



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, December 3, 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
CJ Hoss, Pittsfield Alternate

Others Present: Tricia Farley-Bouvier

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

A. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on November 5, 2020

CJ Hoss moved to approve the minutes of the November 5, 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, CJ Hoss, and Kyle Hanlon.

II. Financial Reports

A. November Expenditures Report

Payments to drug companies - Tom explained that BRPC was allowed to buy flu vaccine and we vaccinated over 1400 people at flu clinics. The vaccine had to be pre-purchased on a credit card.

Berkshires Tomorrow reallocation of contract funds – Tom explained that this

amount was related to the Berkshire County Education Task Force. Funds were received into Berkshires Tomorrow. Much of the money was transferred to BRPC but some bills were paid through Berkshires Tomorrow.

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

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

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.

E. Other – None

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Accept a Grant from the Berkshire United Way on behalf of the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council

Approval was requested to accept a grant from the Berkshire United Way on behalf of the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council to update Berkshire Benchmarks and to create regional indicators. The Berkshire Benchmark web site needs revamping. In addition, the Benchmarks site never really developed the indicators portion of the site. Working with the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council indicators would be developed to track how Berkshire County is changing over time. The initial grant is for \$10,000 but will be increased to \$140,000 as the project progresses. Staff lead for the project is Mark Maloy, mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org.

Tom explained the initial money is to start the project on the top eight indicators. This project will be matching funds to the EDA Grant we are waiting for approval on.

Rene suggested Age groups should also be an indicator.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director to Accept a Grant from

the Berkshire United Way on behalf of the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council 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, and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Other – None

V. Committee Reports

A. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on November 18, 2020 (draft – unapproved minutes were attached.) The main topic of the meeting was the Transportation and Climate Initiative. The Committee recommended comments about this initiative that were acted on by the Commission at its 11/20/20 meeting. Clete Kus, Transportation Manager, wrote a letter that is included in this packet.

There was a discussion on the importance of this topic.

Also discussed was that the eastern part of the state needs to understand Berkshire County and the miles we must drive to get around, the lack of public transportation and the limits with BRTA, the transportation issues related to schools and the elderly.

Rene suggested a follow up letter from the Commission the impacts of TCI to the region. Tom agreed and stated that the timing of a letter should coincide with the signing of the MOU by the state and address how the money should be spent. The goal is to reduce emissions and the effects on climate change but the region needs to receive our fair share of the benefits.

Sheila pointed out the need for money for electric vehicles and electric vehicles charging stations.

B. Other – No other Committee Reports

At this time, Representative Tricia Farley-Bouvier was provided with the opportunity to speak and engage with Executive Committee members.

Sheila stated Commission would like to discuss with the delegations about the issues concerning the TCI program.

The increase in the cost of gas could be from 5 cents to 17 cents per gallon to provide revenue for the TCI program. The increase is a concern to our area because we do not have a subway and lack other public transportation. We also want to make sure the revenue does not fund the MBA. Due to our demographics, people cannot go out and buy electric vehicles to offset the

increased cost of gasoline. Funds should go to Berkshire County to improve the BRTA, the East-West rail, subsidize electric vehicles and charging stations. Tricia has had bills to realign funds to be pay per mile.

Kyle commented on the need for Berkshire County to have a seat at the table and a voice in further CI discussions.

Tricia will review the letter and be happy to have a discussion. The delegation could sign the Commission's follow up letter or the delegation send its own letter.

Tricia agrees there needs to be a push for infrastructure for EV charging stations.

Rene reported National Grid's program a few years ago to put EV charging stations on municipalities' properties. Town halls or libraries would be perfect. The issue was the portion of the cost the municipality had to pay. Eversource has a program to put EV stations on private locations i.e. Grocery stores. Another issue is the charging connection and the need for universal connections as exemplified by Tesla vs non-Tesla cars.

The delegation would need a detailed briefing on the complex issues to advocate together.

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 11/1/2020 to 11/30/2020

- Dalton Stormwater 2021 - \$11,000
- Peru Hazard Mitigation - \$18,750
- Otis Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant - \$20,000
- Boston Medical Center - Boston Medical Center- Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities - \$48,911.00
- West Stockbridge Master Plan - \$44,000
- Stockbridge Outsource Planner - \$25,000
- Berkshires Tomorrow – Berkshire Remote Learning Initiative -\$26,650
- Berkshire United Way/Berkshire Leadership Impact Council Berkshire Benchmarks Regional Indicators -\$10,000
- MIIA - Cyber Risk Prevention -technology & hardware to support telework - \$2,862

Grants and Contracts not received

We are not aware of any grants and contracts not received in this period.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

Aside from administrative approvals, there were no November BTI approvals.

C. Staff Updates

We have filled the Grant & Procurement Specialist position. We are pleased

to welcome Christie Lewis to that position. See attached resume. Office Assistant Susan Nawazelski is leaving BRPC. We wish her good luck.

D. East-West Rail Update

The draft East-West Rail report was available for public comment. The Commission approved comment at its meeting on November 19th. A final version of those comments it attached.

E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) did not meet in November. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for December 11, 2020. The intended discussion topics are housing and population change.

F. Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)

As mentioned under the Regional Issues Committee, the Full Commission approved comments on the TCI. The submitted comments were included in the meeting materials.

G. APR 120 Day Notice Waivers

I approved 120 Notice Waivers for the following proposed APR acquisitions:

- Town of Williamstown - APR Project Name: Galusha, William L. and Kelly A., Project ID # 20C05
- Town of Great Barrington - APR Project Name: North Plain Farm, LLC, Project ID # 20C07
- Town of New Marlborough - APR Project Name: MacKenzie, Scott, Project ID # 20C06

H. DLTA Update

Tom reported the fate of the DLTA program-funding starting January 2021, was in the hands of a conference committee, as the Senate did not include it in their version of the budget.

Tricia reported on Friday there would be a formal session regarding the state budget.

I. MassWorks Funding Award

Congratulations to Pittsfield and Sheffield for MassWorks grant awards. The Pittsfield award was for Tyler Street Streetscape improvements including upgrades to sidewalks, crosswalks, and lighting to help stimulate extensive economic and resident investment along the corridor, including six new and reuse developments. Funds for Sheffield will support the construction of two bridge replacements on Lime Kiln Road and Kelsey Road. It is somewhat disappointing that only 2 of the 11 applications from Berkshire County were funded and only 2 of the 36 funded in the state.

J. Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program

The Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development will shortly formally announce a new program, the Local Rapid Recovery Planning

Program. This is a grant program for municipalities to develop actionable recovery plans tailored to the unique economic challenges and COVID-impacts in each MA City and town. The RFP is expected to be released on November 30th with responses due Dec 18th. Awards will be made in mid-January with all work to be completed by June 20, 2021. A Webinar for interested parties is tentatively scheduled for 12/3/20 at 10:00 a.m. DHCD contacts Chris Kluchman, Chris.Kluchman@mass.gov and Emmy Hahn, Elizabeth.Hahn@mass.gov

Tom pointed out towns should apply for this program for technical assistance.

K. Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund

With funds secured by Senator Hinds in the supplemental budget, we are able to launch the Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund. Grants through this program will help businesses and organizations with up to twenty-five employees address expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. Online applications will be available as of December 1st. More information is at Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (berkshireplanning.org)

Tom explained there is a strong need as we have received over 40 applications so far. The total amount requested for is over the grant money we received. BRPC is looking at options to ask for more money.

Tom commented the more applications received will show the need for more money.

L. OSRP Workbook Revisions

The Division of Conservation Services is starting a process to update the requirements for Open Space and Recreation Plans. The goal is to update the requirements to make them more relevant to climate change resiliency while eliminating sections that are less pertinent to open space and recreation. Provide comments to DCS contact Melissa Cryan melissa.cryan@mass.gov

M. Other- None

VII. Old Business

A. Staff Top Ten Commitments – FY21

At the last meeting, Executive Committee member wanted to have more time to review the staff's top ten commitments for FY 21.

There was no discussion.

B. Office Re-Opening Update

Due to the recent uptick in COVID-19 cases Tom requested that to the extent possible staff not come into the office to work unless they absolutely have to, i.e. process the mail. When staff are in the office they are to work in individual offices with the door closed.

C. Other – Public Health Program – Tom reported it looks like we will be issuing Covid-19 vaccine in the Spring or Summer.

VIII. New Business

A. January Full Commission Meeting (Virtual) January 21, 2021

At this time, it is early to prepare for January's meeting.

Possible Topics discussed:

- Electric vehicles charging stations
- DLTA21
- Public Health review of COVID-19 issues and meeting the needs and the towns assisted
- Overview of the CDBG-CV program and it's complexities

B. Other - Tom spoke with the landlord about taking the 3-month lease option

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm by a motion made by Roger Bolton and seconded by Sheila Irvin.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of November 5, 2020
- November Expenditures Report
- November Accounts Receivable Report
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo – Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Regional Issues Draft Minutes November 18, 2020
- Christie Lewis Resume
- East-West Rail Advisory Committee Comments
- Transportation and Climate Initiative Comments
- COVID-19 Adaptation Fund for Berkshire County
- FY21 Top Ten Commitments
- October Assistance Activities