



### MEETING NOTICE

There will be a meeting of the  
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE  
of the  
BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Thursday, December 02, 2021 at **4:00 p.m.**

This will be 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.

Join Zoom Meeting  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3926128831>  
Meeting ID: 392 612 8831

Phone: 646.558.8656, 301.715.8592, 312.626.6799, 669.900.9128, 253.215.8782, 346.248.7799

**Meeting materials are posted on BRPC's website: [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org).**  
Click on the calendar of events, then the meeting name and follow link to materials.

### AGENDA

- I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement (4:00)
- II. Approval of Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting of November 4, 2021\* (4:05)
- III. Financial Reports (4:10)
  - A. November Expenditures Report \*
  - B. Accounts Receivable Report
  - C. Line of Credit Report
  - D. Other
- IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues (4:15)
- V. [Items Requiring Action\\*](#) (4:20)
  - A. Approval to Submit Grant Application to MIIA Health Benefits Trust Wellness Grant
  - B. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)
  - C. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Rural Health Equity Program
  - D. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program
  - E. Other

**City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice pursuant to M.G.L. Chapter 39, Section 23B**

#### Please Note:

For information regarding postponements or cancellations on the day of a scheduled meeting, please call Berkshire Regional Planning Commission at (413) 442-1521, x5

- VI. Committee Reports (4:25)  
A. MPO  
B. Finance Committee  
C. Other
- VII. Executive Director's Report (4:30)  
A. Report on New Contracts / Agreements  
B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update  
C. West – East Rail  
D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update  
E. CPTC Fall Training Schedule  
F. Special Commission on Rural Schools  
G. Other
- VIII. Old Business (4:45)  
A. Office Space Update  
B. Other
- IX. New Business (5:05)  
A. January Commission Meeting  
B. Employee Handbook
- X. Adjournment (5:15)

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of the November 4, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting
- November Expenditures Report
- November Receivables Report
- November Line of Credit Report
- MassDOT White Paper Executive Summary
- CPTC Training Schedule
- Special Commission on Rural Schools Subcommittee Reports
- Memo – October 2021 Technical Assistance

\* Items Requiring Action



**DRAFT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Thursday, November 4, 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 4:01 p.m.**

Chair John Duval called the meeting to order and stated that 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:**

Read by Office Manager Marianne Sniezek:

John Duval, Chair, Adams Alternate

Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair, Great Barrington Alternate

Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Lee Delegate

Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate

René Wood, Commission Development Chair, Sheffield Alternate

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Pittsfield Alternate

Sam Haupt, Peru Delegate; At-Large

Others Present: Christine Rasmussen Stockbridge Alternate; Al Blake Becket Alternate; Nancy Socha, Stockbridge Delegate; Sarah Hudson, Tyringham Alternate; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires

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

Tom introduced Chris Brown, the new Community Planner. Chris worked as a planner in Troy, NY, and Sarasota, FL. He is especially interested in housing. BRPC has had more requests for housing assistance, such as needs assessments. BRPC is working on a housing production plan for Sheffield. Tom noted that Phil Arnold, Community Planner, will be missed.

Roger Bolton suggested sharing successes, such as Williamstown's affordable housing projects, at Commission meetings, not just needs. Tom said Project Specialist Chris Skelly is documenting success stories for the regional housing group.

## **II. Approval Executive Committee Meeting October 7, 2021 Minutes**

CJ Hoss moved to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2021 meeting. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton and approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt. Buck Donovan abstained.

## **III. Financial Reports**

### **A. October Expenditures Report**

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

### **B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments**

In response to a question about the slow payment from the Executive Office of Energy & Environment, Tom said BRPC confirmed that the payment had been processed, so a check is expected soon.

René Wood appreciated the new format. Tom said that is thanks to Linda Ludwig, Financial Administrator.

### **C. Line of Credit Report**

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

### **D. Other – None**

## **IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues**

Tom reported that former Washington Planning Board member Marilyn Wiley passed away.

Sheila Irvin asked for an update on Powerhouse Square's repayment of their Brownfields loan. BRPC is actively negotiating and is optimistic payment will be made.

Al Blake asked if BRPC staff are involved with the Mass Clean Energy Center (MCEC). A recent OLLI event highlighted low cost energy solutions. He will forward the information to Tom.

Fred Schubert asked about BRPC's interface with the Berkshire Innovation Center. Tom noted that the last Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) committee meeting was held at the BIC. BIC does their own programming, but Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager, is in regular contact with their team.

Tom reported that a county-wide housing coalition is forming to address the need for all kinds of housing, not just affordable. BRPC will recruit municipalities, 1Berkshires the business community, and Berkshire Housing

Development Corporation will provide expertise on project implementation. The connection between housing and attracting employees is clear to all.

## **V. Items Requiring Action**

### **A. Approval to Enter into a Contract with Housatonic Valley Association for Churchill Brook Culvert Replacement Outreach Services**

The Executive Committee was requested (after the fact) to authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) to support HVA's Churchill Brook Culvert Replacement Project. BRPC will conduct a needs assessment of highway/public works staff on the barriers to culvert replacements in the Berkshires and help recruit highway/public works staff to information sessions conducted by HVA at the Churchill Brook Culvert site. Staff lead is Senior Planner Courteny Morehouse, [cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org).

Sam Haupt moved to approve that the Executive Director enter into an agreement with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) to support HVA's Churchill Brook Culvert Replacement Project. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, and Sam Haupt.

### **B. Approval to Enter into a Contract with Housatonic Valley Association for Municipal Culvert Replacement Cooperative Project Support**

The Executive Committee was requested (after the fact) to authorize the Executive Director to enter into an agreement with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) to support HVA's Municipal Culvert Replacement Cooperative Project. This project explores the feasibility of creating a Culvert Replacement Cooperative that Berkshire municipalities can join to make culvert replacement easier. BRPC will determine whether group procurement can be utilized in culvert replacement projects and help the project team conduct outreach to highway/public work staff in Berkshire communities. Staff lead is Senior Planner Courteny Morehouse, [cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org).

Malcolm Fick moved to approve that the Executive Director (after the fact) enter into an agreement with the Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) to support HVA's Churchill Brook Culvert Replacement Project. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, and Sam Haupt.

### **C. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Citizen's Housing and Planning Association**

The Executive Committee was requested (after the fact) to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and to sign any resulting

contracts and agreements to the Citizen's Housing and Planning Association's (CHAPA) Municipal Engagement Initiative to build a Berkshire Regional Housing Collaborative and engage a wide range of partners to address the Berkshire County housing crisis. As of now, Tom Matuszko is the staff lead, [tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:tmatuszko@berkshireplanning.org)

Sheila Irvin moved to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the Citizen's Housing and Planning Association's (CHAPA) Municipal Engagement Initiative to build a Berkshire Regional Housing Collaborative and engage a wide range of partners to address the Berkshire County housing crisis. René Wood seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, and Sam Haupt.

#### **D. Approval to Submit Grant Application to U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment Funding**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment funding in the upcoming grant round. Previously awarded assessment grant funds have been exhausted. There are no funds available for site assessments. Several sites have been identified that could benefit from environmental site assessments. The maximum grant award is \$500,000. No local match is required, but a limited amount of administration is now allowed under Brownfields Grants. The staff lead is Melissa Provencher, [mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org).

Last year's application was denied. These grants have become extremely competitive.

Malcolm Fick moved to authorize that the Executive Director submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment funding in the upcoming grant round. CJ Hoss seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, and Sam Haupt.

#### **E. Approval to Dispose of Surplus Property**

Per BRPC policy, the Executive Committee was requested to approve the following declaration and disposal of surplus property: 8 JAMAR traffic counters and related accessories. There no longer is a need for these traffic counters as a vendor provides this function. In 2010, it was determined that it was more cost-effective to outsource this activity. The value of each counter is estimated to be less than \$200.00 as each unit is inoperable. The internal batteries need replacement. Below is a list of items that authorization was sought to dispose of per the policy.

2 - Jamar TRAX GK counters

2 - Jamar TRAX Plus HS counters  
2 - Jamar TRAX Flex HS counters  
2 - Jamar TRAX II counters  
8 - sets of chains and locks  
8 - sets of 60' tubes (new)  
12 - sets of used tubes (various lengths)  
12 - end plugs  
3 - amber car roof beacons  
6 - 18" traffic cones  
Miscellaneous chargers, cables, installation hardware/tools, and manuals

Sam Haupt would take the cones for the Peru Fire Department.

CJ Hoss moved to approve the disposal of surplus traffic counters and related accessories. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, René Wood, Roger Bolton, CJ Hoss, and Sam Haupt.

**F. Other - None**

**VI. Committee Reports**

**A. Regional Issues Committee**

The Regional Issues Committee met on October 27, 2021. Draft minutes were distributed.

CJ Hoss, Chair, reported that Dr. Tafoya summarized findings from Auditor Suzanne Bump's Office's report [Public Infrastructure in Western Massachusetts: A Critical Need for Regional Investment and Revitalization](#). As all are aware, Western Massachusetts faces multiple challenges in demographic and financial health categories (e.g., school-age children, workforce, broadband). No action is planned unless a letter of support is needed. Tom Matuszko submitted a letter, available upon request.

**B. Other - None**

**VII. Executive Director's Report**

**A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements**

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated 10/01/2021 to 10/31/2021

- Adams – Shared Economic Planner FY22 - \$25,000
- Housatonic Valley Association – Churchill Brook Culvert Replacement - \$2,000
- Housatonic Valley Association – Municipal Culvert Replacement Cooperative - \$10,000
- EPA Healthy Communities Healthy and Efficient Homes Pilot Project - \$28,021
- The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Public Health –

- Community Research Initiative of New England - \$26,000
- Department of Energy Resources – Regional Energy Planning Assistance - \$42,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

- None

**B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update**

There were no Berkshires Tomorrow actions over the last month.

**C. Staff Update**

- Vanessa Oeien was hired as an intern for the Public Health Program. (Resume attached)
- June Axt was hired as a part-time Public Health Nurse. (Resume attached)
- Paula Downer was hired as a part-time Public Health Project Specialist. (Resume attached)
- Chris Brown was hired as a Community Planner. (Resume Attached)
- Seth Jenkins was hired as a Community Planner. (Resume Attached)
- Philip Arnold resigned as a Community Planner.

The Public Health Program has an ambitious plan to vaccinate 5-11-year-olds in 30 schools. They have hired additional part-time staff.

Tom is analyzing staffing needs and considering a third Community Planner. Another community wants a Master Plan. Public Health has more positions to fill. More funds are coming from the state.

René Wood asked about DLTA applications for this year and their impact on staffing needs. Solicitations haven't gone out yet.

**D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update**

Tom Matuszko reported that the Rural Policy Advisory Commission met on October 8, 2021. The main agenda items were a presentation by the State Auditor's office about infrastructure spending in Western Mass, a presentation about a Farmland Action Plan the MA Food Systems Collaborative is preparing, comments about recommended changes to the Community Scale Housing Initiative, and comments about the Payment in Lieu of Taxes program. Five communities in Massachusetts changed from rural. There are still ~145 rural municipalities in the state.

**E. CPTC Fall Training Schedule**

The Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) training schedule was distributed. The sessions are virtual again this year; hence the full range of training is available to everyone. Tom encouraged distribution and participation.

**F. State Auditor's Report on Infrastructure Spending in Western Mass**

In response to the State Auditor's report ([Office of the State Auditor |](#)



[Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov)) about the need for infrastructure investment in the Western Massachusetts counties of Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire, Executive Director Tom Matuszko, the Berkshire County Selectman's Association, and the Franklin Regional Council Of Government submitted comments to the delegation and the rural caucus. The comment letter is in the meeting materials.

Tom expressed disappointment that more funding for Chapter 90 did not make it into the ARPA bill. Sewer and water projects are in the House version. Not sure about the Senate's version.

#### **G. Moving Together Conference**

Information about MassDOT's Moving Together Annual Conference was distributed.

#### **H. Census Data Products**

The U.S. Census offered an opportunity to provide comments about how data will be released. The meeting packet includes the comments BRPC submitted about the type of data useful at the town level.

#### **I. Other**

### **VI. Old Business**

#### **A. Office Space**

Tom signed the five-year lease today. Work has not begun in the new space. Building improvements have started, including replacing the + 40-year-old fire protection sprinklers, re-pointing of bricks, concrete repairs to the foundation, and replacing parts of the roof. Also, Eversource replaced the cracked sidewalk in front of the entryway. Access to new space is likely by the end of January.

#### **B. Other - None**

### **VII. New Business**

#### **A. November Commission Meeting**

The following item needs to be on the agenda:

- approval of the CEDS annual report.

Tom suggested housing development as an educational topic, such as what is a housing needs assessment.

René Wood recommended that the Commission Development Committee ask members what topics and issues interest them. The Executive Committee agreed that this subcommittee should propose meeting topics and or training.

Meanwhile, Tom will try to get a presenter, perhaps a Legislator, to review

the ARPA funding process and eligibility details at the full Commission meeting on 11/18.

Members expressed concerns that ARPA has an east-coast focus, and there are plusses and minuses of ear-marking. Some things communities need do not qualify.

**B. Other**

**C. Adjournment**

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:58 p.m., seconded by CJ Hoss and unanimously approved.

**Attachments:**

- Unapproved Minutes of the October 7, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting
- October Expenditures Report
- October Receivables Report
- October Line of Credit Report
- Memo – November 4, 2021, Executive Committee Agenda Items
- Resume – Vanessa Oeien
- Resume – June Axt
- Resume – Paula Downer
- Resume – Chris Brown
- Resume - Seth Jenkins
- CPTC Training Schedule
- Comment letter on Western Mass Infrastructure spending
- Moving Together Conference Information
- Census Data Products comment letter
- Memo – September 2021 Technical Assistance

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Check Register  
For the Period From November 1, 2021 to November 23, 2021

Filter Criteria includes: Report order is by Date.

Check #	Date	Payee	Amount	DEPT	DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION	EXPENSE
EFT	11/1/21	DOTSTER	17.49	515 BB/BUW19	Berkshire Benchmarks	Software Renewal
15609	11/1/21	THE COOPER CENTER, LLC	4,557.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Rent
15610	11/1/21	MUTUAL OF OMAHA	549.02	40 ADMIN	Admin	Life: STD; LTD
15612	11/2/21	MASS STATE BOARD OF RETIREMENT	8,423.17	---	---	Retirement
EFT	11/2/21	AMAZON.COM	97.04	40 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
15613	11/2/21	AAIM TRAINING AND CONSULTING LLC	195.50	40 ADMIN	Admin	Background Checks
15614	11/2/21	JUNE AXT	92.96	Varied PHN	Public Health Nursing	Nurses
15615	11/2/21	BECKS PRINTING	399.00	585 NBCC/OD2A	Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdoes Data to Action	Printing
15616	11/2/21	BERKSHIRE HILLS REGIONAL SCHOOL DIST	5,000.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15617	11/2/21	VALERIE BIRD	357.45	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15618	11/2/21	LAURA BRENNAN	41.33	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15619	11/2/21	GWENDOLYN CARIDDI	170.80	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15620	11/2/21	SARAH CARLETON	1,015.00	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Subcontractor
15621	11/2/21	COMPUWORKS	576.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Software
15622	11/2/21	CARLEY DANIELS-CHAGUE	150.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15623	11/2/21	HEATHER DESCOTEAU	63.70	Varied PHN	Public Health Nursing	Nurses
15624	11/2/21	LESLIE DRAGER	440.35	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15625	11/2/21	HOWARD J EBERWEIN	91.45	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Expense Report
15626	11/2/21	EDWARD M. FAHEY	301.28	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15627	11/2/21	DAVID W. KELLEY	360.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Cleaning
15628	11/2/21	JENNIFER L. KIMBALL	8.51	585 NBCC/OD2A	Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdoes Data to Action	Expense Report
15629	11/2/21	LAURA KITTROSS	39.20	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15630	11/2/21	PATRICIA A. MULLINS	34.72	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15631	11/2/21	MARY NASH	1,920.00	644 BARR/BCETF21	BARR BCETF's 2021 Planning	Subcontractor
15632	11/2/21	NEW ENGLAND NEWSPAPERS, INC.	120.20	522 CHS/NMB/CDBG18	Cheshire CDBG	Advertising
15633	11/2/21	NORTH ADAMS AMBULANCE SERVICE, INC.	2,500.00	585 NBCC/OD2A	Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdoes Data to Action	Stipend
15634	11/2/21	FRANCESCA OLSEN	750.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15635	11/2/21	CITY OF PITTSFIELD	375.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Parking
15636	11/2/21	ROBERT PUTNAM	2,112.50	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Subcontractor
15637	11/2/21	RICHMOND CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL	5,000.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15638	11/2/21	KENNETH M. ROCKE	2,560.00	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Subcontractor

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Check #	Date	Payee	Amount	DEPT	DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION	EXPENSE
15639	11/2/21	BRENDAN SHERAN	92.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Expense Reimbursement
15640	11/2/21	NANCY SLATTERY	347.08	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15641	11/2/21	KENNETH WALTO	23.52	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15642	11/2/21	PETTY CASH	30.32	40 ADMIN	Admin	Varied Expenses
15643	11/2/21	TD CARD SERVICES	2,262.20	40 ADMIN	Admin	CC Payment ()
1132	11/2/21	EMERALD LEAD TESTING	712.00	522 CHS/NMB/CDBG18	Cheshire CDBG	Lead Contractor
CCARD	11/2/21	SUNDAY RIVER RESORT	156.04	585 NBCC/OD2A	Northern Berkshire Community Coalition - Overdoes Data to Action	Meetings
EFT	11/2/21	STAPLES ADVANTAGE	81.25	40 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
CCARD	11/7/21	AMAZON.COM	152.84	284 BPHN/PHN	Public Health Nursing Program	Vaccine Supplies
15644	11/9/21	1BERKSHIRE	100.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Advertising
15645	11/9/21	BERKSHIRE SPRINGS	12.50	40 ADMIN	Admin	Water
15646	11/9/21	GWENDOLYN CARIDDI	117.04	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15647	11/9/21	DONOVAN O'CONNOR & DODIG LLP	90.00	166 EPA/RLF	Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund	Legal Services
15648	11/9/21	MIIA HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST	2,065.21	40 ADMIN	Admin	Dental Insurance
15649	11/9/21	MIIA HEALTH BENEFITS TRUST	46,903.16	40 ADMIN	Admin	Health Insurance
15650	11/9/21	OLD MILL ROAD MEDIA, LLC	750.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15651	11/9/21	PITNEY BOWES GLOBAL FINANCIAL SERV.,LLC	148.05	40 ADMIN	Admin	Postage Meter
15652	11/9/21	VALLEY GREEN SHREDDING, LLC	105.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Recycling
15653	11/9/21	W.B. MASON COMPANY, INC.	144.24	40 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
15654	11/9/21	WHITNEYS FARM	240.00	610 HRIA/G2G	Health Resources in Action (HRIA) - Grey to Green: Increasing Health Equity in Pittsfield	Supplies
1133	11/9/21	BARTLETT CONSTRUCTION	11,540.00	522 CHS/NMB/CDBG18	Cheshire CDBG	Voided
1133V	11/9/21	BARTLETT CONSTRUCTION	-11,540.00	522 CHS/NMB/CDBG18	Cheshire CDBG	Voided
1134	11/9/21	BARTLETT CONSTRUCTION	11,540.00	522 CHS/NMB/CDBG18	Cheshire CDBG	Subcontractor
1224	11/9/21	EMERALD LEAD TESTING	550.00	570 SHFNMBOTS/CDBG19	Sheffield New Marl Otis CDBG FY19	Lead Contractor
EFT	11/9/21	WJ BLUEPRINT & DIGITAL GRAPHICS	35.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Printing
EFT	11/10/21	MA CHAPTER AMERICAN PLANNING ASSOC	60.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Staff Development
EFT	11/10/21	AMAZON.COM	17.88	40 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Supplies
EFT	11/10/21	AMAZON.COM	49.71	40 ADMIN	Admin	Computer Supplies
EFT	11/11/21	UNANET TECHNOLOGIES	7,228.80	40 ADMIN	Admin	Subscription Fee
EFT	11/12/21	ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS, INC.	40.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Dues/Subscriptions
15655	11/15/21	MARK ABRAHAMS DBA THE ABRAHAMS GROUP	3,587.00	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Subcontractor
15656	11/15/21	ADELSON MOYNIHAN KOWALCZYK, PC	12,500.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Audit
15657	11/15/21	ALBANY CAN CODE INC	5,202.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15658	11/15/21	BBE OFFICE INTERIORS	130.00	284 BPHN/PHN	Public Health Nursing Program	Vaccine Refrigerator Transfer

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15659	11/15/21	RYAN BUGGY	150.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15660	11/15/21	SYKES, COLIN	69.48	---	Varied Projects	Expense Report
15661	11/15/21	COMPREHENSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL, INC.	2,795.00	592 DEP/319REGC	Nonpoint Source Regional Coordinator	Subcontractor
15662	11/15/21	JUSTIN GILMORE	45.47	643 DCHD/LRRP/SME	Local Rapid Recovery Planning - Subject Matter Expert Services	Expense Report
15663	11/15/21	ROBIN HELFAND	2,675.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15664	11/15/21	SETH JENKINS	53.76	545 DHCD/DLTA	District Local Technical Assistance	Expense Report
15665	11/15/21	HOWIE MARSHALL	150.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15666	11/15/21	RENATUS SOLUTIONS	750.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15667	11/15/21	THE COOPER CENTER, LLC	1,146.53	40 ADMIN	Admin	Utilities
15668	11/15/21	BRENDAN SHERAN	7,080.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 22	Subcontractor
15669	11/15/21	STACEY M. SILKEY SCHULTZE	1,500.00	635 DESE/BRLI21	Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education - BCETF - Berkshire Remote Learning Support Initiative 23	Subcontractor
15670	11/15/21	TMSOLUTION, INC.	12,000.00	638 DESE/REGIONAL21	MA Dept Elem/Sec Education - BCETF	Subcontractor
15671	11/15/21	TPX COMMUNICATONS	946.50	40 ADMIN	Admin	Telephone
15672	11/15/21	W.B. MASON COMPANY, INC.	63.45	40 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
15673	11/15/21	WJ BLUEPRINT & DIGITAL GRAPHICS	35.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Voided
15673V	11/15/21	WJ BLUEPRINT & DIGITAL GRAPHICS	-35.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Voided
15674	11/15/21	ABBY ARCHEY	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15675	11/15/21	JAYCEE BABBS	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15676	11/15/21	RYO BEVINS	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15677	11/15/21	BRIAN ANNOR BAAH	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15678	11/15/21	DYLAN CARMEL	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Voided
15678V	11/15/21	DYLAN CARMEL	-50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Voided
15679	11/15/21	DYLAN CARMEL	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15680	11/15/21	ANNA DINICOLA	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
Check Register  
For the Period From November 1, 2021 to November 23, 2021

Filter Criteria includes: Report order is by Date.

Check #	Date	Payee	Amount	DEPT	DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTION	EXPENSE
15681	11/15/21	WILLAM GARRITY	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15682	11/15/21	DAKOTAH HUNT	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15683	11/15/21	LONAN JENNINGS	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15684	11/15/21	AXEL MURPHY-MALLOY	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15685	11/15/21	JADE NOTCHICK	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15686	11/15/21	AUTUMN OCHS	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15687	11/15/21	THOMAS PETERSON	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15688	11/15/21	SHASTA RACELA	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15689	11/15/21	NICK SACCO	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15690	11/15/21	AWA TOURAY	50.00	645 BARR/POG21	BARR BCETF - Action Plan to Implement Portrait of Graduate	Honorarium
15691	11/15/21	1BERKSHIRE	8,192.51	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15692	11/16/21	MASS STATE BOARD OF RETIREMENT	8,774.76	---	---	Retirement
EFT	11/17/21	ADOBE ACROBAT	122.33	40 ADMIN	Admin	Supplies
EFT	11/18/21	BERKSHIRE GENERAL STORE	94.79	284 BPHN/PHN	Public Health Nursing Program	Meetings
EFT	11/18/21	BIG Y SUPERMARKET	20.99	284 BPHN/PHN	Public Health Nursing Program	Meetings
15693	11/22/21	KAREN CARSWELL	1,500.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor
15694	11/22/21	EMPLOYERS ASSOC OF THE NORTHEAST, INC	199.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	HR Meeting Expense
15695	11/22/21	MIRICK, O'CONNELL, DEMALLIE & LOUGEE	346.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Legal Services
15696	11/22/21	NEW ENGLAND NEWSPAPERS, INC.	350.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Annual Subscription
15697	11/22/21	VALLEY GREEN SHREDDING, LLC	35.00	40 ADMIN	Admin	Recycling
15698	11/22/21	FRANCESCA OLSEN	1,400.00	637 EDA/COVIDRRP	EDA COVID-19 Regional Recovery Project	Subcontractor

**Total** 185,052.08

# BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

## Aged Receivables

As of Nov 30, 2021

Filter Criteria includes: 1) Includes Drop Shipments. Report order is by ID. Report is pri

Customer ID	Customer	Over 90 days	Amount Due	Notes
283/BHHA/INSP/PTS	CITY OF PITTSFIELD - BOARD OF HEALTH		675.00	
283/BHHA/INSP/WND	TOWN OF WINDSOR		-2,103.75	Paid Full Contract In Advance
284 BHPA/PHN/FLA	TOWN OF FLORIDA		-1,050.00	Paid Full Contract In Advance
284 BPHA/PHN/SND	TOWN OF SANDISFIELD		525.00	
284/BHPN/PHN/CHS	TOWN OF CHESHIRE		-2,262.74	Paid Full Contract In Advance
284/BHPN/PHN/PTS	CITY OF PITTSFIELD - BOARD OF HEALTH	1,150.00	1,150.00	Laura Kittross in contact PTS
284/BHPN/PHN/WMST	TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN		1,678.16	
284/BPHN/PHN/BHDC	BERKSHIRE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORP		600.00	
284/BPHN/PHN/CLK	TOWN OF CLARKSBURG	731.06	1,462.12	Lynne Lemanski emailed Town office - Pending
284/BPHN/PHN/GTB	TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON	1,519.35	3,038.70	Lynne Lemanski in contact with GTB - Resent Invoices
350/BCBOHA	BERKSHIRE COUNTY BOARDS OF HEALTH ASSOC		2,575.00	
427 ADM/BFASSESS	TOWN OF ADAMS		775.06	
440/TPL17	MASSDOT#75425 - TPL13		54,651.80	
466 LAN/SW	TOWN OF LANESBOROUGH	1,008.65	1,008.65	LAN missed invoice & will put on their Dec Warrant
482 GTB/ASSESS	TOWN OF GREAT BARRINGTON		2,474.71	
515 BB/BUW	BERKSHIRE UNITED WAY		776.07	
526 BCSO/OPIOID19	BERKSHIRE COUNTY SHERIFFS OFFICE		6,250.00	
533 FCSD/OJJD	SDF-SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT, FRANKLIN		22,533.01	
538 ADM/CLNUP	TOWN OF ADAMS		2,284.37	
550 DOER/AARC	COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS		6,073.35	
560 COMMVENPUR	COMMUNITY VENDOR PURCHASING	800.00	800.00	Sent copy, will pay.
560 EJ PRESCOTT, INC	EJ PRESCOTT, INC.	168.26	168.26	Sent copy, will pay.
561 LEN/EDP	TOWN OF LENOX		9,569.40	
580 EOEEA/DAL/PLANA	EXEC OFFICE OF ENERGY AND ENV	34,561.25	34,561.25	Courteney Morehouse spoke with Kurt Gaetner. It was submitted for payment. Notified Courteney to follow up again.
606 BMC/PTSFA	BOSTON MEDICAL CENTER		1,264.39	
616 WMPHA	WESTERN MASS PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION		4,000.00	
617 ADM/CDBG/CV	TOWN OF ADAMS		1,828.39	
622 USDA/FS/MTWPFRC	USDA FORESTRY SERVICE	11,674.03	20,449.09	Melissa Provencher is following up. Still pending.
625 ADM/MTWPMVPA	TOWN OF WILLIAMSTOWN		3,780.07	
626 WST/MP	TOWN OF WEST STOCKBRIDGE		4,241.70	
630 OTS/MVP	TOWN OF OTIS		6,932.91	
633 OTS/CS	TOWN OF OTIS		7,118.35	
635 DESE/BRLI21	635 DESE/BRLI21		82,683.00	
636 DHCD/LRRP	DHCD/LRRP		4,169.02	
637 EDA/COVIDRRP	637 EDA/COVIDRRP		41,941.04	
638 DESE/REGIONAL21	DEPT OF SECONDARY EDUCATION		24,789.73	

BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION

Aged Receivables

As of Nov 30, 2021

Filter Criteria includes: 1) Includes Drop Shipments. Report order is by ID. Report is pri

<u>Customer ID</u>	<u>Customer</u>	<u>Over 90 days</u>	<u>Amount Due</u>	<u>Notes</u>
646 DPH/MASSCALLS	DEPT OF PUBLIC HEALTH - MASSCALLS		64.85	
651 MAPC/AAR	METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL		18,185.63	
661 TOWN OF LENOX	TOWN OF LENOX		1,466.86	
COOK INSURANCE	CHARLES COOK		-0.13	

Report Total

51,612.60 371,128.32

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America's Most Convenient Bank®

Current Balance

**\$0.00**

Available Credit

**\$230,000.00**

Amount Due

**\$0.00**

Payment Due Date

**Dec 5, 2021**

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It appears you don't have any recent activity.

When available, this is where your account activity will display.

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Committee, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director  
DATE: November 24, 2021  
SUBJ: Agenda Items – December 2, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting

### V. Items Requiring Action

#### **A. Approval to Submit Grant Application to MIIA Health Benefits Trust Wellness Grant**

Approval is requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts MIIA Health Benefits Trust Wellness Grant and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant provides resources for creating and maintaining a healthy work culture, such as exercise equipment and adjustable desks. The grant budget is up to \$5000. There is no local match required. The staff lead on this application is Marianne Sniezek, [msniezek@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:msniezek@berkshireplanning.org).

#### **B. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC)**

Approval is requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Planning and Local Technical Assistance Program, Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC) and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant would allow BRPC to prepare a 5 year Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). The current CEDS expires the end of this year. The requested amount is likely to be \$30,000. A match is required and would be provided through the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program. Staff lead is Economic Development Program Manager Laura Brennan, [lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org).

#### **C. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Rural Health Equity Program**

Approval is requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Rural Health Equity Grant program through the New England Rural Health Association and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. The BRPC Public Health Program is submitting an up to \$75,000/year, three-year Rural Health Equity Grant for the small towns in the Central Berkshire Rural Health Equity Cluster, including the Towns of Becket, Dalton, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Peru, Richmond, Washington, and Windsor. This grant will include hiring a part-time person to manage the COVID response, including mitigation efforts such as vaccination, education and other mitigation strategies. It will also work with communities and other partners

to identify sustainable structural changes that will improve health outcomes in the long-term in rural communities. There is no match requirement. Staff lead is Senior Planner Allison Egan [aegan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:aegan@berkshireplanning.org).

**D. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program**

The Executive Committee is requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Community Empowerment and Reinvestment Grant Program with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Public Health staff would work with the Westside Legends and their sister organization, the Growing Legends, Habitat for Humanity, the City of Pittsfield, and other community partners to develop a community impact/strategic plan focused on food sovereignty, economic opportunity, and mentorship for the Westside Neighborhood in Pittsfield as part of a larger neighborhood revitalization strategy. This strategic plan would aim to lay out specific staffing, community, training, and educational needs of the Westside community to increase economic prosperity, food sovereignty, and mentorship for all, while reducing recidivism. The grant amount is approximately \$50,000 over a 6 month period, from January 2022 through June 2022. There is no match required. BRPC is the applicant. Staff lead is Senior Planner Allison Egan [aegan@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:aegan@berkshireplanning.org).

**E. Other**

VI. Committee Reports

**A. MPO**

The MPO met on Tuesday November 23, 2021. The main agenda item was to approve a TIP amendment for public comment related to BRTA and their preventive maintenance, operating expenses, bus replacement and fare collection improvements. (Draft unapproved minutes have not yet been prepared.)

**B. Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee will meet on December 9, 2021. The main agenda items are to recommend the FY2023 Community Assessments to the Commission and review the FY2021 BRPC Audit.

**C. Other**

VII. Executive Director's Report

**A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements**

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated 11/01/2021 to 11/30/2021

- Clarksburg – Municipal Vulnerability Program - \$15,000
- Lenox - Municipal Vulnerability Program - \$295,190
- Mount Washington - Municipal Vulnerability Program - \$20,000
- Mount Washington – Hazard Mitigation - \$18,750
- Clarksburg – Green Communities Weatherization & Lighting Project - \$10,000
- Public Health Emergency Preparedness Planning - \$150,909
- CHAPA – Municipal Engagement Initiative – grant of services

#### Grants and Contracts not received.

- ACT4All Grant Program for developing an E-bike incentive program for low-income community members.

#### **B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update**

The BTI board authorized the President, John Duval, to sign an agreement with the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and sign any other contracts to support the COVID-19 Pediatric Clinics not to exceed the amount of \$10,000, including a 2% administrative fee. Berkshires Tomorrow did not receive a grant from EPA's Environmental Justice Small Grant Program for \$75,000. The was a very competitive application.

#### **C. West – East Rail**

A next step recommended in MassDOT's East-West Passenger Rail Study was to understand the governance options for expanded passenger rail in Western Massachusetts. MassDOT recently released a white paper that provides background on issues that influence passenger rail operations in Western Massachusetts and provides specific recommendations on passenger rail operations and governance options for future services. Attached is the Executive Summary. For the complete white paper go to:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/massachusetts-intercity-passenger-rail-governance-white-paper-0/download>

#### **D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update**

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in November. The next meeting is tentatively set for December 17, 2021.

#### **E. CPTC Fall Training Schedule**

Trainings are still being offered for planning and zoning board members through the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC). The schedule of online sessions is attached.

#### **F. Special Commission on Rural Schools**

The Special Commission that was established by the legislature to examine rural school districts has been working over the past several months through various subcommittees. At its meeting on November 9, 2021, the subcommittees reported out their initial recommendations (attached.) One additional subcommittee on school choice recommended that the entire school choice policy needs to be re-examined statewide, including an examination of the inequity it might be causing. The Special Commission will synthesize these recommendations into a final report/recommendation, which is proposed to be released early next year. A recording of the meeting is available [here](#).

#### **G. Other**

### VIII. Old Business

#### **A. Office Space**

Our building owner continues to concentrate work on the exterior of the building. The Roofing work is just about completed on the main roofs. The

overhangs along North and Fenn Streets will be re-roofed, which should the dripping on the sidewalk that freezes in the winter. The exterior masonry work is done for the season. A drain line extension will be constructed along fire escape in the back parking lot area to serve the downspouts on the back wall and alcove area. Gutters and downspouts will be replaced and connected to the new storm line that should help eliminate icing conditions in the parking lot. Work on the interior will not start in earnest until the first of the year.

**B. Other**

IX. New Business

**A. January Commission Meeting**

The following item needs to be on the agenda:

- Approval of the assessment for FY23.

Other possible agenda items include:

- A report on the Commonwealth's ARPA spending plan
- Given the strong interest expressed at the Commission meeting, we will have a housing topic on this meeting and as a "standing" agenda for future meetings.

**B. Employee Handbook**

Once we reach 50 employees, we are required to comply with additional federal requirements and have additional personnel policies. We currently have 47 individuals as BRPC employees; with many being part-time, (we have about 35 FTE.) We want to use this as an opportunity to develop a complete employee handbook, instead of the compilation of separate, somewhat disjointed, policies we have now.

# Massachusetts Intercity Passenger Rail Governance White Paper

November 12, 2021

## I. Executive Summary

The Massachusetts Department of Transportation conducted the East-West Passenger Rail Study to examine the potential benefits, costs, and investments necessary to implement a new passenger rail service connecting Western Massachusetts communities with Central and Eastern Massachusetts.

After public meetings and input from a Task Force consisting of representatives from municipalities and other stakeholders, the study concluded in January 2021 with the publication of a final report identifying three potentially viable service alternatives as well as a set of recommendations and next steps to advance the study. One next step was to understand the governance options for expanded passenger rail in Western Massachusetts. To advance that effort, this white paper provides background on issues that influence passenger rail operations in Western Massachusetts and provides specific recommendations on passenger rail operations and governance options for future services.

This approach is a slight departure from the original conception for the paper which contemplated a menu of options examining different ways to approach governance and service models for further discussion.

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) passed by Congress on Friday, November 5 includes several discretionary grant programs for intercity passenger rail and unprecedented levels of funding for Amtrak. MassDOT officials believe the recommendations in this white paper will help position the Commonwealth to take advantage of the federal funding opportunities and is the most logical course to develop an East-West rail corridor and grow other rail services in Western Massachusetts.

### **Intercity Passenger Rail Service Operator: Amtrak is proposed**

After examining the functional characteristics and legal/regulatory framework of different types of passenger rail, it is clear all three East-West Service Alternatives would be considered Regional Intercity Passenger Rail and therefore should be operated by Amtrak. As the primary operator responsible for the nation's Intercity Passenger Rail, Amtrak is the **only** railroad that has rights of access to the facilities of any other railroad or regional transportation authority. These access rights provide Amtrak with access to any rail line in the United States and give Amtrak the ability to use any host railroads' facilities, such as stations or railyards.

The cost for Amtrak to use those rail lines and facilities are based on the incremental costs (added costs resulting from Amtrak's operation) and not the full cost of capital and maintenance. Furthermore, Amtrak is provided preference in train dispatching, which minimizes delays to Amtrak trains when operating on tracks with both freight and passenger services.

The unique rights provided to Amtrak through federal law make it a preferred operator when considering passenger rail services and the preferred operator for the East-West Passenger Rail Service. Although the process of exercising Amtrak's unique rights takes a considerable amount of time and is costly, Amtrak has the right to bring any seemingly unresolvable issues to the Surface

Transportation Board (SB) for ultimate resolution. Although recent federal law allows other passenger rail operators to bring issues to the STB for mediation, it is a process that has not yet been tested. If other rail operators, such as the MBTA, were considered to operate the East-West Service, the difficulties in accessing the CSX-owned portion could render the service unfeasible.

The Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2008 (PRIIA) includes a provision that establishes a cost sharing approach for regional intercity rail services operated by Amtrak. Consistent with this provision, titled PRIIA Section 209, a cost allocation model has been developed by Amtrak and sponsor states that is used to determine how to allocate costs for state sponsor reimbursement. This model, which would be used to determine annual operating costs for the East-West Service, will improve clarity on the annual operating cost of the service for the Commonwealth.

Engaging Amtrak for the service operations does not mean that Amtrak can or should handle all aspects of the service as a "turnkey" operation. At a minimum engaging Amtrak would mean Amtrak would operate the train service by providing Amtrak labor for on-board conductors, engineers, and daily train maintenance. Other aspects of the service could be evaluated to understand if Amtrak or others would be the preferred provider. These aspects include:

- Service Plan Development
- Safety System Compliance
- Ticket Sales / Fare Collection
- Food Service Provisioning
- Rolling Stock Capital
- Rolling Stock Maintenance

Other aspects of the service would be best addressed by the owner/primary operator of each segment of the rail corridor. These aspects include:

- Train Dispatching
- Right-of-way Maintenance
- Station Maintenance
- Layover Facility Maintenance
- Capital Renewal

Engaging Amtrak to operate the East-West Intercity Passenger Rail Service would provide the best chance at a successful service by leveraging its unique federal benefits, extensive experience, and national resources. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts can work cooperatively with Amtrak to provide successful services that meet the regional travel needs of Western Massachusetts.

### **Governance: proposed to establish focused, mission-driven authority**

To progress the East-West passenger rail service, an entity is required to develop, manage, and oversee the service.

There are several benefits for passenger rail to be managed by a local authority; in this case, an entity focused on passenger rail service in Western Massachusetts (*i.e.*, a Western Massachusetts Intercity Rail Authority). These benefits include:

- A more efficient allocation of resources and decision making related to service development, operating plans, transportation network connectivity, and service schedules. Developing

operating plans that best fit with the local transportation network would be improved through detailed understanding of local conditions. Coordination of the service with local bus connections or responding to transportation demand surges could be implemented more quickly at the local/regional level.

- A unified Western Massachusetts voice at the state and federal level when advocating on Western Massachusetts intercity rail issues.
- Coordinated passenger services such as ticketing, marketing/advertising, and information systems and potential efficiencies to be gained from more localized efforts.
- Coordinated capital improvement priorities that benefit the entire corridor and the ability to focus resources on the projects that would generate the most benefit. A local authority that includes the rail owners and operators along the corridor would be in a better position to coordinate these improvements.
- More focused oversight and management of on-time performance, schedule integration, mechanical issues, and customer service by local staff. Local authority board members and senior management who are also located along the corridor mean that customer-related issues could more easily be identified and addressed.

The benefits of establishing a focused, mission-driven authority to govern intercity passenger rail services in Western Massachusetts are clear. The ability to match local governance of the service with local transportation needs would undoubtedly lead to a more effective service. It is assumed that the authority would be governed by a Board of Directors appointed by the Governor of Massachusetts, consistent with other state authorities such as the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and Massport, and made up of qualified Western Massachusetts residents with a strong interest in providing intercity rail service to Western Massachusetts.

The initial role of the Authority should be to guide the development and implementation of the East-West intercity passenger rail service. Other responsibilities could be included such as to provide management oversight of the existing “State-Supported” Amtrak services (Amtrak Vermonter, Amtrak Hartford Line, and Amtrak Valley Flyer), to coordinate with Amtrak on financial and operational policies, and to manage capital improvements and capital renewal activities on lines where Amtrak “State-Supported” services operate.

In addition to a governing structure, the authority will require the following capabilities to operate an effective Western Massachusetts Intercity Rail Authority:

- Ability to enter into agreements and contract for intercity service
- Eligibility to receive and manage federal and other funds
- Ability to manage risk through liability limitations and purchase of insurance

The Authority would need to establish the resources and support staff to develop, manage and oversee the service. The Authority would need the ability to administer large capital investment programs. Familiarity with federal capital grant programs and procedures would be essential. Legal support, accounting, bills payable, receivables, payroll, and human resources support are all functions that would need to be established.



Establishing a new authority would be significant effort, however the benefits of establishing a Western Massachusetts Intercity Rail Authority would provide the mission focused effort necessary to implement a major new passenger rail service. An entity focused solely on passenger rail service in Western Massachusetts will ensure the resulting service will meet the transportation needs of the region.

# CPTC WEBINAR SERIES - 2021



The CPTC Webinar Series is a series of workshops focused on core topics that will be offered beginning in November of 2021. Each workshop is sponsored by a regional planning agency. The fee is \$20 per workshop. The workshops run for approximately 2 hours, including a question and answer period. This series replaces our traditional Fall Workshops this year.

Registration is open. CPTC registration closes 48 hours before the workshop begins. We will email the Zoom registration link approximately 24 hours before the class begins. Access requires a brief Zoom registration for attendance purposes. We encourage online payment however we will accept checks. More information is at the bottom of this page regarding checks, refunds and registration.

## Upcoming Workshops

### 1. Fair Housing Laws - 211110

- **Date:** Wednesday, November 10, 2021, 6:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

Fair housing laws regulate the development, leasing, buying and selling of real estate, as well as state and municipal housing programs, and aspects of municipal land use. This module will describe how land use regulations have been (and continue to be) used to exclude groups from specific neighborhoods and properties, and provide a detailed overview of federal and state laws intended to prevent discrimination and promote equity in housing. A special focus will be on the role of the municipality in enforcing a commitment to fair housing, and the potential consequences of not doing so.

- **Presenter:** Jenny Raitt, Director of Planning & Community Development, Town of Arlington
- **Sponsor:** Pioneer Valley Planning Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## 2. Fair, Defensible Land Use Decisions - 211115

- **Date:** Monday, November 15, 2021, 6:00 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Credit:** CPTC level 1
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

This course covers some key points that will assist boards in writing clear and defensible decisions and why that is important. It describes criteria that should be contained in local zoning provisions and how they relate to the drafting of the decision and the conditions a board may impose when approving a special permit or variance application. This session covers legal and procedural requirements for conducting a public hearing and the ramifications of failure to follow procedural regulations in the decision-making process.

- **Presenter:** Ilana M. Quirk, Esq.
- **Sponsor:** Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## 3. Adopting and Revising Rules and Regulations - 211117

- **Date:** Wednesday, November 17, 2021, 5:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

Boards of appeal and planning boards frequently choose to, or are required to, adopt rules and regulations governing process, procedure and even the substance of their application reviews. While such documents are an important source of authority for boards, they also make life easier for board members and applicants by providing a clear road map for a fair and predictable process. This session will clarify which types of zoning, non-zoning and subdivision rules and regulations are mandatory and which are voluntary; describe what they can and cannot cover; and explain how they get adopted and amended. The regulatory framework for establishing fees and using consultants will also be discussed.

- **Presenter:** Laura Harbottle, AICP, Planning Consultant
- **Sponsor:** Franklin Regional Council of Governments
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## 4. Drafting Zoning Amendments - 211118

- **Date:** Thursday, November 18, 2021, 6:00 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptic.org/Register>)

While regular review and amendment of a municipality's zoning ordinance or bylaw in response to changing needs and circumstances is essential to ensuring that it remains up-to date, the process can be tricky. This course will provide a step-by-step roadmap on how to adopt and amend zoning codes in accordance with the strict requirements of G.L. 40A Section 5. Local officials and staff will gain an understanding of what type and scope of amendments are permissible; the relationship between zoning and other municipal planning documents; and the essential role of the Planning Board in the process. Tips for drafting zoning amendments, and strategies for successfully getting them passed will also be addressed.

- **Presenter:** Jonathan Silverstein, Attorney, KP Law
- **Sponsor:** Central MA Regional Planning Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptic.org/Register>)

## 5. Adopting and Revising Rules and Regulations - 211123

- **Date:** Tuesday, November 23, 2021, 6:00 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptic.org/Register>)

Boards of appeal and planning boards frequently choose to, or are required to, adopt rules and regulations governing process, procedure and even the substance of their application reviews. While such documents are an important source of authority for boards, they also make life easier for board members and applicants by providing a clear road map for a fair and predictable process. This session will clarify which types of zoning, non-zoning and subdivision rules and regulations are mandatory and which are voluntary; describe what they can and cannot cover; and explain how they get adopted and amended. The regulatory framework for establishing fees and using consultants will also be discussed.

- **Presenter:** Pam Brown, Esq., FAICP, Brown & Brown, PC
- **Sponsor:** Merrimack Valley Planning Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptic.org/Register>)

## 6. Introduction to Subdivision Control Law/ANR - 211129

- **Date:** Monday, November 29, 2021, 6:00 pm

- **Cost:** \$20
- **Credit:** CPTC level 1
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

This session addresses the purposes of the Subdivision Control Law and the Planning Board's authority under the Act. It also covers important procedural requirements and board responsibilities when reviewing subdivision and ANR plans; adoption of subdivision regulations; review of ANR plans; access issues; preliminary and definitive plans; Planning Board waivers; modifying, amending and rescinding plans; enforcement; vested rights; and zoning freezes.

- **Presenter:** Robin Stein, Attorney, KP Law
- **Sponsor:** Old Colony Planning Council
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## 7. Fair, Defensible Land Use Decisions - 211202

- **Date:** Thursday, December 2, 2021, 6:00 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Credit:** CPTC level 1
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

This course covers some key points that will assist boards in writing clear and defensible decisions and why that is important. It describes criteria that should be contained in local zoning provisions and how they relate to the drafting of the decision and the conditions a board may impose when approving a special permit or variance application. This session covers legal and procedural requirements for conducting a public hearing and the ramifications of failure to follow procedural regulations in the decision-making process.

- **Presenter:** Barbara Saint Andre, Director, Community and Economic Development, Town of Medway
- **Sponsor:** Northern Middlesex Council of Governments
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## 8. Roles and Responsibilities of Planning and Zoning Boards - 211207

- **Date:** Tuesday, December 7, 2021, 5:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Credit:** CPTC level 1
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

Join us if you are a new Board member or building inspector. This program will launch you into your role as a local official and introduce you to the functions of the two boards and the main tools of planning and zoning. This session will also include an introductory discussion of the Open Meeting, Public Records, and the Conflict of Interest Laws.

- **Presenter:** Bob Mitchell, FAICP, Consultant
- **Sponsor:** Montachusett Regional Planning Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masseptc.org/Register>)

## 9. Special Permits and Variances - 211215

- **Date:** Wednesday, December 15, 2021, 5:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Credit:** CPTC level 2
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masseptc.org/Register>)

Participants will learn about the difference between special permits and variances; the issues and criteria for decision-making; and procedural requirements. Additionally, the course will discuss who has the authority to issue special permits and variances and how judicial decisions guide the way we work with them.

- **Presenter:** Alex Weisheit, Attorney, KP Law
- **Sponsor:** Southeastern Regional Planning Economic Development District
- **Register** (<https://portal.masseptc.org/Register>)

## 10. Use of Design Review - 211216

- **Date:** Thursday, December 16, 2021 5:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masseptc.org/Register>)

Design review is a process that municipalities can undertake to improve the visual quality of structures and promote good design for the benefit of the public. This session will clarify the appropriate scope and authority for the use of design guidelines, the types of standards that can be implemented, and how that can be accomplished. The session will also explain how design review guidelines can be developed, administered and enforced in a fair and predictable manner.

- **Presenter:** Michael DiPasquale, AIA, AICP, Assistant Professor of Regional Planning, UMass Extension
- **Sponsor:** Cape Cod Commission
- **Register** (<https://portal.masseptc.org/Register>)

## 11. Working with Chapter 40B - 211221

- **Date:** Thursday, December 21, 2021 5:30 pm
- **Cost:** \$20
- **Registration:** Register (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

A workshop for municipal staff and local boards reviewing applications for projects seeking a comprehensive permit under G.L Chapter 40B. Topics will include the following: reviewing the initial application for completeness and compliance with state and local requirements; conducting a site visit; managing the public hearing process; retaining Peer Review consultants; making an informed decision consistent with the local needs provided for in the statute; drafting and issuing the Comprehensive Permit decision; and working with developers, abutters, and other interested parties.

- **Presenter:** Judi Barrett, Barrett Planning Group LLC
- **Sponsor:** CPTC
- **Register** (<https://portal.masscptc.org/Register>)

## Registration, Payment & Refunds

### Registration

Registration is through our new registration system. If you have previously used the registration system, login with your email and password. New participants will be asked to create a new account with an email address and password. Use the email address at which you wish to be contacted. Retain the password as you will need it each time you log in. If you run into problems registering contact [coordinator@masscptc.org](mailto:coordinator@masscptc.org) (<mailto:coordinator@masscptc.org>)

### Payment by Check

If you cannot make payment online you can mail in a check. Checks can be received after the workshop. The check must include the name of the participant(s) and workshop name. Due to limited access to our office, checks may take 60 to 90 days to process. Mail checks to:

CPTC c/o Urban Harbors Institute

UMass Boston

100 Morrissey Boulevard,

Boston, MA 02125

### Refunds

Honoring your commitment to attend and pay is important. However if cannot attend a workshop you can receive a refund by notifying us by email at least 48 hours before the workshop begins. If you paid online the refund will be processed within 3 days. If you paid by check it may take up to

90 days to process your refund. Please include your name, the workshop name, the email address you used to register and the method of payment. Email [coordinator@masscptc.org](mailto:coordinator@masscptc.org)  
(mailto:coordinator@masscptc.org)

  

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### Special Education

Amend the circuit breaker law to provide 100% reimbursement for costs over some amount for any very high-cost student (maybe \$100,000).

Reimburse districts for new high-cost students when the student arrives from out of state or in-state and enrolled in a collaborative or other high-cost public system, not at the end of the year. Provide adequate funding to extraordinary relief to cover these costs and reimburse at same rate as circuit breaker.

Explore having the state fund a portion of the cost of transporting students to special education programs for rural districts (in addition to circuit breaker) and other districts that have to transport students long distances – perhaps reimburse a portion of the amount over state average.

### Chapter 70/Rural Aid

Provide a new per student minimum aid for all low-capacity districts.

Significantly increase rural aid to cover the specific fixed costs of small rural school districts (but keep a means test to target districts with more limited local resources). Include it within Chapter 70 as a type of minimum aid, not subject to appropriation, so rural districts can rely on it with predictability. Work with DESE to calculate the amount and include in final commission report.

### Transportation

Reduce the walking distance for rural school transportation reimbursement to less the 1 ½ miles to reflect the lack of safe/any pedestrian infrastructure in rural areas.

Implement recommendations from previous school transportation study:

- Consider funding mechanisms that ensure that regional school districts with the greatest need (based on distance, low-income percentage, etc.) receive appropriate transportation funding.
- Incentivize regional districts to adopt practices that promote operational efficiencies.
- Expand funding for non-regional school transportation, especially those with unique transportation challenges, as they currently receive little state assistance.
- Direct DESE to conduct a feasibility study of transportation collaboratives.
- Consolidate similar existing bus routes and permit students from different schools to ride the same bus. Because districts may have varying levels of flexibility, this process should be done in consultation with members of the community.

### School Choice

DESE should conduct a student equity analysis of School Choice, Charter and Vocational Schools to analyze the impacts to “losing” districts both financially and demographically. School Choice may have

the unintended consequence of reducing equity – people with economic means (often white) choice to wealthier school districts. If true, School Choice is failing.

Note: These items were discussed and generally agreed to by the Subcommittee members. Due to time constraints, the Subcommittee as a group did not act on the version submitted

11/09/21

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## **Special Commission on Rural Schools**

### **Special Education Subcommittee Report**

The testimony heard by members of the special education subcommittee lead to the following general conclusions and recommendations.

#### **Transportation**

Costs for transportation of students with disabilities to out of district placements is typically greater due to:

- Greater distance to travel to get to available out of district programs.
- A greater percentage of students need to attend out of district programs because smaller rural districts cannot justify the cost of establishing in-district programs for very small numbers of students, and often find it difficult to staff such programs.

Costs for transportation of students with disabilities within the school district is typically greater because rural districts with more than one school building will likely locate any in-district substantially separate special education program in one school building. The distance between school buildings in a rural district can be several miles.

The Student Opportunity Act currently provides reimbursement to districts for special education transportation. Funds available for transportation reimbursement consist of the surplus funds after all circuit breaker tuition claims have been met. The only transportation costs that are reimbursable are those for claims that reach the circuit breaker threshold (4 times foundation). In rural districts many special education transportations costs do not qualify for circuit breaker reimbursement because transportation is to in-district programs or to programs at collaboratives, where tuition and transportation costs often do not meet the circuit breaker cost threshold.

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11/09/21

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### **Transportation Recommendation:**

Explore state funding of a portion of the cost of transporting students to special education programs for rural districts (in addition to circuit breaker) and other districts that have to transport students long distances. Maybe look specifically at in-district. Perhaps reimburse a portion of the amount over the per pupil state average.

### **Staffing**

In cases where districts have a small number of students who need support from specialized personnel such as a Board Certified Behavior Analyst, there may only be a need for a part-time employee. Finding someone in a high demand field to take a part-time position is nearly impossible, even after exploring options for contracting with Educational Collaboratives. Districts end up making the decision to hire 1.0 FTE.

There is a scarcity of community based resources for students and their families in rural communities. Rural residents often do not have access to counseling and other support services in their communities. Traveling to a larger community for these services can be difficult or impossible due to lack of public transportation, particularly for families who are economically disadvantaged. As a result, rural districts have an increased need to provide services to students in the school setting. Rural districts have created increased numbers of positions in an attempt to fill this void of services.

Passing the MTEL can be a disincentive to paraprofessionals and others who might seek licensure as special education teachers.

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11/09/21

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### **Staffing Recommendations:**

Increased funding for rural school districts is needed to account for:

- the need to employ staff members to provide services such as counseling within the school district, to provide access that students cannot get in the community.
- the need to employ staff with specialized licensures and skill sets at 1.0 FTE, when the need is actually less than 1.0 FTE, in order to attract and retain such personnel.

Expand the current tuition incentive grant program for paraprofessionals to obtain licensure as special educators (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/paraprofessional-teacher-preparation-grant-program>) to include general educators seeking additional licensure as special educators.

Develop assessments that can be used as an alternative to MTEL, or, develop licensure criteria that will supersede passing the MTEL.

### **Out of District Placement Costs**

Students who require very expensive placements can have a devastating impact on a school district/municipal budget, if the district is not able to plan ahead for the costs of the placement. With relatively small district and municipal budgets it can be nearly impossible to absorb such an expense once the fiscal year has begun. This is particularly challenging when students move into Massachusetts from out of state due to lack of cost sharing requirements between districts.

When increases for tuition for private special education schools are granted by DESE, the increased tuition rate is often approved after the beginning of the fiscal year and instituted retroactively. Rural districts can find it difficult to absorb

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11/09/21

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the increased tuition rates for high cost placements because they have not planned for the increased tuition in the current fiscal year budget.

The inability of districts to create specialized substantially separate programming for small numbers of students who need such programs contributes to a greater percentage of students needing to attend expensive out of district placements.

### **Out of District Placement Costs Recommendations**

Reimburse districts for new high-cost students when the student arrives from out of state for the first fiscal year that the student is enrolled. Provide adequate funding to extraordinary relief to cover these costs and reimburse at the same rate as circuit breaker.

Reimburse districts for new students moving in from other districts in cases where the move-in law does not apply.

Reimburse districts for high cost placements before the end of the school year. Consider the feasibility of a quarterly cycle for circuit breaker reimbursement.

Amend the circuit breaker law to provide 100% reimbursement for costs) for any very high-cost (over \$100,000) student placement.

Explore the possibility of changing the cycle of increasing tuition rates for private day schools. Could approval take place in one fiscal year, but tuition increases take effect on July 1 of the following fiscal year, thereby allowing districts time to plan and budget for increased costs?

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**11/08/21**

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## **Special Commission on Rural School Districts**

### **Regionalization and Shared Service Subcommittee report**

The Regionalization Subcommittee adopted the overall goal of its work to be to improve student opportunities and outcomes. Regionalization **may** be one way to meet that goal. The primary issues considered with rural districts by this Subcommittee were twofold:

1. Declining enrollments: Declining enrollments offer less opportunity for students simply because there are not enough students to, for instance, warrant a class offering, or populate a team or group.
2. Insufficient financial resources: Districts with declining enrollment frequently are in municipalities facing fiscal stress. In these districts limited financial resources limit funding for specialized courses or expanded curriculum like AP courses in high schools or special courses, such as music, art, and gym in elementary schools.

The Subcommittee also recognized that due to factors such as large geographic areas, hilly terrain, limited transportation options (and correspondingly long transportation times), that regionalization may not be feasible in all instances and, furthermore, it may not address the insufficient financial resources problem in the long term if enrollments continue to decline. Regionalization may buy some time but may not be the overall solution if enrollments in rural school districts continue to decline. It might be considered “kicking the can down the road.”

Furthermore, the Subcommittee acknowledged the huge impact that the large amounts of state-owned conservation land, which are removed from the property tax rolls, have on small rural towns’ ability to finance schools. This factor, combined with the limited economic development potential in many small rural towns, led the Subcommittee to conclude that while regionalization, shared services, and additional collaborative efforts should be pursued to improve student opportunities and outcomes, additional financial support, a rural factor, will likely be needed to sustain rural schools in the long term.

#### **REGIONALIZATION**

The Subcommittee focused its work on incentives to provide for regionalization and disincentives to overcome which are barriers to regionalization.

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### **Incentives to Provide**

1. Enhanced support from the Department of Education for Regionalization Effort

Regionalization efforts require specialized knowledge and extensive time. A state-level position dedicated to fostering regionalization efforts would demonstrate the Department of Education’s commitment to regionalization efforts and likely increase the success of regionalization efforts. This position would assemble the requisite data, analyze that data, and serve as a ready resource to regionalization efforts.

2. Enhancements to the Department of Education’s School District Regionalization Grant Program

The Department of Education’s School District Regionalization Grant Program is a valuable source of funding to enable regionalization committees conduct the necessary work to make informed decisions about regionalizing.

Currently this is offered as a one year grant, ending June 30<sup>th</sup>, at the end of the fiscal year. In recent years, due to the uncertainty of the state budget adoption, this grant program has not been able to commence until late into the fiscal year. This leaves a short time to conduct the work.

Regionalization requires a multi-year planning process. The uncertainty securing grants for consecutive years also hinders a regionalization planning process. This grant program would be enhanced if it were a 3 year award with a total award in the \$300,000 to \$500,000 range. An annual review process could be built in to gauge progress, with the subsequent year’s award contingent on progress being made.

3. Enhanced Data Analysis Tools to Assist Regionalization Committees

The Department of Education collects numerous data sets on a wide range of items. Some of this data is not readily accessible to Regionalization Committees. While Department of Education employees are helpful to assist with this data, regionalization efforts would be enhanced if more tools, like the DART tool, were prepared to allow regionalization committee the ability to clearly determine the impacts of regionalization on a wider range of data sets.

4. Long Term Assistance to Regionalization Committee

After a Regionalization Committee has conducted its initial planning work and has embarked on implementation, there is still much work to do with the



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day-to-day business of the transition. School personnel would be expected to perform much of this work but would need to do this in addition to their normal work. Long term support and assistance over time (3-5 years) is needed from an outside source to monitor and assist with the regionalization transition.

5. Assistance to Deal with Unused School Building

Regionalization can lead to some school building becoming unnecessary for educational use. This can create a financial burden on towns if there is still building debt. In these instances, the state should consider relieving the municipalities of all remaining financing debt burden.

Unused former school buildings are frequently not compatible for non-school use and the frequently become “white elephants” for municipalities. Assistance is needed to assist towns planning for school reuse and the assist towns with retrofitting buildings for some other use.

6. Assistance to Align Staff Salaries and Benefits

Regionalizing districts will most often have significant differences between salaries and benefits. To incentivize regionalization efforts, financial support should be provided to equalize those differences and not transfer added costs to municipalities. Long term financial support should be provided if equalized salaries are raised to the salary level of the highest paying district.

7. Assistance to Maintain Staff Positions

One of the greatest barriers to regionalization efforts is the threat of the loss of jobs. To incentivize regionalization efforts, financial support should be provided to maintain all staff positions for a defined period and let staff changes occur through attrition.

8. Assistance to Cover Transitional Costs

Regionalization efforts are likely to result in one-time transitional costs, for such items as IT alignment, administrative alignment, and increased transportation costs. To incentivize regionalization effort, support should be provided for one-time transitional costs.

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**11/08/21**

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## 9. New School Building Grants

Many school buildings across the Commonwealth need repair or replacement and do not meet current educational needs. Increased funding is needed for the school building program. Additional funding for school buildings could be built in as an incentive for districts to regionalize.

### **Disincentives to Overcome**

#### 1. Governance and Funding of Regional Districts

The current system of multiple municipal boards, School Committees, Select Boards, Finance Committees in multiple municipalities all having an important role in the financing of regional districts is an administrative burden for administrative personnel. The current town by town budget regional budget approval process contributes to uncertainty to the entire budgetary process where one town negative vote can derail an entire budget process. A more direct funding and governance approach to regional districts is needed.

#### 2. Loss of Chapter 70 funding

Chapter 70 aid projections for the Six Town Region (Gill Montague / Pioneer Valley) regionalization effort indicated a significant decrease in funding from a combined district versus separate districts. The six-towns would receive less Ch 70 aid than as separate districts. This reduction in funding is a disincentive to pursue further regionalization. No loss of Chapter 70 funding from regionalization efforts is needed.

#### 3. Hold Harmless Aid

Districts with declining enrollment receive a significant portion of hold harmless aid which become important elements of the district's budget. The threat of the loss of this aid is a disincentive to regionalization. A way to allow districts to carry over hold harmless aid to a regional district is needed to stabilize municipal costs.

#### 4. School Choice

The topic of School Choice is extremely complicated, but it can serve as a disincentive to regionalization efforts. School choice-in districts, generally wealthier districts with higher educational performance, can “afford” to accept students at a discounted rate to get a marginal return on investment

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to fill their classrooms. Municipalities in these districts can generally afford to pay higher costs with this marginal return, hence there is no incentive to regionalize. Conversely, choice-out districts, generally poorer with lower education performance suffer the economic consequences. Changes to the School Choice legislation to limit choice to an intra-district policy could be studied to eliminate one barrier to regionalization efforts.

### **SHARED SERVICES**

Shared services can result in cost savings and efficiencies and may advance collaborative relationships among districts that might facilitate future regionalization strategies. While savings may be meaningful, they will not fully resolve the funding challenges facing rural schools.

### **Incentives to Provide**

#### **1. Assistance to Support Shared Services**

Many shared service arrangements result in one, possibly already over-worked, employee taking on an entirely new set of responsibilities from a new school or district. Without adequate support services these arrangements can lead to decreased efficiencies and employee dissatisfaction or burnout. Additional financial incentives could be provided to districts sharing services to provide support services.

#### **2. Assistance to Identify Potential Shared Service Opportunities and Facilitate Their Implementation**

It is likely that more shared services work could be done but identifying those opportunities and facilitating their implementation frequently presents extra work for school officials with limited expertise in these arrangements. A state-level position, with expertise in shared services, to proactive research potential arrangements and facilitate their implementation would likely increase the use of them.

### **Disincentives to Overcome**

#### **1. Collective Bargaining Agreement**

Implementing certain shared services may require changes to collective bargaining agreements. Assistance to identify which shared services fall into this category and to engage in discussions about how to achieve desired changes reportedly requires substantial lead time for planning and negotiation

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**11/08/21**

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### **COLLABORATIVES**

Educational collaboratives may reduce education costs while improving various school capacities. Collaboratives may enable schools to save money, maintain local control over education functions, preserve existing school district structures, improve educational services for districts of all sizes, pool resources, eliminate duplication, and streamline other services.

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Recommendations:

- Create a position(s) in the Department of Education to exclusively work on regionalization, shared service and new collaborative efforts including:
  - Direct support to regionalization planning committees, including the creation of data tools (templates) and data analysis
  - Support to identify potential shared services possibilities and facilitate their implementation.
  - Support to arrange and sustain newly formed collaborative / regionalization efforts
- Change the Department of Education’s School District Regionalization Grant Program to a 3 year grant award with an award of not less than \$500,000.
- Create a strong financial package to incentivize regionalization efforts to include:
  - Full reimbursement of one-time transition costs, such as technology infrastructure, administrative alignment, and transportation costs
  - Full reimbursement of salaries and benefit costs to adjust for disparities between combining schools / districts to create a new pay scale and benefits package
  - Financial assistance to maintain staff positions for a period of 5 years
- Change Chapter 70 to ensure no decline of Chapter 70 funding from regionalized versus separate districts
- Create a program to address school building in districts undergoing regionalization to include:
  - Possible incentives for new school building grants for regionalizing schools
  - Consideration of elimination of any remaining dept on school buildings that need to be closed due to regionalization
  - Funds for municipalities to re-purpose school buildings closed due to regionalization

## RURAL SCHOOLS COMMISSION - Transportation Subcommittee Recommendations

11/09/2021

Transportation is an obstacle to learning opportunities for students who attend rural schools with declining enrollments.

We believe the adoption of the following recommendations will assist in removing many of those obstacles.

### Schools/Districts

1. **Appropriate/direct additional funds to enable every rural school district to purchase/maintain a handicap accessible van or vans.**

Rationale: This would help some rural school districts transport special education and regular ed students for Vocational-Technical opportunities, co-curriculars and Early College access at our Commonwealth's Community Colleges.

2. **Appropriate/direct additional funds to offer qualified drivers additional work beyond their driving duties at the schools or within the town.**

Rationale: The Commonwealth could provide incentives for individuals to join the bus driver workforce through targeted funding for districts to provide full time employment rather than less attractive part time work. (It could expediate RMV turnaround time for the required Class D school operators' licenses.

### DESE

3. **Designate DESE to create a statewide list of approved/pre-qualified transportation vendors who will provide transportation to rural school districts.**

Rationale: As we do with other procurements, rural districts could turn to this list knowing that the basis of their quotes meets with DESE approval. This will help with access to bids as well as oversight of contract language which harms access to transportation.

4. **Reconsider Amend the special education regulations under 603 CMR 28.00 so that the durational limit of one hour each way applies for in-district trips only.**

Rationale: The mandated travel time limits for special education students established several decades ago fails to recognize the complete transformation of today's travel patterns. The increase of vehicular traffic has complicated access to appropriate special educational services across the Commonwealth in cost and time. It also effectively prohibits cost-effect measures to pick up students along the route to these special ed schools and collaboratives.

5. **Reimburse as an eligible reimbursement transportation where the path to and from school is on a documented danger roadway.**

**Rationale:** In instances where a School District is required to provide regular education transportation for a student whose home is less than 1.5 miles from her/his school and where the home is on a documented dangerous roadway, the cost to provide such transportation by the School District will be eligible for regular education transportation reimbursement by the Commonwealth (DESE).

### Legislative

6. **Establish and fully fund a Rural School Transportation Reimbursement Account.**

Rationale: Using the prior year's October 1<sup>st</sup> numbers for Rural School Districts falling in priority levels 1 through 3, the Legislature would have accurate funding figures from DESE to expand eligibility to these school districts with exceptional transportation challenges. (Regional rural school districts in Levels 1-3 could not "double-dip".

7. **Fully fund Line Item 7035-0007 which provides for reimbursement for Non-resident Pupil Transportation reimbursement.**

Rationale: This would provide significant financial relief for rural communities by lifting the burden of chronic underfunding of this item. The line item is defined as "For reimbursements to cities, towns, regional vocational or county agricultural school districts, independent vocational schools, or collaboratives for certain expenditures for transportation of non-resident pupils to approved vocational-technical programs of any regional or county agricultural school district, city, town, independent school, or collaborative under [section 8A of chapter 74](#) of the General Laws."

8. **Amend Chapter 71, Section 7C of the Massachusetts General Laws to allow for more competition in the school transportation vendor contract process.**

Rationale: In both MGL and Federal Code Title 49-Transportation, Part 605.11, Regional Transit Authorities are precluded from providing transportation to school districts when private vendors are available. Waivers specifically reference urban communities. We have reached out to US DOT staff to seek an understanding why rural communities would not be eligible.



## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Delegates and Alternates, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

**FROM:** Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director

**DATE:** November 24, 2021

**RE:** **October 2021 Assistance Activities**

This report highlights technical assistance provided by BRPC staff for October 2021. This assistance was in response to requests identified in the Board/Organization column. Responses were supported by local assessment or grant funds, if available and permitted by the funding agencies. The purpose of this report is to inform municipal officials about how local assessment funds are used and indicate the types of local and technical assistance BRPC can provide. If assistance may be useful to your community, please feel free to contact us for details.

<b>Town/City/State</b>	<b>Municipal Technical Assistance</b>	<b>Board/Organization</b>
Egremont	FMA and or HMPG potential application for Prospect Lake dam repairs	Select Board
Lee	Reviewed grant requirements and discussed pre-application	Lee Historical Commission
Monterey	Grant funds for Master Plan	Planning Board
North Adams	Federal Clearinghouse Review	Community Development Board
Savoy	Information technology needs assessment	Select Board
Sheffield	Buildable land and endangered species maps	Select Board
Sheffield	Neighborhood map	Assessor
<b>Assistance Recipient</b>	<b>Non-Municipal Technical Assistance</b>	<b>Organization</b>
None		