



APPROVED MINUTES OF THE FULL COMMISSION March 18, 2021 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 7:05 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. Pittsfield TV was recording.

Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

- Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
- Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
- Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate
- James Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
- Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
- Pam Kueber – Lenox Delegate
- Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
- Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
- Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate
- Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
- Sarah Hudson – Tyringham Alternate
- Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
- David Zink – Windsor Delegate

Staff Present:

- Thomas Matuszko – Executive Director
- Marianne Sniezek – Office Manager
- Clete Kus – Transportation Program Manager
- Emily Lange – Environmental & Energy Planner
- Courteny Morehouse - Environmental & Energy Senior Planner
- Laura Brennan – Economic Development Senior Planner
- Kate Hill Tapia – Office Administrator

Others Present:

- iBerkshire
- Pittsfield Community Television
- Senator Adams Hinds
- Unknown (just a phone #)

B. Approval of Minutes of January 21, 2021 Meeting

Buck Donovan moved to approve; Fred Schubert seconded. No comments or discussion. Approved with a roll call vote and one abstention.

Roll Call Vote:

Yes:

Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Sarah Hudson – Tyringham Alternate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
David Zink – Windsor Alternate

Abstained:

Pam Kueber – Lenox Delegate

II. Comments from the Public

There were no comments.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

Al Blake raised a potential issue with PCBs at the former GE site in Pittsfield that received funding for remediation. If it falls under MEPA, thresholds will have to be met.

IV. Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions or comments on the actions taken by the Executive Committee at the February 4 and March 4 meetings.

V. Legislative and Budgetary Update – State Senator Adams Hinds

Senator Hinds reviewed some of his legislative and budgetary priorities.

He is chair of the **Senate Committee on Reimagining Massachusetts Post-Pandemic Resiliency** charged with considering implications of the pandemic for state policy such as remote work and its impact on:

- Commercial real estate: could buildings be converted to housing or co-working spaces?
- Increased importance of digital access
- Changes in transportation patterns and therefore investments
- Child care
- 20,000 (of 40,000) state employees may do hybrid work
- We will know more by the end of 2021

We are entering a new term and budgetary process with similar priorities to previous years:

- Establishing an Office of Rural Policy
- Establishing an Office of Rural Recreation
- Rural Job Account (tax credit for job development); governor vetoed
- Rural and Small Town Development Fund was approved

In two years, the region will be in a better position with the NYC to Pittsfield Flyer and high-speed internet in rural communities.

Successes:

- Culvert Study is finalized; it needs a fund like bridges have
- State reimbursement for state owned land (not funded, but bill submitted)
- Climate change bill was sent to Governor today
- Student Opportunities Act: mostly Pittsfield will benefit
 - Aid to schools with low and declining enrollment still a need
- School Transportation Commission finished its work and filed a bill; regional schools 80% funded, need to improve efficiencies

Transportation:

- bonds authorized for BRTA on demand

There were questions and discussion about funding and access for trade's education and the need for tradespeople. This impacts implementation of the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 as there are not people to do the work to change energy infrastructure.

The pandemic has highlighted how great the digital divide is. Senator Hinds would like to see funds for studies to identify high-speed internet needs. It was discussed that larger communities like Pittsfield also need better internet service. One thousand 200 (1,200) Pittsfield students reported not have access to technology for remote learning. Some progress on adjusting to post-pandemic life has been made such as parity for telemedicine reimbursements with in-office visits.

Housing discussion summary:

- Acknowledged the demand for market rate and lower income housing and rehabilitation of existing housing
- Noted that zoning changes will make it easier to create multi-family housing
- Changing the "not in my backyard or NIMBY" mindset can be challenging. Senator Hinds suggested the message be about a *mix* of housing, so that people who grew up in a community can afford to live there; that all levels are needed for a functioning town and asking, "who do we want to be as a community"? It was reported that new Windsor residents have joined town commissions and committees.
- Market rate housing development on Tyler St. by Mill Town and David Carver's Morning Star, and Allegrone on North St., took a mix of

- housing development earmarks (some from Pittsfield's GE fund), historic tax credits and/or investors who tolerate a low profit margin.
- At \$250 square foot cost, new construction is unrealistic for many.
 - Perhaps Rest of the River funds could help other communities.

The federal **COVID Economic Relief Bill** money for Massachusetts is \$4.5 billion and the state has an unexpected increase of \$800 million in revenue for this fiscal year. The Legislature is considering how to use these for one-time expenditures that will not increase the deficit going forward such as catching up the student opportunity act, infrastructure, extra costs due to the pandemic and health care access.

Senator Hinds encouraged everyone to let him know "what you are seeing and hearing," so he can "grab that and do something about it in Boston." "We are poised to get some things right". Feel free to contact him: (413) 344-4561 adam.hinds@masenate.gov

VI. Interim Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030

Two reports, the [Massachusetts 2050 Decarbonization Road Map](#) and [Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030](#) (CECP 2030) were released by the Baker Administration in December. 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. 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. The Regional Issues Committee prepared draft Comments that were reviewed by BRPC staff members and approved by a unanimous roll call vote. Comments are due March 22, 2021. The draft can be found in the 8-page attachment to the meeting materials and via this link to the [BRPC website](#). The reports are formatted by sector strategies, each with actions.

BRPC **Transportation** Program Manager, Clete Kus, reviewed the transportation chapter of the report focused on a 45% emissions reduction from use of light duty electrifying vehicles (EVs). Each of the six transportation strategies were presented followed by a discussion on the associated strategy actions and BRPC's comments included in the letter.

Questions and discussion:

There is not a universal connection plug for EVs, Tesla has their own and is the lone standout. Clete noted that in his experience, the federal government would need to get involved to regulate a universal plug. There is no mention of a buyback program for retiring fossil fuel vehicles in the reports. Half-ton pickup trucks are considered light duty. EVs for public buses in the Berkshires is not realistic due the distance of the routes. Hydrogen fuel cells are a possibility. Autonomous vehicles are not mentioned in the 2030 CECP or the 2050 plan. Shared ridership may also be a solution. Agreed that it

seems unrealistic that manufacturers can meet the demand for EVs within the next 10 years to meet these goals, though noted that GM has made a commitment to 30 new types of EVs.

Emily Lange, Environmental & Energy Planner, reviewed these chapters:
Buildings, Energy Supply, Emissions and Protecting Natural and Working Lands.

Questions and discussion:

Buildings: Upfront costs of clean energy such as air source heat pumps supported by solar and geothermal systems are mentioned in the plan but there is not much detail or mention of training programs for contractors. These are controversial topics per experience of Windsor as a Green Community. Perhaps BRPC could be involved in public education. The market and rebate structure are helping with public education. Expansion of community solar for those unable to do it individually (e.g. renters) to offset the costs of clean energy sources is in the plan.

Energy Supply: Renewable energy has its issues such as how to dispose of solar panels that last 20 years and are treated with chemicals, the amount of land needed to generate output and inability to store wind energy. There was some debate about development of hydro and nuclear. The only incentive program for solar is the Solar Massachusetts Renewable Target (SMART) Program.

Emissions: No questions or discussion

Protecting Lands: No questions or discussion

Commission members appreciated the impressive comment letter and amount of work the BRPC staff did reviewing the plan.

Fred Schubert moved to approve submission of the comments and Jim Sullivan seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous "yes" roll call vote.

Yes:

- Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
- Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
- Zack McCain – Dalton Delegate
- Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
- Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
- Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
- Fred Schubert – Richmond Alternate
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- Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
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VII. Community and Economic Development Priorities

The new Community One Stop for Growth Program offers grant assistance to communities along the development continuum, from planning to site design and preparation to development funding.

Time limited discussion about community and economic development priorities, especially in relation to this new program. Tom suggested to call or email him or Laura Brennan if communities are submitting applications or with questions. BRPC may be able to help connect to matching funds if needed. BRPC is receiving a large CARES Act multiyear grant and is hiring a full time Economic Development Planner to work with municipalities. This is an opportunity to move projects forward. Tom also recommends the webinars on how to use the site: [One Stop for Growth](#)

VIII. Full Commission Meeting Time

Uncertainties about public meeting requirements going forward and the need for commute time if they return to in-person, led to a decision not to change the meeting time for now.

X. Executive Director’s Report

A. Office Update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the BRPC Office is still closed to the public. Tom continues to monitor the Governor’s recent directives. Accordingly, the office is allowed about ½ half the staff in the office at any one time. Most days there are fewer staff. When staff are in the office they need to keep their face covering on, except when they are in a private office with the door closed.

B. District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Projects

Staff expect to announce plans with how to work with the communities that submitted applications in the next week or two.

C. Local Rapid Recovery Plans

Staff have initiated work related to prepare Local Rapid Recovery Plans (LRRPs) for Williamstown, North Adams, Adams and Great Barrington. LRRPs are part of the Baker-Polito Recovery Plan to revitalize downtowns, respond to the effects of COVID-19 on local businesses, and prioritize actions and strategies. BRPC will provide technical assistance to develop effective strategies to stabilize business districts.

D. Other

Staff have considered restarting 5th Thursday trainings or offering them at another time that could be done via Zoom. The Commission Development Committee is considering the culvert report as a topic. Send topic ideas to Tom.

XI. Adjournment

Fred Schubert made a motion to adjourn; seconded by David Zink. Unanimously approved. Adjourned at 8:57 pm.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Meeting Agenda

Draft Meeting Minutes January 21, 2021

Executive Committee Actions Memo for Feb and Mar 2021

Executive Director's Report

Clean Energy and Climate Plan (CECP) for 2030 Comment Letter Draft