



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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MINUTES OF THE REGIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
January 27, 2021
Meeting Held Via Zoom Video Communications

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:07 by CJ Hoss. The meeting was recorded.

Committee Members Present

CJ Hoss, Chair, Pittsfield
Andrew Groff, Williamstown
Kyle Hanlon, North Adams
Eleanor Tillinghast, Mount Washington (non-Commission member)
Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield (arrived late)

Committee Members Absent

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington

BRPC Staff Present

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director
Laura Brennan, Community and Economic Development Senior Planner
Melissa Provencher, Environmental and Energy Program Manager
Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager
Emily Lange, Environmental and Energy Planner
Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator
Alexander Valentini, Economic Development Researcher

II. Approval of November 18th, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Kyle H. moved to approve the minutes of the November 18th, 2020 meeting. Andrew G. seconded to the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

III. Interim Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030

Melissa P. introduced the Interim Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030. The Plan was drafted by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs with the intention of achieving a 45% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 baseline by 2030 and net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The Plan has 4 pillars for decarbonization, those being: End Use Energy, Energy Efficiency and Flexibility, Carbon Sequestration, and Decarbonization of the Energy Supply. The Plan focuses on 5 sectors, those being: Transportation, Buildings, Energy Supply, Other Sources of Energy, and Natural and Working Lands. Comments on the draft Plan are due February 22.

Clete K. presented on Chapter 2: *Transforming our Transportation Systems*. The target 45% reduction in greenhouse gasses from the transportation sector equals 8 million metric tons of CO₂. This will be pursued through 6 strategies:

1. Cap Transportation Sector Emissions and Invest in Clean Transportation Systems
 - a. Cap and invest via Transportation and Climate Initiative (TCI)

- b. Target 750,000 – 1,000,000 electric vehicles by 2030
 - c. Introduction of low-carbon fuel standard/expand use of biodiesel
 - 2. Implement Coordinated Advanced Clean Vehicle Emissions and Sales Standards
 - a. Adopt California mandates for zero-emission vehicles
 - 3. Reduced Upfront Zero-Emission Vehicles Purchase Cost Burden
 - a. Existing program to provide rebates to consumers
 - i. Some problems with this are that there is no dedicated funding source and TCI revenue will likely fall short.
 - 4. Deploy Electric Vehicles Supply Equipment & Enable Smart Charging
 - a. Install electric vehicle charging equipment across the Commonwealth
 - b. BRPC believes that utility providers need to become more involved in this process
 - 5. Engage Consumers & Facilitate Markets
 - a. Engage consumers regarding the ownership benefits of Zero-emission vehicles
 - b. BRPC believes that consumer-engagement personnel hired by MassDOT should be based in specific regions of the Commonwealth to ensure they are familiar with the challenges particular to different parts of the state.
 - 6. Stabilize Light-Duty Vehicle Miles Travelled & Promote Alternative Transportation Modes
 - a. Promote and incentivize Smart Growth principles

The greatest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions is expected to come from strategies 2, 3, and 4.

CJ H. mentioned that Berkshire County is reliant on automobiles for transportation, and Berkshire County residents are less likely to be able to afford new electric vehicles than other Massachusetts residents.

Eleanor T. said that the Plan mentions increased costs to residents and ratepayers but does not provide details on these costs. Explicit cost-projections for each of the strategies are needed.

Sheila I. asked if the charge stations installed would be universal or proprietary. Clete K. said that all automakers other than Tesla use universal charge stations/connectors.

Eleanor T. mentioned that Tesla has reached its federal quota for rebates. How do the proposed Massachusetts rebates relate to federal rebates?

CJ H. mentioned that commercial ratepayers will suffer in addition to residential ratepayers. This will result in costs passed on to consumers and businesses choosing not to locate in Berkshire County, which already experiences high energy costs.

Emily L. presented on Chapter 3: *Transforming Our Buildings*. Chapter 3 consists of 3 strategies:

- 1. Avoid Lock-in of Building Systems That Are Not 2050-Compliant
 - a. Implement new high-performance stretch code before 2028
 - i. BRPC believes that this timeline could be accelerated
- 2. Pivot the market for Building Envelope Retrofits and Clean Heating Systems
 - a. Decrease and eventually eliminate incentives for fossil fuel heating systems and increase incentives for heat pumps and building envelopes.
 - i. BRPC believes that training for HVAC installers on how to work with heat pumps should be incentivized
- 3. Convene the Commission and Task Force on Clean Heat & Cap Fuel Emissions

- a. Ensure zero up-front capital solutions for low income and affordable housing residents

CJ H. mentioned that not only is training needed for current HVAC professionals, but also the workforce needs to be expanded. Kyle H. said that young people are disincentivized from getting into plumbing and heating. Andrew G. said he feels that the state has put in place barriers for tradespeople of all kinds.

Eleanor T. disagreed with the BRPC comment regarding acceleration of the stretch code timeline.

Kyle H. said that heat pumps don't work in the region unless the building envelop is already tight.

Laura B. said she was surprised not to see any mention of the state's Property Assessed Clean Energy program. This should be included in the Plan.

Emily L. presented on Chapter 4: *Transforming Our Energy Supply*.

Offshore wind will be a major component of the Commonwealth's future energy supply.

BRPC believes that onshore wind should be considered in addition to offshore.

Solar energy will be a supplementary component of the Commonwealth's future energy supply.

BRPC believes that solar installed on built environments should be prioritized, incentives should be put in place to prepare older homes for solar readiness, and rural areas should be considered for flexible pilot programs.

Eleanor T. asked for the comment supporting onshore wind to be removed as much work has gone into preventing mountain-top wind farms in Berkshire County. CJ H. asked if BRPC has previously taken a stance on onshore wind. Tom M. said that was previously opposed by the Commission.

The Committee agreed to remove the comment supporting onshore wind and insert comment supporting offshore wind.

Andrew G. said that there should be an emphasis on solar installations on parking lots.

CJ H. said that a city like Pittsfield needs incentives to expand residential solar and that there needs to be pressure on utility companies to update infrastructure to reduce the cost of solar connections.

Eleanor T. raised major concerns regarding large-scale solar development, which she believes will be pushed west to Berkshire County. Additionally, adequate energy storage capacity does not currently exist, the development of which will likely mean the establishment of pumped-hydro reservoirs in Berkshire County. She also stressed that there needs to be clarification and consistency of terminology throughout the Plan.

The Committee agreed to include a comment regarding Berkshire County's support for renewable energy development, but to stress its concerns regarding equitable distribution of the costs and benefits.

Emily L. presented on Chapter 5: *Getting to 45% in 2030: Stabilizing emissions.*

Eleanor T. said that recycling needs to be incentivized and that the state should consider setting up recycling centers.

CJ H. said that the waste disposal system requires a major overhaul.

Emily presented Chapter 6: *Protecting our Natural and Working Lands.*

The Committee agreed to include a comment regarding the need for coordination between different parts of the plan. Additionally, a comment regarding the need for local input and control.

IV. Topics for Future Consideration

BRPC staff will incorporate Committee feedback into the Clean Energy and Climate Plan for 2030 comment letter. This letter will receive a final review at the next Committee meeting.

V. Next Committee Meeting Date – Wednesday, February 17th, 2021 at 4pm

The Committee agreed that the next meeting would be held on Wednesday, February 17th.

VI. Adjournment

Eleanor T. moved to adjourn the meeting. CJ H. seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30.