



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES APPROVED

Thursday, September 2, 2021

Virtual Meeting as allowed by Ch. 20 of the Acts of 2021 suspending certain provisions 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 John Duval called the meeting to order and stated 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.

John asked Executive Director, Tom Matuszko, to explain the OWL technology that showed the three staff members in the BRPC conference room. Tom explained this camera and speaker system is set up to focus on the speaker and gives a panoramic overview of the room. He asked for feedback on its effectiveness and warned that there can be a delay, so a need to pause between speakers.

B. Roll Call:

Read by Office Manager, Marianne Sniezek:

John Duval, Chair

Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair

Sheila Irvin, Clerk

Buck Donovan, Treasurer

René Wood, Commission Development Chair, Sheffield Alternate – arriving late

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Pittsfield Alternate

Kyle Hanlon, North Adams Delegate, At-Large

Sam Haupt, Peru Delegate; At-Large

Others Present: Nancy Socha, Stockbridge Delegate; Christine Rasmussen Stockbridge Alternate; Melanie Glynn, Savoy Select Board Member; Barbara Davis-Hassan Lanesborough Delegate; Kate Read; Wade Hasty Williamstown Select Board Member; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager; Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator

C. Approval of Minutes of Executive Committee Meeting on July 8, 2021

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the minutes of the July 8, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Kyle Hanlon and approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Buck Donovan, CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, and Kyle Hanlon. Sam Haupt abstained.

II. Financial Reports

A. July & August Expenditures Report

Executive Director, Tom Matuszko, clarified the following:

Line 15383 corrected: subscription to State House News Service

Line 15403 Portrait of a Graduate refers to the Berkshire County Education Task Force program on what a graduating student needs to succeed. Funded by the BARR Foundation.

Line 15409: description was blank – Consultant for drug mis-use project

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

The Executive Director reported that the receivable from town of Lee needs clarification on BRPC's end.

C. Line of Credit Report

There has been no need to tap the line of credit.

D. FY2021 Year End Close

BRPC and accountants (Adelson & Co.) are working to close the previous fiscal year (FY 2021) that ended with a General Fund surplus of approximately \$29,000 which was higher than the budgeted amount of \$15,000. Due to the pandemic, the Commission was unable to provide 5th Thursday, CPTC Educational workshops and the Annual Meeting resulting in a savings. Also contributing to the surplus, was the application date change to FY 2022, for the DHCD Community Development Block Grant application, resulting in an FY21 savings. The Commission worked on approximately 130 programs in FY 2021. The accountants are completing their review of the last quarter of FY2021. The BRPC FY 2021 field work for the audit is scheduled for mid-October. The EDA grant requires that BRPC complete the audit by December 31. Adelson will begin the review mid-October.

E. Brownsfields Powerhouse Square Loan

The Executive Director reported that a stern letter was sent to Powerhouse Square regarding their lack of repayment of a Brownsfields revolving loan as recommended by BRPC attorney. There is still some hope they will repay it. No response yet.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

Nancy Socha introduced Stockbridge's new Alternate to the Commission, Christine Rasmussen who was welcomed by John Duval, the Chair.

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Enter into a Contract with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation for Transportation Planning Services

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to sign a contract and related items with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for transportation planning services. This is the standard BRPC contract with MassDOT to allow transportation planning services as outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP.) The amount of this FFY 2022 contract (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022) is \$615,413. Staff lead is Clete Kus, ckus@berkshireplanning.org ex. 20.

René Wood moved to approve that the Executive Director sign a contract and related items with the Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) for transportation planning services for FY22 as outlined in the Unified Planning Work Program. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Kyle Hanlon, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Sam Haupt and René Wood.

B. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Clean Energy Center (MassCEC) for a Planning Grant and Letter of Intent to Develop a Funding Application for an E-bike Incentive Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements with MassCEC related to a planning grant to support BRPC's engagement and participation in the application development process for the ACT4All Grant Program. MassCEC will provide a \$7,500 grant to cover the cost associated with developing an E-bike incentive program for low-income community members. The scope of the proposal will be to connect service workers, particularly those that live within Adams' Environmental Justice block groups and commute within the Northern Berkshires, with E-bikes. MassCEC anticipates awarding 4-5 projects statewide between \$100,000 and \$500,000 each. There is no BRPC required match for the planning grant. The BRPC contact is Emily Lange, elange@berkshireplanning.org

Tom noted that there are two steps to this application, the first is unusual in that there is funding for writing of the grant.

Roger Bolton moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements with MassCEC related to a planning grant which will support BRPC's engagement and participation in the application development process for the ACT4All Grant Program. It was seconded by Malcolm Fick and approved by roll call vote

from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to MassCEC’s EMPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Working with the City of Pittsfield, Berkshire Environmental Action Team, Center for EcoTechnology and Berkshire Community Action Council, BRPC is applying for \$23,018 to fund research on issues stemming from split incentives in Pittsfield, whereby tenants pay energy bills and so landlords have no incentive to make efficiency upgrades that would conserve energy and lower tenant’s bills. Efforts will culminate in a final report prepared for the City of Pittsfield containing an analysis of Pittsfield’s market conditions, a literature review of innovative approaches to split incentives, case studies of related program models across the US, findings of a working group assembled under this grant comprised of local organizations doing related work, and recommendations for how the City of Pittsfield may incentivize or enforce energy efficiency standards.

MassCEC’s expectation is that Innovation and Capacity Building Grants will serve as "seed" funding for the planning of innovative program models or projects. Grant recipients will then apply for an Implementation Grant for up to \$150,000 in a subsequent funding round to implement the project planned under this grant.

This application has no BRPC match requirement. The primary staff contact for this grant submission is Emily Lange, Energy and Environmental Planner, at elange@berkshireplanning.org.

René Wood moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements (after the fact) to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program. The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

D. Other

None

V. Committee Reports

A. Berkshire MPO

The Berkshire MPO met July 27, 2021. The main agenda items were an approval of an amendment (4th amendment) to the 2021-2025 TIP to reflect more accurate projects cost and a presentation on the Berkshire County Electric Vehicle Charging Plan by Transportation Planner Justin Gilmore. Tom suggested the presentation may be considered for wider audiences. Draft unapproved minutes were distributed.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

The CEDS committee met August 4, 2021. The main agenda items were a review of the EDA CARES Act award activities, discussion of CEDS 2021 Annual Report and a presentation about the state's "Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" report. Kyle Hanlon, committee chair said the CEDS Annual report will go to a future full Commission meeting. Draft unapproved minutes were distributed.

C. Regional Issues Committee

Committee Chair CJ Hoss reported that the Regional Issues Committee met August 11, 2021. The main agenda item was the Transportation Climate Initiative. A comment letter was finalized and distributed to this committee with the draft unapproved minutes.

The next meeting is Wednesday, September 22. Suzanne Bump, the State Auditor will participate in a discussion of report *The Impact of the State-Owned Land PILOT and Solar Taxation Policies on Municipalities*.

D. Transportation & Climate Initiative (TCI)

The Executive Director reported that there will be a ballot initiative to try to stop the Transportation & Climate Initiative (TCI). He will follow up to report back who is behind it.

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received / initiated 07/01/2021 to 08/31/2021

- DHCD Local Rapid Recovery Planning Program Special Matter Experts Technical Assistance - \$63,150.00
- Washington – Public Health Inspectional Services FY22 - \$4,207
- Lanesborough – Public Health Inspectional Services FY22 - \$25,500
- Savoy - Public Health Inspectional Services FY22 – Fee for Service
- Adams - Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$3,970
- Cheshire - Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$4,525.10
- Dalton – Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$6,099
- Lanesborough - Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$3,552
- Hinsdale - Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$2,856
- Windsor– Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$2,100
- Sandisfield – Public Nursing Services FY22 - \$2,100
- DPH – Substance Addition Services/ Berkshire Early Childhood Community Circle- \$156,250
- Adams – GIS Services - \$11,000
- FDA AFDO Food Safety Retail Standards Re-assessment Sheffield - \$2,500
- FDA AFDO Food Safety Retail Standards Re-assessment Egremont - \$2,500
- FDA AFDO Food Safety Retail Standards Re-assessment Adams - \$2,500
- FDA AFDO Food Safety Comprehensive Strategic Plan Egremont - \$2,500
- Stockbridge – Community Planning Services - \$25,000

- Berkshire County Boards of Health Association Support Services - \$11,000
- Monterey – 604B Design and Implementation Plans for Phosphorus Reduction in Lake Garfield - \$3,500
- Dalton – Stormwater Support - \$11,000
- Cheshire – Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness and Hazard Mitigation - \$32,000
- Great Barrington – Green Communities - \$10,000
- River Run Apartments Dalton- Public Health Nursing Services FY22 - \$733.33
- Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdoes Data to Action - \$97,000
- Boston Medical Center- Pittsfield Fiscal Agent HEALING Communities - \$49,500
- FRCOG Berkshire Medical Reserve Corps Emergency Preparedness Planning FY22 - \$22,056
- FRCOG Franklin County Medical Reserve Corps FY22 Emergency Preparedness Planning - \$22,056
- Berkshire United Way – Berkshire Benchmarks - \$10,000
- Lanesborough Stormwater FY22 - \$11,000

The Executive Director noted that BRPC would like to simplify the public health contracts for the 22 participating towns.

Grants and Contracts not received.

- DEP – 604B Funding - \$900 – DEP Funding fell through to be able to fund this.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

The BTI board will meet after this Executive Committee meeting to approve Officers and Directors for FY22 along with yearly administrative items.

C. Staff Update

- Bill Thornton resigned as a part-time Housing Rehab Specialist
- Ned Saviski and Claudia Sarti have been hired as part-time Public Health Inspectors. Resumes were distributed.
- John Roughley, Jr. has been hired as a Housing Rehab Specialist. His resume was distributed.
- Chris Skelly has been hired as a part-time Project Specialist. His resume was distributed. Committee members praised Chris’s historic preservation expertise. He will help BRPC with Western Mass Historical Preservation Commission responsibilities and a Pittsfield project. It was suggested that BRPC might want to expand its services to municipalities in this area such as help with historic tax credits.
- Christine Ector, Public Health Planner gave her resignation effective 9/15/21. She was a key team member for the public vaccination clinics.

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission met August 11, 2021. The primary agenda items were an update on the Mass Humanities collaborative project

with the Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street "Crossroad" project to highlight Rural Life in America, a discussion about legislative priorities for the year, and presentations and discussion about various effort across the state to advance affordable housing efforts in rural and small communities. Crossroads' information was shared. Tom encouraged communities with 12,000 or less residents to pursue this opportunity.

E. District Local Technical Assistance Funding

The Executive Director reported that FY 22 funding for the District Local Technical Assistance Funding (DLTA) was included in the final state budget. BRPC anticipates doing a solicitation to municipalities, like previous years. Tom expressed thanks for the support the Berkshire delegation has given to this important source of funding for technical assistance to the region's communities.

F. Training for New Planning Board and Zoning Board of Appeals Members

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative, (CPTC) was unable to secure a presenter for a training for new members of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals. Hence, the session, tentatively scheduled for July 29th, did not occur.

G. Community Compact Grants

Several Community Compact grant programs were funded in the state budget. These 4 programs, Best Practices, IT Grant, Efficiency & Regionalization (E&R), and Municipal Fiber (new in FY22) offer funds and / or assistance to communities. The Executive Director reported that the Best Practices Program is open now and is likely over-subscribed. He urged communities to apply now as funds will likely run out fast. Program materials were distributed.

Savoy is getting two grants. Select Board member, Melanie Glynn credited Tom with helping them complete the relatively easy process.

René Wood reported that Sheffield received funding (applied one day, got it the next) for recycling and development of a capital plan.

H. Housing Equity Bill

Legislation has been proposed, (H.1434/S.891), to provide additional protections to renters. A support letter was in the meeting materials.

I. Other - none

VII. Old Business

A. Office Space Update

Executive Director Tom Matuszko reported that BRPC continues to negotiate with representatives of the Cooper Center, the recommended respondent to

the BRPC office space RFP. BRPC staff met with building representatives and their engineer about possible modifications. A floor plan should be available next week. Aside from superficial improvements, i.e., painting, carpeting, etc., the necessary building modifications are relatively minimal. Due to materials shortage, access may be pushed from mid-November to January. BRPC will apply for a MIIA grant for a front door entry and security equipment.

Regarding COVID related items, most staff are in the office 2 days a week. Face coverings are requested in common areas. The situation is constantly evaluated. Non-BRPC staff are permitted in the office (with face coverings). The street door is still locked, and visitors must call to be admitted. Hybrid meetings were discussed including feedback on the OWL camera and voice system that was operating. Off-site participants reported that the OWL image from BRPC office with three staff people in conference room was fuzzy and voices went in and out. Maybe it was the acoustic quality of the BRPC conference room. Hybrid meetings do not seem like an option unless BRPC can improve the experience.

B. Annual Meeting and September Commission Meeting

Due to the increase in the number of COVID-19 cases, the Annual meeting shared with the Selectmen's Association was changed from an in-person meeting to a virtual meeting. Also, since the Jewish holy day of Yom Kippur ends the evening of September 16th, the date was changed to September 30th. Ashley Stolba, Undersecretary of Community Development within the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development, will speak about the administration's plans for a strong economic recovery from the COVID crisis. It was agreed to have a one-hour Commission meeting 5:30 – 6:30 prior to the Annual Meeting 6:30 – 8 p.m. The Annual Meeting would include the Kusik Award, BRPC Highlights and Selectmen's Association elections.

C. Kusik Award

Three nominations were reviewed, and the committee chose to recognize the unique county-wide and collaborative efforts of two organizations: The COVID-19 Emergency Response Fund for Berkshire County and The Berkshire Vaccine Collaborative

D. Committee Membership

The BRPC FY 22 Committee membership list was mentioned but not in the meeting materials. It will be shared in the full Commission meeting materials document. A few Berkshire Brownfields members remain to be confirmed.

E. Other

VIII. New Business

A. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Fall Training

The CPTC trainings will be virtual again this fall. CPTC will organize one, possibly 2 workshops, with each RPA. CPTC is seeking BRPC's top 3 choices

for training. Preferences were identified as Engagement and Planning Community Support. Noted that all trainings are available remotely to anyone. <https://masscptc.org/>

Marianne Sniezek pointed out that towns get credits on their MIIA insurance for participation in these trainings. Tom offered that BRPC may list the available courses as an adjunct to the BRPC Common Ground newsletter.

B. September Commission Meeting

It was agreed to have the meeting 5:30 – 6:30 prior to the shared Annual Meeting September 30 with the following potential agenda topics tabled for now:

- Berkshire County Electric Vehicle Charging Station Plan presentation
- Massachusetts Future of Work report presentation
- A possible MEPA comment letter

Commission Chair, John Duval, said topics for BRPC Executive Committee or Full Commission should be submitted to Tom Matuszko, tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org.

C. Other

IX. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 pm by a motion made by Roger Bolton and seconded by Kyle Hanlon. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, Sam Haupt and Kyle Hanlon.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of the July 8, 2021 Executive Committee Meeting
- July and August Expenditures Report
- July Aged Receivables Report
- July 2021 Line of Credit Report
- Memo – September 2, 2021 Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the July 27, 2021 MPO Meeting
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the August 4, 2021 CEDS Committee meeting
- Transportation Climate Initiative Comment Letter
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the August 11, 2021 Regional Issue Committee meeting
- Resume – Ned Saviski
- Resume – Claudia Sarti
- Resume – John Roughley, Jr.
- Resume – Chris Skelly
- Crossroads Grant Program information
- Housing Equity Bill support letter
- Kusik Award Recipients
- CPTC Webinar topic Description Fall 2021
- Memo – July 2021 Technical Assistance