



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE FULL COMMISSION September 24, 2020 MEETING

Virtual Meeting as allowed by Massachusetts Governor Charlie Baker's Executive Order dated March 12, 2020 suspending certain provision of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20.

I. Opening

A. The meeting was called to order at 7:14 PM

Chair Kyle Hanlon reminded all that per the open meeting law, BRPC records all meetings. Others may record the meeting after informing the chair. Any documents presented must be provided to the chair at the meeting.

Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate
Jim Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate
Kenneth Smith – Sheffield Delegate
Dante Birch – Williamstown Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko – Executive Director
Marianne Sniezek – Office Manager

Others Present: None

B. Approval of Minutes of July 16, 2020 Meeting

Jim Sullivan moved to approve; Roger Bolton seconded. Approved with a roll call vote and two abstentions

Roll Call Vote:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate - Yes
Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate - Abstain
Jim Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate - Abstain
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate - Yes
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate - Yes

Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate - Yes
Kenneth Smith – Sheffield Delegate - Yes
Dante Birch – Williamstown Delegate - Yes
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate - Yes

II. Comments from the Public – None

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

IV. Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions on the actions taken by the Executive Committee at their July 16, 2020 and September 3, 2020 meeting.

V. Resilient Lands Initiative Comments

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has developed a Vision and Strategy for the Resilient Lands Initiative, described as “Expanding Nature Across the Commonwealth to Help People.” The Commission was requested to review and approve the draft comment letter prepared by the Regional Issues Committee.

Tom gave an overview of the draft comment letter. Comments are due September 25th.

Roger Bolton moved to approve the draft Resilient Lands Initiative comment letter; Sheila Irvin seconded. Approved with a roll call vote.

Unanimously approved by a roll call vote.

Roll Call Vote:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate - Yes
Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate - Yes
Jim Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate - Yes
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate - Yes
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate - Yes
Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate - Yes
Kenneth Smith – Sheffield Delegate - Yes
Dante Birch – Williamstown Delegate – Yes

VI. Good Deeds Recognition

The recipients for our Good Deeds thank you and recognition in response to the COVID-19 crisis were presented.

Organizations and individuals recognized were Berkshire Health Systems, Berkshire Medical Center nurses, Berkshire County Public Health nurses, Adams Council on Aging, Goodwill Industries of the Berkshires and LP Adams

Company. BRPC will continue to recognize good deeds in response to the COVID-19 Crisis. E-mail Good Deeds to Tom Matuszko at tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

VII. About BRPC-FY20

In lieu of an in-person Annual Meeting this year due to the COVID-19 crisis, Tom highlighted some key projects and accomplishments over the last fiscal year by giving an overview of BRPC’s new website our programs, projects and initiatives.

All were encouraged to look at the home page on the website to see hot topics, news and announcements and the calendar of events to locate BRPC committee meetings and materials.

Link to BRPC’s website:
<https://berkshireplanning.org/>

VIII. Modification to BRPC’s Mission, Goals and Values Statement to Reinforce our Commitment to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Principles.

The recent protests in the wake of police shootings and the Black Lives Matter demonstrations has provided the opportunity to re-examine how we all may contribute to systemic racism and discrimination. There was a discussion on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion as relating to our Mission, Goals, and Values statements after a PowerPoint presentation to get members thinking about common words or phrases Racist or Derogatory Origins.

Tom explained over the next year or so could we add or modify the Mission, Goals and Values Statement.

The first step was the first discussion.

It was decided at the next Executive Committee meeting there would be a discussion on a strategy and at the next Full Commission meeting to have further discussions when more members are in attendance.

IX. Executive Director’s Report

Tom pointed out the new grants available.

A. 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 that 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>.

B. CPTC Training

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. Keep on the lookout this year's specific schedule and registration information. More information can be found at <https://masscptc.org/>.

C. Mass Housing Partnership's MHP Western Mass Housing Conference

Registration is now open for the Western Mass Housing Conference as sponsored by the Mass Housing Partnership. 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 required. 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

D. FY 2021 State Budget Update - Status of District Local Technical Assistance and other important priorities

As of this date there is no word about when the FY21 State Budget will be passed. An update will be provided if there is any movement at the state.

E. Staff Update

We are pleased to welcome Jared Latour as the newly hired Grant &

Procurement Specialist. This position works with the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Housing Rehabilitation and the Covid 19 Emergency Assistance to Micro Enterprise Business Owners programs, and provides staff support in the Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program (BRGPP).

F. MassWorks Applications

Eleven MassWorks applications were submitted by Berkshire County communities. All but 2 of these were STRAP grant application. The cumulative value of these was \$11 million. Statewide there were 100 applications with a total request of \$208 million.

G. FY21 Community Compact Cabinet IT Grant Program

The FY2021 Community Compact IT Grants application period opens on September 15, and any city or town that was not awarded an FY2020 Community Compact IT Grant is eligible to apply. Under the Community Compact IT Grant Program, grants of up to \$200,000 may be awarded to fund one-time capital needs such as technology infrastructure, upgrades, or purchases of equipment or software. Municipalities should have received a September 8 "Kick-Off" letter which featured the FY2021 Community Compact IT Grant application password and additional information.

H. Other:

Tom reported the following new items:

East-West Rail – the three options will be announced.

Culvert & Small Bridges Work Group Report – In the report are provisions for pre-approved designs. In the past the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC) met on the issues of Culvert and the cost burdens for small municipalities. The report will be posted on BRPC's website.

X. Adjournment

Sheila Irvin made a motion to adjourn; seconded by Jim Sullivan. Unanimously approved. Adjourned at 8:41 pm.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Meeting Agenda
Draft Meeting Minutes July 16, 2020
Executive Committee Actions Memo
Good Deeds Recognition
BRPC Mission Statement, Vision, Values

Executive Director's Memo
MHP's Western Mass Housing Conference Virtual Series
Jared J Latour Resume
Draft Comment Letter – Resilient Lands Initiative
Good Deeds Recognition Organizations and individuals
PowerPoint Common Words and Phrases