



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

JOHN DUVAL, Chair
MALCOLM FICK, Vice-Chair
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer
THOMAS MATUSZKO, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES APPROVED September 30, 2021

This was a 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. Opening

A. The meeting was called to order at 5:31 p.m.

Chair John Duval stated 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.

B. Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Mike Mach – Adams Delegate
John Duval – Adams Alternate
Shirley Mueller – Alford Alternate
Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Alternate, 5:46 p.m.
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
James Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
Barbara Davis-Hassan – Lanesborough Delegate
James Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
Mark Carson – New Marlborough Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
René Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko – Executive Director
Marianne Sniezek – Office Manager
Kate Hill Tapia – Office Administrator
Laura Brennan – Economic Development Program Manager
Wylie Goodman – Economic Development Planner

Others Present:

Brittany Polito, iBerkshire; Pittsfield Community Television;

Andy Hogeland – Williamstown Select Board;
Lucinda Fenn-Vermeulen – Egremont Select Board;
Grant McGregor – Dalton Planner;
Meg Britton-Mehlich, Berkshire Eagle

C. Approval of Minutes of July 8, 2021, Meeting

René Wood moved to approve the draft minutes of the July 8, 2021 meeting. Kyle Hanlon seconded the motion. There were no comments or discussion. The minutes were approved with a roll call vote and seven abstentions.

Yes:

John Duval – Adams Alternate
Shirley Mueller – Alford Alternate
Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Alternate, 5:46 p.m.
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
James Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
René Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

Abstained:

Mike Mach – Adams Delegate
James Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
Barbara Davis-Hassan – Lanesborough Delegate
James Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
Mark Carson – New Marlborough Delegate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate

II. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

There were no Delegate or Alternate issues.

IV. Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions or comments on Executive Committee actions at the July 8 and September 2, 2021 meetings.

V. Appointment to the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority Board (BCRHA) of Commissioners

The BCRHA requested Jay Sacchetti, a resident of Pittsfield, MA, be appointed to an initial term of one year to their volunteer Board of Commissioners. He would replace their long-time member and recent Board Chair, Richard Grillon, who unexpectedly passed away recently. Mr. Sacchetti's resume was distributed.

Tom Matuszko clarified the process for these appointments (they are based on recommendations from BCRHA) and vetting the candidates. The appointment request comes to BRPC as the only county-wide organization. Several meeting participants confirmed Mr. Sacchetti's qualifications (resume in meeting materials) based on their experiences with him.

René Wood motioned to appoint Jay Sacchetti to an initial term of one year to the Berkshire County Regional Housing Authority's volunteer Board of Commissioners. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

Yes:

Mike Mach – Adams Delegate
John Duval – Adams Alternate
Shirley Mueller – Alford Alternate
Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Alternate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
James Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
Barbara Davis-Hassan – Lanesborough Delegate
James Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
Mark Carson – New Marlborough Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
René Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

VI. Ratification of Committee Members

As required by the BRPC bylaws, the Commission must ratify members to BRPC's committees. New members were added since the July Commission meeting. An updated membership list was shared.

Tom Matuszko explained that the BRPC Chair makes appointments to the committees, and the Commission members must approve them. The Commission is always open to new members if anyone wants to join or recommend someone.

René Wood motioned to accept the current list of BRPC's committees' membership. Jim Sullivan seconded. The motion passed with a unanimous roll call vote.

Yes:

Mike Mach – Adams Delegate
John Duval – Adams Alternate
Shirley Mueller – Alford Alternate
Alvin Blake – Becket Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Alternate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
James Sullivan – Hinsdale Delegate
Barbara Davis-Hassan – Lanesborough Delegate
James Lovejoy – Mt. Washington Alternate
Mark Carson – New Marlborough Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
René Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

VII. Presentation: "Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts"

Tom Matuszko introduced this presentation saying the report hopes to identify what changes will be seen in the future of work. He asked Commission members to listen to hear if the report sounds accurate for their communities.

Senior Economic Development Planner Wylie Goodman reviewed the Baker administration's report "Preparing for the Future of Work in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts" as we emerge from the pandemic. The Executive Summary was distributed. The full report may be viewed and downloaded at [download \(mass.gov\)](https://www.mass.gov).

The discussion emphasized the "vicious circle" of lack of housing, not enough tradespeople, limited public transit, and population loss, especially younger people. How do we learn from our experiences and advance? Training funds are available, but there aren't enough students, or they leave when training ends. Job fairs struggle to find participants. Eldercare is especially in a crisis. Child care costs and availability are also critical issues.

Doug McNally confirmed that the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's (BRTA) data is available on their website, and the new night routes are working well. First and last-mile options are still a big challenge. Affordable on-demand transit is one of the Berkshire's primary needs.

Better internet access can attract younger people to our communities. If jobs pay better and are more meaningful, people may be more interested. The natural resources of the Berkshires are an attraction.

Commission members raised questions about the report such as Lenox listed as a "suburban" community, the total # of communities = more than (the Berkshire's) 32 towns & cities, and the stated, "reduced need for transportation" (the report is referring to rail and urban communities). Also, will ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) funds be used to address the issues identified? Tom said that is a good question for the Annual Meeting speaker, Undersecretary Stolba.

X. Other

XI. Executive Director's Report

XII.

A. Office Update

Based on the recent uptick in COVID 19 cases, we cautiously monitor if new restrictions are required. The BRPC office is still open to the public, but the public must wear face masks. Staff members are still working in the office, a minimum of 2 days per week. Staff members must wear face coverings in common areas. The main door to the building remains locked at all times. The entry system at the street entrance is non-functional. The staff uses a key fob to open the door. Visitors need to have a cell phone on them and call the Office Assistant who goes down and opens the door.

B. Western Railroad Stone Arch Bridges

The U.S. Department of the Interior's National Park Service (NPS) has recently approved the Western Railroad Stone Arch Bridges (partially in Becket) as well as the Chester Factory Village Depot as National Historic Landmarks (NHL). The Western Railroad Stone Arch Bridges are surviving components of the Western Railroad, which connected Worcester, Massachusetts, with Albany, New York. When completed in 1841, the Western was the longest railroad constructed and operated in the United States by a single corporation. It was one of the first four interregional railroads in the country. The innovative management hierarchy of the Western Railroad's corporate structure set a new standard that many American corporations subsequently copied. The railroad segment and bridges are nationally significant as the best representative works and highest achievement of George Washington Whistler (1800–1849), one of the country's leading practitioners of civil engineering in the early nineteenth century and a pioneering designer of railroads. They are also nationally significant as an intact segment of the first railroad in the United States—perhaps the world—to demonstrate the feasibility of moving trains across a mountain range using only traction, or the friction between the wheels of the train and the tracks, for propulsion and braking. To accomplish the mountain ascent, the Western Railroad, with Whistler as its lead engineer, built a group of ten large masonry arch bridges and made extensive cuts

and fills to accommodate the roadbed within a winding three-mile section of the Westfield River Valley. As surviving components of that section of railroad, the Western Railroad Stone Arch Bridges and the segment of Western Railroad Roadbed that connects them exemplify the engineering accomplishment of the mountain crossing.

C. PILOT Payment Evaluation

Late last year, the state Auditor's Office issued a report, "The Impact of the State-Owned Land PILOT and Solar Taxation Policies on Municipalities." This was a critical examination about how the program, as structured is unfair for most small and rural communities. Dr. Ben Tafoya from the Auditor's office recently presented at the BRPC Regional Issues Committee. The Auditor's office has co-sponsored the legislation, S.1875/H. 2831, which seeks to address some of the problems with the program. Tom reported he will be working with the Rural Policy Advisory Commission to prepare comments about and support the legislation.

D. Other - none

XIII. Adjournment

René Wood made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Kyle Hanlon. Unanimously approved and adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

Materials distributed or presented during this meeting:

Agenda

Draft Meeting Minutes July 8, 2021

Executive Committee Actions Memo for July and September 2021

J. Sacchetti Resumé, BCRHA Volunteer Commission assignment

BRPC Committee Memberships FY22

Executive Summary on Future of Work in Massachusetts Report

Executive Director's Report