



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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REGIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE – Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 3, 2022
via Zoom

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 4:04 pm by CJ Hoss. The meeting was recorded.

Committee Members Present

Malcolm Fick, BRPC Vice Chair
Andrew Groff, Williamstown
Kyle Hanlon, North Adams
CJ Hoss, RIC Chair, Pittsfield
Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge
Chris Rembold, Great Barrington
Eleanor Tillinghast, Mount Washington (non-Commission member)

Committee Members Absent

John Duval, BRPC Chair
Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield

BRPC Staff Present

Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager
Melissa Provencher, Environmental and Energy Program Manager

Guests/Public Present

Amanda Hamilton, Tyringham
David Wasielewski

II. Public Comments

David Wasielewski, Dalton resident and chair of the local Green committee, also representing a group called Local Power out of Williamsburg. They are trying to address waste management issues in Berkshire County and Western MA in general. Two facilities have closed recently causing issues with non-recyclable waste. Mr. Wasielewski indicated that in some cases waste is being shipped as far as North Carolina, and that it is unclear where waste is being shipped from the Hubbard Avenue facility. He shared that there are emerging technologies allowing for dealing with trash locally, and he would like to get permission to share a presentation to the Regional Issues Committee in the future. They have spoken with John Fisher at DEP who referred the Local Power group to BRPC. He has recently sent Melissa Provencher their whitepaper. She has not yet had the opportunity to share with Tom Matuszko. Melissa P. indicated that this topic has been discussed internally, particularly after a recent MEPA review. Laura B. requested an email address for follow up. CJ indicated that this may be appropriate for consideration as future topic for RIC.

Amanda Hamilton introduced herself and stated that she is interested in learning more about the work of the committee. She is the planning board delegate from Tyringham. She is particularly interested in environmental matters, housing, and public transit. CJ thanked

her for participating and invited her to become involved in the committee if she is interested.

III. Approval of April 2022 Meeting Minutes

Kyle H. made a motion to approve, Malcolm F. seconded. No discussion. Minutes from April 2022 were approved via roll call vote, with Malcolm Fick abstaining.

IV. Draft Comments re: Stretch Energy Code and Specialized Municipal Opt-In Code

Members of the committee had received a copy of the draft comments prior to the Meeting. CJ invited Melissa P. to share more information. The Regional Issues Committee had originally discussed this topic when DOER had issued a straw proposal. The Commission sent comments at that time. Emily Lange, a former BRPC staff member, had developed the contents of that response. Melissa has considered our previous comments and shared that most issues were still relevant and worth reiterating. One of the earlier comments was regarding the HERS rating. They are still allowing for a higher rating, with an explanation that they currently have a stepped approach with a 5-point difference which has become slightly more stringent.

There will be virtual hearings regarding the opt-in stretch code, Melissa plans to listen to the one scheduled for August 8th. Based on what she has heard so far, consensus seems to be that it is not yet stringent enough.

She removed from our current draft comments a section regarding the tie between net-zero and the grid. The current proposal does not include the same reference. All of our remaining comments appear to be germane.

CJ H. asked about next steps in terms of process. Melissa indicated that the deadline of August 12th allows for two options: comments could be from the RIC, to be approved by the Commission later or submitted as staff comments signed by Tom Matuszko. CJ H. asked for comments or edits from committee members. Malcolm F. asked for an explanation of what HERS stands for, and the group discussed the system of looking at appliances, windows, insulation, etc. holistically to reach a home energy efficiency rating, and how that may compare with a passive house rating in the future. Christine R. reiterated concerns included in both sets of comments regarding a lack of properly trained workforce to address this topic.

CJ H. stated that he does not have anything to add to this draft and asked whether the RIC members should formally approve or allow this to be submitted as staff comments. Laura B. indicated that it would be for documentation purposes to record whether the committee endorsed the letter. Malcolm F. made a motion to approve, seconded by Kyle H. The letter was approved unanimously by roll call vote.

V. Green Communities Climate Leaders proposal

CJ H. invited Melissa P. to provide an overview of the proposal. She explained that this is generated by DOER as part of the Green Communities initiative, with comments due on the 8th of August. Comments need to be submitted via an online form, which is geared towards individual municipalities. She asked committee members to consider whether they felt BRPC should respond, in addition to encouraging municipalities to fill out the form.

The proposal describes the next phase of the Green Communities Initiative, for communities which already have the optional designation. There would be an option to be designated as a Climate Leader, with MVP planning process as a prerequisite. Adoption of the highest tier

of the stretch code would also be required. David Wasielewski indicated that the Dalton committee will be considering this but have not yet decided. This would provide access to solar funding which he feels is a good incentive.

The group discussed whether there is a benefit to BRPC responding in addition to communities. Melissa P. indicated that we have a good working relationship with DOER and have already had the opportunity to provide early feedback, and that hearing from individual communities will be most important. One of the downsides is that the benefit of Climate Leaders is the potential (not a guarantee) of future grant funding. CJ H. indicated that in terms of the decarbonization commitment, it would be important to understand what possible funding would be included. He asked that BRPC conduct outreach to encourage communities to respond, explaining the importance of responding. Malcolm F. requested that staff also share a link to the webinar during outreach. Melissa P. will send out information as discussed and will copy RIC members. She will also respond on behalf of BRPC.

Webinar link for Climate Leaders proposal: <https://vimeo.com/731070545>

Online form link for Climate Leaders proposal:

https://forms.office.com/pages/responsepage.aspx?id=Fh2GPrdIDkqYBowE2Bt7KhNNfg96OG9CICRR4bCH_JJUREgyQIA1Mlk3TTAzSE5EMFISUzFaTktJVy4u&wdLOR=c89EA2F52-38F8-4D0E-BCAA-AF2D53E4E3A8

VI. Topics for Future Consideration

CJ H. asked whether there were new topics to add to our running list. Andrew G. asked if there was anything from the end of the legislative session that should be discussed. CJ H. stated that he has heard a lot of comments regarding the inaction around economic development or housing. These items may not be relevant for RIC in terms of formal response. However, there may be a push for the legislators to come back for a special session. Melissa P. brought up the Community Compact program's additional funding, particularly the regionalization component. Laura B. has reached out to staff to learn more about when applications will open, as the website still shows FY22 information. CJ H. indicated that this may be of interest to the full Commission and asked that staff follow up on this topic and help distribute information.

Next Committee Meeting Date – either August 24th or September 28th

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 p.m.