Lana Sheep Farm Yarn & Wool Shop	Stockbridge	\$3,000.00
Braytonville Properties LLC / REDPM	Adams	\$3,000.00
Orchid Beauty Salon	North Adams	\$3,000.00
Christopher's Cuts	North Adams	\$3,000.00
100-104 River Street LLC	North Adams	\$515.82

O. Other – None

VIII. Old Business

A. Review of FY 20 Berkshire Group Purchasing Program

A summary report of the Berkshire Group Purchasing Program for FY 20 was included in the meeting materials. Tom explained the program is a complex program to manage. BRPC will continue to improve the program. There are two sources of revenue; the fees from the communities and a percentage on the amount the vendors deliver to the communities. The program is self-supporting.

B. Review of Staff Top Ten Commitments – FY 21

Staff are still working on the final draft of the FY21 Top Ten Commitments.

C. Review of BRPC Values Statement

At the September 24, 2020 Commission meeting there was a lot of good discussion.

Tom asked members for ideas on how to proceed and what the process should be. After a discussion, it was decided to look at specific projects and what BRPC is doing and if there is something else that we should be doing. Ideas discussed were life expectancy in one community is longer than the life expectancy in a nearby community and the health impacts of an area related to income. Other issues discussed include: Health issues and the differences, housing differences, affordable housing discrimination based on economics. Two new grants for small micro-businesses would be good programs to look at because these grants are based on low to moderate income.

At the next Executive Committee meeting in November, the committee can formalize what should be presented at the November Full Commission meeting.

D. Office Space / Lease

The lease for our current office space expires next September. We are not able to renew and must go out to bid. The process to secure office space should begin shortly. The effects of COVID-19 and the need for more space is difficult to determine. Tom did report according to procurement law if the rent is less than \$35,000 then procurement is not needed. Tom will do a survey with staff on their thoughts on telecommuting post COVID and sharing offices.

E. Other - None

IX. New Business

A. Comments on Chapter 70 School Funding

The Massachusetts Division of Local Services and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education are conducting a study to determine the fairness of the Chapter 70 funding provision for schools. One of the key provisions of the current method is the "hold harmless" provision. The hold harmless provision guarantees that districts receive at least the same amount of Chapter 70 aid as the previous year even when their foundation budgets decrease due to declining enrollment. Berkshire schools receive a significant amount of "hold harmless" funding. A recent report, distributed in the meeting materials, by the Massachusetts Business Alliance for Education and Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce recommends eliminating the "hold harmless" provision. Without substitute funding, many of the Berkshire schools' budgets would be devastated. Comments are being solicited until October 16th. Tom asked if BRPC should submit comments.

After a discussion, on school funding all agreed there needs to be a more equitable mechanism for school funding.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission to submit comments on Chapter 70 School Funding to the Massachusetts Division of Local Services and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Commission, which was seconded by Malcolm Fick. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Support for Proposed Legislation regarding Public Health

On Wednesday September 30, 2020, new legislation was proposed to implement recommendations from the Special Commission on Local and Regional Health, including those now in statute as Chapter 72 of the Acts of 2020, An Act Relative to Strengthening the Local and Regional Public Health System (also known as the State Action for Public Health Excellence, or SAPHE Act). BRPC Public Health Program Manager Laura Kittross was a member of the Special Commission and has been involved in a working group to shape the legislation. Laura briefed the Executive Committee on the legislation.

Laura talked about the challenges faced by public health across the Commonwealth. These challenges lead to inequities, which prompted the special commission on local and regional health to submit recommendations from the special commission. She explained the essential provisions of SAPHE 2.0. Laura's full presentation can be found here: <https://berkshireplanning.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/SAPHE-Presentation-to-the-BRPC-Exec-Comm.pdf>

The Executive Committee was asked if we should join the coalition to support the legislation regarding Public Health.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission to join the coalition to support the Proposed Legislation regarding Public Health, which was seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon.

C. November Full Commission Meeting (Virtual) – November 19, 2020

The possible topics for the November Full Commission meeting were discussed.

- CEDS 2020 Annual Update (required)
- Revisions to BRPC's value statement (continued from last meeting)
- Additional recognition of outstanding Berkshire County responses to COVID-19

There was no discussion.

D. Other – None

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:49 pm by a motion made by Sheila Irvin and seconded by Malcolm Fick.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of September 3, 2020
- September Expenditures Report
- September Accounts Receivable Report
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo – Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Unapproved Minutes of the Regional Issues Committee meeting September 24, 2020
- Unapproved Minutes of the CEDS meeting September 10, 2020
- BRPC Adopted Mission, Vision and Values Statement
- Economic Impact of COVID-19 on Berkshire County MA
- Berkshire Group Purchasing Summary
- MMA School Budgets Chapter 70