



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, November 5, 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: 4:01 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
CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair
Sam Haupt, At-Large
Buck Donovan, At-Large

Others Present: Barb Davis Hassan, Lanesborough; Fred Shubert, Richmond; Amanda Hamilton, Tyringham; Tammy Daniels, iberkshires staff

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director, Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager, Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager, Laura Brennan, Senior Planner

A. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on October 1, 2020

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the minutes of the October 1, 2020 meeting, which was seconded by Rene Wood and approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon. CJ Hoss and Sam Haupt abstained.

II. Financial Reports

A. October Expenditures Report

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

Tom reported no issues with the 90-day aged receivables. Marianne reported reminders were sent to communities for assessments and Group Purchasing fees.

C. Line of Credit Report

The line of credit was not needed last month.

D. FY20 Audit Update

Marianne reported the FY20 audit has begun. Once the audit is completed, the Finance Committee will review it and hear a presentation from our accountant.

E. Other – None

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Submit Grant Applications to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)/ Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) program

Approval (after the fact) was requested for the Executive Director to submit grant applications to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Association of Food and Drug Officials Program. BRPC, working with the Berkshire Public Health Alliance along with the Towns of Dalton, Egremont and Sheffield have applied for 3 small FDA/AFDO (Association of Food and Drug Officials) grants of \$2,500 each to re-assess at least 3 Alliance member Food Safety Programs in accordance with the FDA Program Standards. These are fixed price grants. If awarded, these grants will be used to support Alliance programs, including outreach, planning and training.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director, after the fact, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a grant application to U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)/ Association of Food and Drug Officials (AFDO) program and authorize the Executive Director to enter into necessary contracts and agreements. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton,

Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Approval to Submit Grant Applications MIIA Risk Management Program

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts MIIA Risk Management Grant program and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant opportunity was an offering from MIIA to support risk management initiatives including COVID related products and resources to assist in continued re-opening efforts. The grant budget is \$4,155. There is no local match required.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts MIIA Risk Management Grant program and authorize the Executive Director to enter into necessary contracts and agreements. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Other – None

V. Committee Reports

A. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee met on Wednesday October 21, 2020. The main topic on the agenda was an Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF) with a request for a Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for the Hoosic River Bank Stabilization and Erosion Control Project in the Town of Adams submitted by National Grid (NEP). 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 were due October 23, 2020. The Executive Committee previously authorized the Environmental Review Committee to submit comments, which were included with the meeting material. An additional topic was BRPC's role in reviewing various items related to the Rest of River clean-up with a request this topic be brought to the Executive Committee for discussion.

Roger asked for a discussion of BRPC's role in reviewing MEMA reviews related to the Rest of River clean-up. Tom explained the clean-up is a Federal project and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) must live up to the standards of the permit. There is extensive public comment and the Rest of River Municipal Committee review. After a discussion it was determined there is no need for the Environmental Review Committee to be involved. Tom also reported all Rest of River Minutes and links for resources are on BRPC's

website. <https://berkshireplanning.org/initiatives/housatonic-rest-of-river-municipal-committee/>

B. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee did not meet in October. November 18, 2020 is the next scheduled meeting. CJ Hoss reported the Committee has a list of potential topics for consideration.

C. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meet at 3:30 pm on Thursday November 5, 2020 before the Executive Committee meeting. The main topic of the meeting was to recommend the community assessments for FY22.

Malcolm reported the Finance Committee approved, to recommend to the Commission at their November meeting, no increase in the FY22 Community Assessments from the previous year. The recommendation is earlier than in previous years to assist communities in their budgeting process.

D. Other - None

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 10/1/2020 to 10/31/2020

- MassDOT Transportation Planning - \$628,859
- Tyringham – Public Health Nursing Services - \$2,200
- Florida – Public Health Nursing Services - \$2,000
- USDA Forest Service Forest Resilience Carbon Storage Practices - \$60,000
- Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdose Data to Action year 2 - \$85,343
- Western Ma Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition (HMCC) - Vaccine Support - \$18,062.73
- EPA Revolving Loan Fund Amendment - \$450,000
- Lenox – CBDG-VC Southern Microenterprise Assistance Program - \$90,000
- Adams – CBDG-VC Northern Microenterprise Assistance Program - \$36,000
- Department of Public Health DPH – COVID19 – Additional Funds- \$50,0000
- Adams – GIS Services - \$11,000

Grants and Contracts Not received - None

- CDC Environmental Public Health and Emergency Response Grant - \$155,465

- DEP – 604b Water Quality Management Planning Grant - \$50,000
- HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response Program - \$1,000,000

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

Aside from some administrative approvals, there were no BTI approvals in October.

C. Staff Updates

- Melissa Provencher was congratulated on her 20-year Anniversary with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Melissa started with BRPC as an intern. Melissa was hired on October 2000 as an Associate Planner and has steadily advance through the organization.
- Tom reported have filled the Environmental Planner position with Emily Lange. Her resume was provided in the meeting materials.
- Senior Planner Caroline Massa is leaving BRPC to become Vermont’s State Hazard Mitigation Planner.
- The position did not work out for the recently hired Grant & Procurement Specialist, Jared Latour who resigned immediately. We are re-evaluating that position.

D. East-West Rail Update

At the last East-West Passenger Rail Study Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, Sept. 30, 2020, Advisory Committee members were requested to provide input on several items to be considered for the draft final report. Those comments were included in the meeting material. The draft final report is available for a 30-day public comment period, <https://www.mass.gov/lists/east-west-passenger-rail-study-documents>. The comment period ends on November 19, 2020. Comments must be submitted via the study comment form.

E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) met on October 9, 2020. The primary topic of discussion was the economic conditions in rural communities because of the COVID-19 crisis and ways various agencies across the state are dealing with it. RPAC also agreed to send a comment letter, which was included in the meeting material, on the Local Contributions study related to Chapter 70 funding.

F. Culvert & Small Bridges Work Group Training

The proposed “5th Thursday” gathering on Thursday October 29, 2020 to explain the Culvert and Small Bridges Working Group report, <https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-culverts-and-small-bridges-working-group-report/download> did not occur. MassDOT declined to participate saying that additional documents that needed to be considered along with the report were not yet finished. We are looking to hold the workshop this winter and be able to present the complete package of material.

G. Planner Training Collaborative Fall Virtual Workshops

Tom reported this fall's CPTC training sessions would be virtual. The full schedule of trainings can be accessed here, <https://masscptc.org/training/autumn/fall-workshops-20.html>

H. Comments on Chapter 70 School Funding

Following up on an item from the last meeting, comments submitted by the Executive Director on behalf of the Commission on the Chapter 70 Local Contributions study were included in the meeting material.

I. Forum on Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)

BRPC is co-sponsoring an on-line event entitled *Transportation Climate Initiative: Clean Transportation for Rural Communities*. The Transportation Climate Initiative (TCI) is an initiative of 12 Northeastern states focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector through a regional cap and trade program. This event will be an educational opportunity to learn more about the TCI initiative and to discuss how TCI can address the challenges that rural areas are facing. The event scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2020 at 7 PM. Registration was at https://www.t4ma.org/rural_tci

J. Together Conference

The Moving Together Conference is scheduled for November 17 - 19, 2020. The conference brings together transportation leaders and individuals involved in the areas of planning, public health, bicyclist and pedestrian safety, transit, advocacy, elected office, law enforcement and education. Information and registration is at www.MovingTogetherMA.org

K. Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Entrepreneur Challenge

Business accelerator Lever of North Adams is accepting applications for the Mohawk Trail Entrepreneur Challenge, which seeks entrepreneurs who are building regional businesses that will create jobs in the municipalities included in the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership area. The winner of the challenge will receive \$25,000 to advance their project. To be eligible, entrepreneurs or their businesses must be located in the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership area. Berkshire County member municipalities are Adams, Cheshire, Clarksburg, New Ashford, North Adams, Peru, Windsor or Williamstown. Information is available from Lever Workforce Programs Manager Jade Schnauber, jschnauber@leverinc.org or at <https://leverinc.org/contact/>.

L. DLTA Update

Funding for the DLTA program was included in the Governor's revised FY21 budget proposal at \$3 million. That budget is in the House Ways and Means. This is an important program for Berkshire County and BRPC. The flexibility of this program was instrumental in allowing BRPC to assist with the COVID-19 crisis and subsequent response.

M. Other - None

VII. Old Business

A. Office Space / Lease

Tom reported he spoke with our landlord about extending our lease for one year for an amount less than \$35,000 / year, which is the upper limit where we do not have to do a procurement. Our landlord understood our plight of not knowing how much space we will need due to COVID-19. He was willing to offer us a 3-month lease at the \$35,000/year rate, essentially \$2,916 / month for 3 months. This is substantially below the current monthly rate of about \$4,500 / month. He was willing to consider a longer term depending on the COVID-19 situation next year. He did ask Tom to pursue if there is COVID-19 relief from the requirement that we cannot simply extend our current lease for one year. Tom explained that if BRPC needs to do a full procurement and that the process takes about 6 months. Due to Covid-19, many staff are working remotely. Tom and the landlord agreed they would look at the situation in January. BRPC's lease ends in September 2021, the extension at the lower rate would be until Dec 2021. If staff continue to telework, we would not need more space, could possibly reconfigure the space and have more offices, and shared space. In addition, more conference room space could be considered.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to except the 3-month extension of our current office lease at a reduced rate if warranted. The motion was seconded by Malcolm Fick and approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Review of Staff Top Ten Commitments – FY 21

Tom presented the FY21 Top Ten Commitments at the meeting. The Executive Committee decided they would review and discuss at the next Executive Meeting in December.

C. Other – GOOD DEEDS Recognition

Tom reported individuals to be recognized in the critical Care unit at BMC. The Good Deeds recognition is on our website and was in our recent newsletter.

IX New Business

A. Commission Comments on the Transportation and Climate Initiative

As noted in the Executive Director's report, the TCI initiative is focused on reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the transportation sector through a regional cap and trade program. This emissions cap is applied on fuel distributors. This ultimately would likely result in an increase in fuel prices with the revenue being used on emission reductions measures. Previously,

the price of a gallon of gas was projected to increase by 17 cents/ gallon, but that might have changed due to COVID-19. Many of the measures that are being discussed to reduce emissions revolve around increased transit, but that option does not apply to many of our more rural communities. We may be in a situation where rural communities will shoulder the cost of increased fuel prices but not receive commensurate benefits. An excellent analysis can be found at

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/t4ma/pages/37/attachments/original/1602073069/TCI_Report_Rural_Aug_2020.pdf?1602073069. Previously staff have provided comments at various times in the process. However, the process is nearing closure of the first step as the Governor is expected to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) prior to the end of the year to enter Massachusetts in the program. Tom asked for discussion on the Commission submitting comments that are more formal.

Tom reported that the Rural Policy Commission would be sending a letter on their concerns. The TCI initiative is a topic for the Regional Issues Committee's next meeting.

B. Commission Comments on the East-West Rail Study

As noted in the Executive Directors report, the draft East-West Rail study is available for public comment until November 19, 2020. The Executive Director, as an Advisory Committee member, has submitted comments as the draft were being finalized. Tom asked if the Commission should submit comments that are more formal. Attached is a copy of the Executive Summary.

The draft Comment letter should be an agenda item for the Commission at its November meeting.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director, on behalf of the Commission, to submit a comment letter on the East-West Rail Study to MassDOT. The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

C. November Commission Meeting

Possible topics for the November 19, 2020 Commission meeting include:

- CEDS 2020 Annual Update (required)
- Approval of Community Assessments for FY 22
- Presentation on social determinants of health / Grey to Green Project
- Presentation on CDBG CARES Grants to low-moderate income micro-enterprises
- Additional recognition of outstanding Berkshire County responses to COVID-19
- Good Deeds
- TCI draft Comment Letter

- East-West Rail Comment Letter
- If information ready - \$250,000 Earmark

D. Other – Kate Fletcher requested that recorded meetings could be on public TV. All decided to allow for access to recordings of BRPC’s meetings. CJ Hoss said that Pittsfield gives PCTV the Zoom information and they can log in and broadcast live and offer reruns. Malcolm Fick stated that Gt. Barrington’s meetings are also on public access TV.

X. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm by a motion made by Sam Haupt and seconded by CJ Hoss.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of October 2, 2020
- October Expenditures Report
- October Accounts Receivable Report
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo – Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Comments on the Hoosic River Bank Stabilization and Erosion Control Project EENF
- Emily Lange Resume
- East-West Rail Advisory Committee Comments
- Rural Policy Advisory Commission Comment of the Chapter 70 Local Contributions study
- Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Training Schedule
- Comments on Chapter 70 Local Contributions Study
- FY21 Top Ten Commitments