



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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MINUTES OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING APPROVED

Thursday, March 4, 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
Sheila Irvin, Clerk
Malcolm Fick, Treasurer
Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair
CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair
Buck Donovan, Lee Delegate, At-Large
Sam Haupt, Peru Delegate; At-Large

Others Present: Sarah Hudson, Tyringham Alternate; Michael Mach, Adams Delegate; Fred Shubert, Richmond Alternate; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager; Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator; Mark Maloy, GIS, Data & IT Program Manager

C. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on February 4, 2021

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2021 meeting, which was seconded by CJ Hoss and approved by roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

II. Financial Reports

A. February Expenditures Report

Sheila Irvin motioned to approve the report and Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. The report was approved by roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

Tom explained that the amount due of \$407,000 is high because of the timing of receiving funds vs expenditures. We are likely to see more of that as BRPC has more large projects.

C. Line of Credit Report

The BRPC Line of Credit is still showing a balance of \$125,000. We paid \$619.79 in interest over the last month. Our receipts have improved substantially, and we had received several large CDBG related payments. The Berkshire Adaptation fund project was completed by the end of February and we will submit final paperwork to collect the remaining \$125,000. Once we receive that payment, we should be able to pay back the line of credit, if not before.

D. FY20 Audit Update

We have completed providing documentation and testing samples to the accountant for the FY20 Audit. Also, provided were draft schedules for Federal and State contracts. The accountant has started reviewing the draft schedules. Completion of the FY20 Audit is expected by the end of March.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

A. Berkshires' Academy for Advanced Musical Studies

Adams Delegate, Michael Mach, new to the Commission, shared information about the Berkshires' Academy for Advanced Musical Studies in Adams and its efforts to reach out to young people. The pandemic has limited fundraising options. He asked if BRPC was aware of potential funding sources. Michael will call Tom to be connected with appropriate staff and other organizations.

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to accept funds and sign any contracts with the Department of Housing and Community Development for the District Local Technical Assistance Program

Approval was requested (after the fact) for the Executive Director to accept funds and sign a contract, with the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development, FY2021 District Local Technical Assistance Program. The program amount is \$214,214. Match required is \$21,421.

Roger Bolton moved to approve the Executive Director (after the fact) to accept funds and sign a contract with the Massachusetts Department of Housing & Community Development, FY2021 District Local Technical Assistance Program. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services *

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services Grant Program and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant will provide funding for enhanced cross-jurisdictional sharing of public health services in Berkshire County. The grant amount is to be determined but will be in the \$150,000 - \$300,000. The application deadline is April 1, 2020. No match is required. Staff lead is Laura Kittross, lkittross@berkshireplanning.org, x32.

Roger Bolton moved to approve that the Executive Director submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Public Health Excellence Grant Program for Shared Services Grant Program and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. It was seconded by Malcolm Fick. The motion was approved by roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health/Bureau of Substance Addiction Services

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health / Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This initiative is intended to replace and build upon the foundation established through previous Bureau of Substance Abuse Services prevention grants, including the Strategic Prevention Framework Partnerships for Success 2015 (SPF-PFS 2015) grant program, MOAPC and SAPC grants. In alignment with the earlier SPF-PFS 2015 initiative, SOR-PEC will leverage and enhance local prevention infrastructure and lead to the development of a data-driven strategic plan that will guide community-based prevention programming. This grant will support implementation of a comprehensive, multi-domain set of prevention services directed at a proposed age range of children (prenatal – 11 years of age) with a parent/caregiver with a history of substance misuse and addiction (including those currently in treatment or recovery), parents/caregivers of these children, pre-school and/or school settings, and social service, and early childhood service providers. The grant amount is \$125,000/yr. (pro-rated) for an 18 month period. No match is required. The Grant contact is Jennifer Kimball, Principal Planner, Public Health, x37. jkimball@berkshireplanning.org.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve that the Executive Director submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health / Bureau of Substance Addiction Services and to approve any resulting contracts and agreements. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton and was approved by

roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

V. Committee Reports

A. Regional Issues Committee

The current topic before the Regional Issues Committee is the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030. The prior deadline to provide comments on this plan, February 22, 2021, was extended to March 22, 2021. The Regional Issues Committee intends to meet on March 10, 2021 to discuss BRPC comments. These comments could be considered at the March 18, 2021 Full Commission meeting. However, this Plan is related to the recently passed environmental legislation, parts of which were vetoed by the Governor. There are some significant differences between the Governor's plan and the legislation which may yet again result in a revised comment submission date.

B. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee intends to meet on March 18, 2021 prior to the Full Commission Meeting. The main topic will be to establish a nominating committee to recommend next year's officers.

C. Environmental Review Committee

The MEPA office is proposing modifications to the MEPA regulations. There are two types of proposed updates. One is related to climate adaptation / resiliency and environmental justice intended to align the MEPA requirements with existing Executive Orders, plans and policies. The other are longer term corrective modifications. Staff is reviewing the proposed changes. The next meeting is March 22. Comments are due March 31. There was discussion about thresholds for "areas of critical concern" and a need for more information on "severe weather events" such as sea levels.

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 2/1/2021 to 2/26/2021

- Northampton Health Department - Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-Based Program (COSSAP) - \$15,000
- DHCD - District Local Technical Assistance 2021 - \$214,214
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative FC-421 - \$200,000
- Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) - BCETF - FY21 School District Regionalization grant, FC-191 - \$200,000
- U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) - CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant - \$842,522

Grants and Contracts not received

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

B. FY2022 Health and Dental Rate Changes

BRPC has received the Health and Dental rates changes for FY2022. Health insurance costs for active employees will increase by 1.37%. Dental insurance costs for active employees and retirees will decrease by .63%.

BRPCs offers full-time staff (medical, dental and vision) there is a bundle discount of .5% for medical members who have all three. Staff will get a "free" month (September) with no healthcare contribution payment.

C. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

BTI activities from 2/1/2021 through 2/28/2021 were:

- Completion of providing documentation and testing samples to the accountant. The accountant will do an overview of the FY20 Accountants Review on March 4, 2021. The Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. tax filing will also be submitted in March.

D. Staff Update

- Courteny Morehouse was hired as a Senior Environmental Planner.
- With the recently awarded EDA CARES Act grant, BRPC will immediately advertise for a Senior Economic Planner.

E. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) met on January 14, 2021. The focus of the meeting was setting legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative session. The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 14, 2021. The intended discussion topic is to finalize legislative priorities.

F. East-West Rail Update

Tom reported that he was unaware of any activity this past month.

G. DLTA Update

The deadline for DLTA Applications was February 25, 2021. Seventeen different projects were submitted. Staff will be working with applicants as soon as possible to get projects moving.

H. Berkshire County COVID-19 Adaptation Fund

Using the \$250,000 earmark funds secured by Senator Hinds, Section A of the Adaptation Fund (direct grants) awarded \$207,000 to 38 applicants, prioritizing BIPOC applications. Awards ranged from \$3,000 to \$12,000, with an average award of \$5,447. Section B of the Adaption Fund provided

\$15,000 grants each to two Berkshire County non-profits to conduct technical assistance work for residents and businesses in the community. This effort is completed.

I. 120 Day Notification Waiver Request

After conferring with the town, Tom reported he approved a 120-day notification request by the Department of Conservation and Recreation to purchase about 109+/- acres of land, or other property interest therein, in the Town of Savoy. The property is currently an undeveloped woodlot. The proposed use for the property will be protected open space for conservation and recreation purposes and as an addition to the Savoy Mountain State Forest.

J. Proposed update to the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Areas program

Tom reported he received notice from the U.S. Office of Management and Budget about proposed changes to the Metropolitan and Micropolitan Statistical Area program. Essentially Berkshire County would lose Metropolitan Statistical Area designation and become a Micropolitan Statistical Area. These designations are used for dealing with various data sets. After a staff review and communication with others in Berkshire County, it was determined by staff this change would not likely be detrimental and BRPC will not be providing comments.

K. Mohawk Trail National Scenic Byway Designation

On January 19, 2021, the U.S. Department of Transportation approved the Mohawk Trail Scenic Byway as a designated National Scenic Byway in the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) National Scenic Byways Program (NSBP).

L. Local Rapid Recovery Plans

BRPC has been selected as a "Plan Facilitator" to assist communities to develop Local Rapid Recovery Plans. These plans are intended to examine commercial areas in those communities that applied to that program to strengthen the economic recovery from COVID-19. Staff is still learning about this very new program, which in a recent training was referred to as "building the plane at the same time as attempting to fly it."

M. U.S. Department of Commerce's Economic Development Administration (EDA) - CARES Act Recovery Assistance grant

Although it took longer than anticipated and desired, as noted previously, BRPC received a substantial grant from the Economic Development Administration to assist with economic recovery from the COVID-19 crisis. During this 24-month effort, BRPC, working closely with 1Berkshire, will provide technical assistance for municipalities as well as for and non-profit businesses, using a model of direct business consultations, broad access to

professional training providers and content experts, assessment of program effectiveness, and careful tracking of participant progress toward improved agility and resiliency. The main topic areas of work fall into, Regional Resiliency Planning, Recovery Project Support, Economic Indicator Tracking, Technical Assistance and Capacity Building Workforce and Industry Support. Primary BRPC staff contact is Senior Planner Laura Brennan, lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org 413-442-1521 ex14

N. Other

VII. Old Business

A. Other

VIII. New Business

A. Proposed Changes to Designating Urbanized Areas in the Census

Mark Maloy, BRPC's GIS, Data & IT Manager, reviewed the Census Bureau's proposal to update the criteria for defining urbanized areas based on the 2020 Decennial Census. The Census Bureau reviews and updates the criteria every 10 years. In 2000, Berkshire County had the Pittsfield Urbanized Area, with a population of just over 50,000, which is the minimum population required to be an urban area. In 2010, Pittsfield retained its Urbanized Areas designation due to changes in the Urbanized Area criteria, which allowed it to include more of Lanesborough, a narrow sliver along Route 8 through Cheshire, and most of Adams.

Our very preliminary analysis indicates the proposed changes for 2020 would eliminate the Pittsfield Urbanized Area. Some federal and state agencies use the Census Bureau's urbanized area classification for nonstatistical uses such as allocating program funds, setting program standards, and implementing aspects of their programs. Changes to the urban area criteria might affect the implementation of those programs potentially resulting in some of our communities being ineligible for certain grant funds. Tom brought this to the committee's attention to decide if comments should be provided. This will come back to the Executive Committee in May and maybe to the Full Commission as well.

If a community is affected, there is not an appeal process that we are aware of. Written comments must be submitted on or before May 20, 2021. More information can be found at <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2021/02/19/2021-03412/urban-areas-for-the-2020-census-proposed-criteria>.

B. March Full Commission Meeting (Virtual) March 18, 2021

Topics for the March 18, 2021 were discussed:

- Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 comments

- Introduction to Jose Delgado, who has been appointed the Director of the Governor's Western Massachusetts Office in Springfield.
- Members of the legislative delegation reviewing their legislative and budgetary priorities for the year. At least one legislator could be invited.
- Open discussion about community and economic development priorities, especially in relation to the new Community One Stop for Growth program and the new grant opportunities. How many communities are taking advantage? What priorities are people pursuing and any problems?

C. Other - None

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:57 pm by a motion made by CJ Hoss and seconded by Sheila Irvin. It was approved by roll call vote from Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Buck Donovan, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

Attachments:

- Agenda
- Unapproved Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting of February 4, 2021
- February 2021 Expenditures Report
- February 2021 Accounts Receivables
- Line of Credit Report
- Memo - Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Resume - C. Morehouse
- January 2021 Technical Assistance