



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES Approved

Thursday, February 3, 2022

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 4:02 p.m.

Chair John Duval called the virtual 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 Administrator Kate Hill Tapia:

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 (4:15)

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Pittsfield Alternate

Kyle Hanlon, North Adams Delegate; At-Large

Others Present: Brittany Polito, iBerkshires; Barb Davis-Hassan, Lanesborough Alternate; Mary McGurn, Egremont Alternate; Christine Rasmussen Stockbridge Alternate; Sarah Satterthwaite Savoy Delegate

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager; Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator; Jennifer Scott, Epidemiologist; Andy Ottoson, Public Health Planner

Tom introduced new Public Health Program staff members: Andy Ottoson, Planner for Substance Use Disorders, and Jennifer Scott in a new position as Epidemiologist, collecting and analyzing public health data.

II. Approval Executive Committee Meeting January 6, 2022 Minutes

Malcolm Fick moved to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by Kyle Hanlon and approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

III. Financial Reports

A. January Expenditures Report

There were no questions or discussion about the report.

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

Tom reported that Berkshire Housing Development Corporation paid their outstanding invoice.

C. Line of Credit Report

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

D. Other - none

IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues - none

V. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval of Modified Personnel Pay Plan to Add a New Position

Approval was requested to modify the personnel pay plan to add a new full time position, Assistant Program Manager. When a program area team reaches more than seven, it is difficult for a Program Manager to supervise everyone adequately. The role would assist the Program Manager with those responsibilities. The new position would be a permanent addition to the pay plan. Removing the Assistant position if a team reduces to fewer than seven members has not been discussed.

Sheila Irvin moved to approve modification of the personnel pay plan to add Assistant Program Manager as a new position. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Approval of Two New Personnel Policies

Approval was requested to add two new personnel policies, the Massachusetts Small Necessities Leave Act and the Massachusetts Domestic Violence Leave Act. The policies are required once BRPC employs 50 or more employees.

Kyle Hanlon moved to approve the addition of two new personnel policies, the Massachusetts Small Necessities Leave Act and the Massachusetts Domestic Violence Leave Act. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

C. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program within the Division of Local Services

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program within the

Division of Local Services and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant application will assist the towns of Savoy, and possibly Windsor and Washington in establishing a shared Town Administrator and potentially other shared services or governance possibilities. The amount requested is still being determined but will likely be about \$100,000. There is no BRPC match required. Staff lead is Community Planner Cara Farrell, cfarrell@berkshireplanning.org.

Malcolm Fick moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Efficiency and Regionalization Grant Program within the Division of Local Services and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. Buck Donovan seconded the motion. It was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

D. Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts (MCLA) National Endowment for the Arts Grant Application Fiscal Agent Request

Tom asked for approval to allow BRPC to be the fiscal agent for MCLA's application to work with art institutions to enhance MCLA's arts education learning program. They need a different fiscal agent because MCLA already has a National Endowment for the Arts application in progress, and only one application at a time is permitted.

All agreed that Tom may proceed but the actual vote was tabled until the topic can be posted on the agenda for the next meeting on March 3, 2022.

VI. Committee Reports

A. Environmental Review Committee (ERC)

The Environmental Review Committee met on January 10, 2022. The main topic was the ENF review of the Lenox Valley Waste Transfer Facility. The draft unapproved meeting minutes and the comment letter submitted to MEPA were in the meeting materials.

ERC Committee Chair Roger Bolton moved to approve the comment letter. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion, and the letter was approved by roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, CJ Hoss, René Wood, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

Roger said this review brought to light the need for demolition and construction waste disposal services in the county and its potential for economic development. The idea was passed to Laura Brennan and the CEDS committee.

Tom reported that BRPC submitted an expression of interest through Community One Stop to develop a county-wide solid waste plan.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

Committee chair Kyle Hanlon reported that the Comprehensive Economic

Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee met on January 12, 2022. Topics included a report on CARES Act funding work, Benchmarks, technical assistance to municipalities and businesses, resiliency planning and descriptions of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures' work, and the process that CEDS needs to start for the next five-year plan. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were in the meeting packet.

Kyle noted the significance of Berkshire County's approval as an Economic Development District (EDD) mentioned in the Executive Director's report. He especially thanked Laura Brennan, BRPC's Economic Development Program Manager, and BRPC staff for making this happen. The process started in 2011, stalled, and then took two plus years. The designation recognizes Berkshire County's municipalities' demonstrated enthusiasm and competence in partnering with one another and EDA to pursue regional economic growth. It gives access to financial resources to staff economic development activities and support communities' infrastructure projects. Before this designation, the county was not eligible for some EDA funding since the county was not considered a "distressed" community.

John suggested that Tom visit Select Board meetings to explain the significance of the Economic Development District designation. Tom agreed and noted that BRPC sent thank you letters to communities that wrote support letters for the application.

Tom asked which towns were meeting in person. Adams, Lanesborough and Savoy are. Savoy and Stockbridge switched back to remote. Dalton, Great Barrington and Lee are remote-only. Egremont's board members are in person and the public connects via Zoom.

C. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee met on January 13, 2022. The main agenda item was to determine how to pursue housing as the educational topic for future Commission meetings. Draft unapproved subcommittee minutes were distributed with the agenda and materials packet. The committee will meet before the next Commission meeting and determine topics for the next two Commission meetings.

René Wood noted that the housing discussion at the full January Commission meeting was lively and engaging. Housing success stories will be the main topic at the March meeting.

Tom reported that receipt of questions for statewide candidates has been slow. He will follow up with René.

D. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The MPO met on January 18, 2022. The agenda items were approval of a TIP amendment related to BRTA and their preventive maintenance, operating expenses, bus replacement, and fare collection improvements, a report about

the TIP development process, a presentation on Safety Performance Measure targets, and approval to adopt the statewide safety performance measure targets. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were in the packet.

E. Other - none

VII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated 1/1/2022 – 1/31/2022

- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Hancock - \$1,050
- Williamstown – Housing Needs Assessment - \$15,000
- Adams - Zoning Support for Housing and Housing Choice Designation - \$30,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

- We are not aware of any grants and contracts not received.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

The BTI Board approved an amendment to the agreement with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission to increase the amount for the COVID-19 Pediatric Clinics from \$10,000 to \$11,335.21.

C. Economic Development District Designation

As reported under the CEDS committee above, after many years, the Economic Development Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce approved BRPC's request for designation as an Economic Development District (EDD). This designation provides additional resources for economic development planning activities and facilitates Berkshire communities' access to EDA grant programs. Economic Development Program Manager Laura Brennan is the main contact, lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org, and was commended for her efforts in shepherding this application through a lengthy and complicated process.

D. Cyber Security Assessment and Training

BRPC applied for and was selected to participate in a Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Services & Security cybersecurity awareness training program to improve cybersecurity knowledge. Over the year, the training includes an assessment, five training sessions, and occasional emails to @berkshireplanning.org recipients to test one's ability to detect phishing. The training used to be just for municipalities but opened up to regional planning agencies.

E. Proposed Legislation on Gravel Roads

Tom submitted testimony in support of H 3411, An Act Relative to Unpaved Roads, at a recent hearing of the Joint Committee on Transportation. This legislation would establish a working group focused on collecting data on unpaved roads across the Commonwealth and evaluating safe and efficient

maintenance and improvement practices for dirt and gravel roads. At the time of the meeting, it wasn't known if the committee reported the bill out favorably.

F. Community One Stop for Growth Grant Portal

Following up on Tom's presentation at the January Commission meeting, below are upcoming Community One Stop for Growth Grant portal programs:

- Webinar 1: One Stop Overview Webinar – Tuesday, February 1, 10:00 a.m.
- Webinar 2: One Stop Application Guidance Webinar – Thursday, February 3, 10:00 a.m.
- Webinar 3: Technology Webinar – Recording posted Tuesday, February 8
- MassDevelopment will have an instructional Commonwealth Places webinar about applying as part of the Community One-Stop. Register here: [Commonwealth Places – Community Project Funding | MassDevelopment](#)

G. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in January.

There will be a Western Mass municipal conference on April 9 in Easthampton for small-town municipal leaders.

René asked if others were aware that the Governor's budget includes a 20% cut to school transportation funding, bringing Chapter 70 down to 70% (when established, it was supposed to be 100% funded). For Sheffield, this is a loss of \$200,000. It underscores no rural factor in the education formula despite Senator Hind's efforts. If the Legislature doesn't fund something, the cost has to be "absorbed by the populace." Tom is hopeful that the Legislature will add it back into the budget.

Roger suggested a question for candidates related to this topic. René also reported that Berkshire Hill's transportation contract is increasing 30%, and Sheffield's might too.

John noted that school districts' health care costs are rising 8%.

H. District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA)

The DLTA contract was received, but there is still no official Notice to Proceed. BRPC sent out the solicitation. Responses are due March 4.

I. COVID-19 Rapid Test Kits

Although several communities expressed interest, there was not enough interest to get a good rate for a bulk purchase (7,500 tests.) In addition, the CommBuys procurement was complicated. It was unlikely the communities would have received the kits soon enough to influence the Omicron surge. In addition, the increased availability of the tests and the insurance reimbursement reduced the urgency for them.

J. COVID-19 in Berkshire County

René asked if BRPC had information on the state of COVID-19 for the county. Tom said that numbers are going down but not as quickly as the rest of the state.

VI. Old Business

A. Office Space Update

Work on the interior of our BRPC's new office space started. Window replacements may be done this week. Early March is the targeted occupancy date.

Tom has continued to relax the at least two days in the office requirement for a few more weeks. It looks like the Omicron surge is passing, and we will continue to re-evaluate. Given that there is some disruption from the office construction, Tom may wait until most of the renovation is complete before requiring staff return to the office.

B. State Election Candidate Questions

Tom is compiling questions to send to candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and State Auditor.

C. Other - none

VII. New Business

A. March Commission Meeting

The following item needs to be on the agenda:

- Success stories of housing development projects
- Other suggestions - none

B. Other - none

C. Adjournment

René Wood motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:52 p.m., seconded by Sheila Irvin, unanimously approved.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of January 6, 2021, Executive Committee Meeting
- January Expenditures Report
- January Receivables Report
- January Line of Credit Report
- Proposed Changes to the Personnel Pay Plan
- Proposed Small Necessities Leave Act Policy
- Proposed Domestic Violence Leave Act Policy
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the January 10, 2022 meeting of the Environmental Review Committee
- Lenox Valley Waste Transfer Facility ENF MEPA Comments
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of January 12, 2022, Comprehensive Economic

- Development Strategy Committee Meeting
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of January 13, 2022, Commission Development Committee Meeting
 - Economic Development District Designation Letter
 - Press Release – Economic Development District Designation
 - Support letter for H 3411, An Act Relative to Unpaved Roads