



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201
T: (413) 442-1521 · F: (413) 442-1523
TTY: 771 or (800) 439-2370
berkshireplanning.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, April 7, 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 4:10 pm.

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

CJ Hoss, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Pittsfield Alternate

René Wood, Commission Development Chair, Sheffield Alternate (left 5 pm)

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

Others Present: Nancy Socha, Stockbridge Delegate; Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Alternate; Brittany Polito, iBerkshires; Shaw Israel Izikson, Country Journal; Ann Krawet, Becket Alternate

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager; Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator; Anuja Koirala, Principal Transportation Planner; Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager; Lydia Shulman, Public Health Alliance Coordinator

II. Approval Executive Committee Meeting March 3, 2022 Minutes

René Wood moved to approve the minutes of the March 3, 2022 meeting. The motion was seconded by CJ Hoss and approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

III. Financial Reports

A. March Expenditures Report

Tom explained that the Barr Foundation funds the Berkshire Education Task Force project (now called the Berkshire Education Resource K-12) Portrait of a Graduate. Line 15987 notes Michigan Technological University as a consultant. Their work is for the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership.

Computer equipment purchases are based on best business practices, and the lowest price, and Amazon usually is the supplier.

René Wood moved to approve the March Expenditures Report, and Roger Bolton seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the report from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

B. Accounts Receivable Report & Assessments

The five over 90 days receivables were paid or are about to be paid.

C. Line of Credit Report

No activity.

D. Other (For information only) – none.

IV. Delegate & Alternate Issues - none

V. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities Program within the Environmental Protection Agency

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to EPA's Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements for \$465,589.22. The project period is three years. If funded, the project will expand indoor and outdoor air monitoring opportunities for all Berkshire County residents, especially the County's most vulnerable populations. BRPC and partners will engage Berkshire County communities containing EJ (Environmental Justice) populations to obtain outdoor air sensors, equitably and collaboratively site them, build capacity for ongoing community air quality monitoring, and disseminate indoor air sensors to low-income households making energy efficiency upgrades, namely weatherization and heat pump adoption. Indoor and outdoor sensor deployment will be accompanied by extensive community outreach, and municipalities and local groups will utilize data to guide regional planning initiatives. There is no BRPC match required. The staff lead is Environmental & Energy Planner Emily Lange, elange@berkshireplanning.org.

This is a new funding source. The emphasis on environmental justice communities is important. There may be an opportunity to collect the data and relate it to the rest of the river clean-up.

René Wood moved to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to EPA's Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements for \$465,589.22. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

B. Approval of Comments on the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority's

(BRTA) Proposed Service Changes 2022

Approval was requested to submit comments to the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Proposed Service Changes 2022. The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority evaluates the performance of its bus routes and other services every few years to ensure it provides the best transportation options possible with limited funding. BRPC's proposed comments (distributed in the meeting materials and expanded on by René Wood) are general and specific to each Route for the proposed service changes identified by BRTA.

The public comment period closes on 4/16. There were two virtual and two in-person meetings at the Intermodel Center. Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala attended one of the meetings that had three participants.

René commented that she is on the BRTA Advisory Board as Sheffield's representative. She expressed concerns about BRTA's process and their exclusion of BRPC Transportation staff's expertise from their discussions. BRPC's Simon's Rock intern Tate Coleman, who is doing his thesis on this topic, asked for route data and four weeks later has not received it. René wants BRPC to go on record with concerns about the impact of route changes, especially for economic justice communities. There is concern that BRPC's input about the efficiency of routes is ignored. Transportation is essential for rural communities like the Berkshires so residents can get from town to town. It was difficult to do the survey; it was hard to find meeting details and how to submit comments. Decisions seem to be made before going before the Advisory Board.

René Wood moved to approve the submission of comments on the Berkshire Regional Transit Authority Proposed Service Changes 2022. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

René asked that the Pilot program be put on a future agenda. There are concerns about the pricing. BRTA is a member of the MPO. It was agreed to invite the BRTA Administrator to present on the Pilot program at the MPO and or the Commission.

C. Approval to Amend the Salary and Performance Review Policy

Approval was requested to amend the Salary and Performance Review Policy to formalize a 6-month performance review of newly hired employees and enable a salary adjustment should that employee perform at a higher level than initially anticipated. BRPC usually employs at the low end of the range, especially if someone makes a career shift and does not have relevant experience. BRPC's merit-based salary policy is based on the previous year's salary. When new employees start at the low end of the salary range, increasing salaries commensurate with work performance is difficult. This change would allow an adjustment should their initial performance warrant it.

René Wood made the motion to table the topic until the committee could see

the red-lined document with the proposed changes., seconded by Malcolm Fick. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

D. Other - none

VI. Committee Reports

A. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDS) met on March 16, 2022. Topics included work being conducted through CARES Act funding, reports on the Benchmarks work, technical assistance to municipalities and businesses, and resiliency planning. There was a presentation about the Greylock Glen project, which is making impressive progress in securing funding for infrastructure improvements. New CEDS goals and objectives were also discussed. Roger suggested the Greylock Glen project be on a Commission agenda. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were distributed in the meeting materials.

B. Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The MPO met on March 22, 2022, focusing on the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for the next five years. Topics included a vote to submit a TIP amendment about a cost increase for Route 23/41 in Egremont, a discussion about the 2023-2027 TIP, a presentation about national traffic safety initiatives, and approval of an Administrative Adjustment to the UPWP. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were distributed in the meeting packet.

There was discussion about state routes, the maintenance burden for small communities, and the resulting different road conditions. Clete noted that the state's Municipal Pavement Program was created to help municipalities with state numbered routes' maintenance. He is seeking clarification on how MassDOT will make selections. The first year's \$15 million is not a lot of money. This program seems better than having to go the TIP route. This will be a topic at an MPO meeting, so members understand how the program works. There is funding for Scenic Byways. It is unlikely the state would take back maintenance of state numbered routes.

C. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on March 23, 2022. Topics were the ratification of comments on the Net-Zero Energy Code, a presentation about the Williams College low carbon heating efforts, and a discussion of short-term rentals and the issues municipalities are addressing. There are no great examples yet of how to handle short-term rentals. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were distributed in the meeting materials. The April meeting will have a utility provider present on moving toward more clean and electric power for buildings and single-purpose vehicles. It isn't clear what will happen with the Open Meeting law, but this committee is concerned about helping municipalities be prepared for hybrid meetings. An ISO New England

(they monitor New England's grid) representative will be at the April 27 meeting.

D. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee will meet on April 12, 2022, at 4:30 pm. The main meeting agenda is to form a Nominating Committee to recommend FY2023 Officers to the Commission on May 19, 2022. The Nominating Subcommittee will meet after the Commission Development Committee.

E. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee did not meet in March. However, an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Kelsey Road over Dry Brook Bridge Replacement Project in Sheffield, Massachusetts (the Project) is being reviewed. The project replaces the structurally deficient, hydraulically undersized bridge that carries Kelsey Road over Dry Brook. BRPC staff do not think comments are warranted. If comments are warranted, the Executive Committee will need to approve them or authorize the Environmental Review Committee to submit them since comments are likely due by April 28th, before the next Executive Committee meeting.

Roger Bolton moved to authorize the committee to submit comments, René Wood seconded. The motion was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, CJ Hoss, René Wood, and Roger Bolton.

F. Other – (for information only)

VII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 3/1/2022 to 3/30/2022

- Massachusetts Clean Energy Technology Center – EmPower - \$28,018
- Windsor – Master Plan - \$30,000
- Northampton Health Department – Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program - \$15,000
- Department of Public Health – Shared Services - \$55,022
- Williamstown – Open Space & Recreation Plan - \$15,000
- Department of Housing and Community Development - District Local Technical Assistance - \$214,214

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

The BTI Board took no action in March.

C. Staff Updates

- Brian Lavino has accepted a summer internship working on tasks related to Clean Energy planning.
- Ajay Chatha is another summer intern working on Clean Energy and

Stormwater planning tasks.

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission met with the Legislative Rural Caucus on March 7, 2022, to discuss legislative priorities for rural communities. These priorities were presented at the March 17, 2022, Commission meeting by Linda Dunlavy, RPAC Chair. The April 8 meeting will focus on future priorities for the new administration.

E. Waiver of 120 Notice Requirement

Tom received a request from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, acting through its Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) to waive the 120 Day Notice requirement for the possible acquisition of a conservation restriction on approximately 40 acres of land in the Town of Otis and approximately 130 acres of land in the Town of Sandisfield. The property is currently undeveloped open space and forest land. The proposed use for the property will be protected open space and conservation and recreation as part of DCR's Sandisfield State Forest and Mass Audubon's Cold Brook Wildlife Sanctuary. Otis and Sandisfield approved the waiver, so Tom did too. A locus map showing the property DCR is interested in was attached.

F. Assessment 2022 Transportation Innovation Conference

MassDOT has announced that this year's Transportation Innovation Conference will be held on Tuesday, May 24, and Wednesday, May 25, and will focus on MassDOT's infrastructure investment. The conference will be at the DCU Center in Worcester. A copy of the press release is at [2022 Innovation Conference](#).

René asked that BRPC staff attend the May 11 briefing on the state revolving fund (SRF) federal funding for the northeast and report back. She will send Tom the details.

G. Future of Work Commission

The Future of Work Commission, a legislative Commission established by Section 92 of An Act Enabling Partnerships for Growth (Chapter 358 of the Acts of 2020) to help chart our Commonwealth's recovery from the pandemic, released its final report. A central finding of the Commission, not surprising, is that the shape and scale of the workplace has dramatically shifted during the pandemic and will continue to do so over the next decade. The report contains recommendations in the following topic areas about how the Commonwealth, higher education system, and business community can increase the odds of success for the workers of the future in acquiring and maintaining fulfilling employment: Workforce Development and Education; Worker Benefits and Protections; Addressing Work-Adjacent Issues; Ensuring Equity and Racial Justice; and Staying Ahead of the Technology and Innovation Curve. The report can be downloaded from the Future of Work Commission (malegislature.gov).

H. MSA Western Massachusetts Municipal Conference

The Massachusetts Select Board Association will host its second Western Massachusetts Municipal Conference on Saturday, April 9, at Easthampton High School. The event will bring together regional stakeholders, including municipal officials, planning agencies, and legislators from Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire counties, to address the region's challenges. Conference goals are to promote sustainable cross-governmental partnerships across western Massachusetts, share best practices for adaptation to and mitigation of challenges facing the four counties, and advocate more effectively for the region. Information at MSA Western Massachusetts Conference (mma.org). Registration is closed at about 100 attendees.

I. Regional Housing Strategy

The final report about the regional housing strategy is available for review at Housing Regional Strategy - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (berkshireplanning.org). This report contains the recommendations briefly touched on at the Commission's March meeting.

J. Grant Workshops

BRPC, along with the other western mass regional planning agencies and western mass legislators, is co-sponsoring a series of virtual workshops for western mass officials on state grant opportunities throughout the spring of 2022. Workshops are on Tuesdays from 3 pm - 6 pm. Registering once applies to all future sessions. The first workshop is on April 12th and will focus on the One Stop for Growth suite of grants because the program has a pending deadline. Potential sessions include municipal cybersecurity grants, the influx of federal broadband money, climate resiliency opportunities, water and sewer infrastructure funding, new federal discretionary programs to fund transportation infrastructure improvements, etc. Please save the dates and [register here](#). Tom confirmed that recordings be available to those who cannot attend. Registration is required, but there is no cost.

K. Other (For information only)

VI. Old Business

A. Office Space

Moving into the new space has started. A few construction tasks remain, including a locking door to the new area. More moving is planned for Mondays, April 4th and 11th. Work on re-pointing the bricks on the exterior of the building is supposed to occur during the first two weeks of April. Hence, it is unlikely staff will work extensively in the office until April 18th as the exterior work is very noisy and irritating.

While our office is open for meetings, the Fenn Street door to the building will remain locked until at least the summer per other tenants. Visitors to the

office will need to use the call box to the left of the Fenn Street door. A staff member will remotely unlock the door. Visitors will only be able to access the office via the elevator and not by the stairs. Visitors need a code for the box in the elevator to enable the elevator to stop on the second floor.

B. Urbanized Areas

The Census Bureau released the final criteria for determining urbanized areas. BRPC submitted comments on the proposed criteria in May 2021. The impact of the changes on the region is not yet known as the Census Bureau is just beginning to create the maps of the urbanized areas. Urbanized Areas are one of the criteria for many federal grant programs. Several changes between the initial proposal and the final criteria will impact Berkshire County.

The first change is the minimum housing unit density increase from 385 to 425 housing units per square mile. This increase will decrease the areas that automatically qualify. The Census Bureau added new criteria to include areas of at least 200 housing units per square mile adjacent to the core areas. This change benefits Berkshire County and will hopefully make up for the loss of the first criteria. The final criteria change that will impact the Berkshires is reducing the qualifying population or housing units to be an urban area. Any area over 5000 people, or 2000 houses, will now be considered urban. This reduction means our smaller urban areas of Great Barrington and Lee/Lenox should remain classified as urban. The big question is if the Pittsfield urbanized area will stay above 50,000 people. This was uncertain before the 2020 census and remains uncertain due to the change in criteria. Results should be known in a few months. The Federal Register notice was attached.

C. Stretch Code Straw Proposal

The final comment letter includes the comments from the last Executive Committee meeting.

D. Other (For Information Only)

VII. New Business

A. Role with Berkshire County Selectman's Association

Tom met with Christine Hoyt, the new Chair of the Berkshire County Selectman's Association. She has some ideas about how to revitalize that organization. While BRPC worked well with the previous Chair, it was limited and ad hoc. BRPC's role could expand, for instance, to offer limited administrative support, such as managing an email distribution list. Tom asked for and got Executive Committee approval to pursue this. He also hopes to strengthen relationships with other western Massachusetts communities. This is a great opportunity to spread the word about BRPC's resources.

B. May Commission Meeting

The following are likely agenda items:

- Agency Budget
- Report of the Nominating Committee
- Transportation Documents (TIP, UPWP)
- Continuation of the Housing Topic - Organizations to assist municipalities with housing development projects.

Other possible agenda items:

- Greylock Glen -At a recent CEDS meeting, there was an informative presentation about Greylock Glen. The town recently received funding for infrastructure improvements, making this project more likely to occur sooner than later. John will follow up with Donna about presenting.
- There were no other suggestions.

C. **Other**

René shared congratulations on the excellent Berkshire Eagle article on the Housing Regional Strategy. Tom and Jonathan Butler's had a long meeting with the Editorial Board. Berkshire did a lot of work on the visuals in the report.

D. **Adjournment**

Malcolm Fick motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:23 pm, seconded by René Wood, unanimously approved.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of March 3, 2022, Executive Committee Meeting
- March Expenditures Reports
- March Receivables Report
- March Line of Credit Report
- BRTA Proposed Service Changes Comment Letter - Draft
- Salary and Review Policy 2022-04-07 - Draft
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of March 16, 2022, Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee Meeting
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of March 22, 2022, Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of March 22, 2022, Regional Issues Committee (RIC) meeting
- Exhibit A -
- Stretch Code Straw Proposal Comment Letter
- U.S. Census Urbanized Areas Final Criteria