



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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APPROVED MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING

Thursday, January 7, 2021

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: 4:03 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
Buck Donovan, At-Large

Others Present: Fred Schubert, Richmond Alternate, Brittany Polito, iberkshire staff, Angie Ellison, North Adams Chief Administrative Officer

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director, Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager, Christie Lewis, Grant Procurement Specialist

A. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on December 3, 2020

CJ Hoss moved to approve the minutes of the December 3, 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. December Expenditures Report

Tom explained that many of the payments to businesses and organizations are from the Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund.

Rene Wood moved to approve the December expenditures, which was seconded by Roger Bolton 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 except the Elder Service aged receivable of \$122.35.

C. Line of Credit Report

The line of credit was not needed last month.

Tom report cash flow is okay for now. BRPC received half of the Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund up front. The other half of the funds BRPC will not be received until June.

D. FY20 Audit Update

We continue to provide documentation and testing samples to the accountant for the FY20 Audit. The accountant will review all documents in January.

Marianne reported the Federal and State and Care money is tracked. The schedules for the audit have been prepared and will be reviewed by the accountant. Tom explained due to the pandemic all audits are behind schedule, according to our auditor.

E. Other – The federal provisional Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Allocation plan was approved by the U.S. Dept. of the Interior at 140%. This approval was required for BRPC’s application with the Economic Development Administration (EDA). EDA would not accept BRPC’s rate of 140% as approved by MassDOT via the Federal Highways Administration. BRPC must complete its audit within six months after the year-end and a final indirect rate proposal must be submitted with actual costs. BRPC’s administrative expenses must comply with Federal limitations under 2 CFR Part 200.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues – None

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval of Modification to the Personnel Pay Plan

Approval was requested to modify the Personnel Pay Plan by adding an Office Administrator position. As reported at the last Executive Committee meeting, Office Assistant Susan Nawazelski has left BRPC. We are taking

this as an opportunity to enhance this position to the Office Administrator position. This position would support the Office Manager, the Executive Director and provide enhanced support for the agency, such as producing the on-line newsletter.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Modification to the Personnel Pay Plan adding an Office Administrator position. CJ Hoss 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.

B. Approval to Submit a Response to a Request for Proposals to be a Consultant for the Local Rapid Recovery Program

Approval was requested to submit a response to, and agree to any associated contract paperwork, a request for proposals to provide technical assistance to the Local Rapid Recovery Program. The Local Rapid Recovery (LRRP) Program provides technical assistance to communities who have submitted applications to address the unique economic challenges and immediate COVID-19 impacts that have affected downtowns, town centers and commercial areas throughout Massachusetts. This program provides technical assistance. BRPC is eligible to be a technical assistance provider. If the response is approved, Tom explained BRPC could be a consultant to provide communities with technical assistance. BRPC contact: Tom Matuszko, tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the Executive Director to submit a response to a request for proposals to provide technical assistance to the Local Rapid Recovery 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 – Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative.

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. The application was for approximately \$200,000. BRPC contact: Tom Matuszko, tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) for the Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative and to sign any resulting 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, and Kyle Hanlon.

V. Committee Reports

A. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee did not meet in December 2020. The next meeting is tentatively set for January 13, 2021.

Tom explained there is a new climate plan with comments due in February. The climate plan ties in with the Transportation and Climate Initiative.

B. Other – No other Committee Reports

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 12/1/2020 to 12/31/2020

- Dept. of Public Health Covid-19 - \$75,000
- Williamstown - Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership Forest Stewardship, Resilience & Climate Adaptation MVP Action Grant - \$164,575
- EOHEP earmark - Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund - \$250,000

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

Below is an update of BTI activities from 12/3/20 through 12/31/20.

- Approved the FY21 BTI Budget
- Approved a grant application to the Barr Foundation for the Berkshire County Education Task Force's (BCETF) planning proposal for \$199,859 to support the BCETF's efforts to improve educational quality.

C. Staff Update

- Housing Specialist BJ Church is leaving BRPC. We wish her good luck. This part-time off-site position worked in the CDBG housing rehab program. We intend to fill ASAP.
- We still have an opening for a Senior Environmental Planner position.

D. Annual Report

A copy of the FY 20 BRPC Annual Report was attached with the material.

E. DLTA Update

Tom reported the DLTA Program was approved in the budget at the same funding level as last year but that the contract will likely be delayed. The eligible activities are essentially the same as in recent years. The solicitation to the towns will be going out ASAP with applications due towards the end of January. Communities that submitted applications last year that were not completed can resubmit their applications. BRPC will reserve some funding for COVID-19 related activities.

F. East-West Rail Update

Tom reported the Study has been released. It appeared that some of BRPC comments regarding CSX had been incorporated into the final report. The Transportation Bond bill does have money for the East-West Passenger Rail Study.

G. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) met on December 11, 2020. The focus of the meeting was the topic of housing and how COVID-19 has affected rural communities. The RPAC is actively working on legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for January 14, 2021. The intended discussion topic is to finalize legislative priorities.

H. State Auditor's Report on the PILOT Program

State Auditor Suzanne M. Bump's report (The Impact of the State-Owned Land PILOT and Solar Taxation Policies on Municipalities | Mass.gov) found that the Commonwealth's payments in lieu of taxes (PILOT) program for state-owned lands (SOL) is underfunded and disproportionately disadvantages smaller, rural communities in favor of larger, wealthier communities. Additionally, the report found that state laws governing taxes paid to cities and towns by solar power generators are outdated, confusing for both municipalities and the solar operators, and may slow the adoption of solar technologies.

I. COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics

BRPC, as fiscal host for Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA) and the Berkshire Public Health Alliance is coordinating COVID vaccination for Berkshire County First Responders (Fire, Police and EMS). Vaccine is expected the week of January 4, for up to seven clinics vaccination clinics throughout the county. Partners include Berkshire Medical Center, Fairview Hospital, Northern Berkshire EMS, County Ambulance, and the City of Pittsfield, as well as other local Boards of Health, Fire and Police throughout the county. Berkshire Community College, W.E.B. DuBois Middle School, the Berkshire Hills School District, and St. Elizabeth's Church in North Adams provided space for the vaccination clinics.

J. Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund

Using the earmark funds secured by Senator Hinds, BRPC has dispersed or allocated \$156,000 to 27 small businesses or non-profit organizations. We will be providing up to two grant awards to non-profit organizations to provide technical assistance related to COVID-19. Demand has far exceeded our financial ability to provide awards, with almost 100 applicants. There is some interest to try to secure more revenue for the fund.

K. Transportation and Climate Initiative

Massachusetts, Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Washington, D.C. entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) committing to a groundbreaking multi-state program that will reduce motor vehicle pollution; the so-called TCI initiative (Transportation and Climate.) The Governor's Press Release and MOU was attached with the material.

L. Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Roadmap and Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030

Two reports, the Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Road Map ([mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)) and Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 ([mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)) were recently released by the Baker Administration. The Roadmap Study was intended to provide a comprehensive understanding of the necessary strategies and transitions in the near and long-term to achieve Net Zero by 2050 using best-available science and research methodology. It also sought to understand the tradeoffs across different pathways to reach the levels of deep decarbonization required by that limit. Based on the Roadmap study, Massachusetts has set its Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions reduction target for the next decade at a 45% reduction below the 1990 level in 2030. The 2030 Clean Energy and Climate Plan establishes a blueprint for achieving this limit equitably and affordably, with major new initiatives advancing decarbonization of the Commonwealth's buildings, transportation, and electricity sectors. Comments (due by February 22, 2021) were requested on Clean Energy and Climate Plan.

M. MassEVIP Direct Current Fast Charging Incentives

MassEVIP Direct Current (DC) Fast Charging is a competitive MassDEP open grant program aimed at making electric vehicle (EV) fast charging stations more widely available across Massachusetts. The program provides incentives for property owners with publicly accessible parking and educational campuses with at least 15 students on site to acquire DC fast charging stations. More information at [Apply for MassEVIP Direct Current Fast Charging Incentives | Mass.gov](#)

N. Other - Legislation

Tom reported the Economic Bill passed with money for Rural Growth Funds,

Rural Jobs Acts, and the Zoning Enabling Act. The Transportation Bond Bill included an increase in uber and lift fees to be added to public funds. More money was included for Complete Street Projects. The Regional Ballot in the Transportation Bond Bill did not pass.

VII. Old Business

A. Office Update

Again, following the Governor's directives in anticipation of a Christmas surge, a very small number of staff are allowed in the office. Tom explained the governor has extended the 25% capacity limit for two more weeks.

In January we need to decide if we are going to extend the lease for 3 months or conduct a full procurement. BRPC may not need the three month extension because of the effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccine. In that case, BRPC would need to do a full procurement.

Rene Wood moved to approve the Executive Director to extend BRPC's current lease for 3 months or go out to procurement for a new lease for office space. 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, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Other – None

VIII. New Business

A. Setting Legislative Priorities

Tom asked for a discussion about BRPC possibly becoming more systematic about establishing and tracking legislative priorities. BRPC could, for instance, set-up a legislative committee. Tom reported he has been doing some of this work, but his efforts are not as focused as they could be, and it would be useful to get other perspectives about priorities. Alternatively, we could de-emphasize this activity all together and simply follow the lead of others, i.e., MMA.

There was a discussion on how best to track bills, BRPC's help in developing and supporting bills. It is important we respond to the differences between Berkshire County and the eastern part of the state when supporting statewide legislation, as we do not always align on some bills.

Options discussed were collaborating with MMA, other organizations i.e. 1berkshire, and our legislative representatives. Tom was asked to prepare a proposal for future consideration by the Executive Committee.

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

These potential topics were previously discussed:

- Electric vehicles charging stations
- DLTA21
- Public Health review of COVID-19 issues / town needs
- Overview of the CDBG-CV program and its complexities

Additionally,

- Jose Delgado has been appointed the new Director of the Governor's Western Massachusetts Office in Springfield. We could ask him to attend.
- We could have a presentation about Clean Energy and Climate Plan, especially if we are going to provide comments.

It was decided the topics for January:

- Jose Delgado, Governor's Western Massachusetts Office in Springfield
- Information on Housing /Zoning Act
- Public Health Review of COVID-19 issues / town needs

C. Other - None

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:07 pm by a motion made by Rene Wood and seconded by Roger Bolton. It was approved by roll call vote from Rene Wood, John Duval, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan and Kyle Hanlon.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of December 3, 2020
- December Expenditures Report
- December Accounts Receivable Report
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo - Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Personnel Pay Plan
- FY20 BRPC Annual Report
- State Auditor Memo about PILOT Program Study
- TIC MOU
- November Assistance Activities