



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, November 3, 2022

Virtual Meeting as allowed by Ch. 22 of the Acts of 2022 suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20 until March 31, 2023.

I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement

A. The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm.

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 Administrator Kate Hill Tapia:

John Duval, Chair, Adams Alternate

Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair, Gt Barrington Alternate

Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate

Rene Wood, Commission Development Committee Chair, Sheffield Alternate

Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Lee Delegate

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

Sam Haupt, At-large, Peru Delegate

Others Present: Britney Polito, iBerkshires; Nancy Socha, Stockbridge Delegate; Laura Mensi, Monterey Delegate; Barb Davis-Hassan, Lanesborough Delegate; Barb Cormier, Sandisfield Delegate

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

II. Approval Executive Committee Meeting October 6, 2022 Minutes

Rene Wood moved to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2022 meeting.

The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, and Roger Bolton. Rene Wood and Sam Haupt abstained.

III. Financial Reports

A. October Expenditures Report

From the October meeting and September report, the missing explanation for a \$31.90 Amazon payment was to pay for restroom door signs.

Rene Wood moved to accept the report as presented, and Roger Bolton seconded the motion. A roll vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

B. Accounts Receivable Report/Assessments

Tom noted that CDGB payments are a long complicated process, so they are often delayed. There are no invoices in danger of not being paid. Commission members will be called upon if help is needed with payment from their municipalities.

C. Line of Credit Report

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

D. Other (for information only) - none

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

- A.** Special Municipal Employee Status was discussed as a potential issue as some municipal positions are automatically designated and others need approval by the Select Board. Possible actions of training for Select Board members or changes to the bylaw were discussed. Tom will follow up with the Select Board Members Association.

IV. Items Requiring Action

A. Approval to Submit a Proposal to the Western Massachusetts Homeland Security Council

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a proposal (after the fact) to the Western Massachusetts Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) and approve any resulting contracts and agreements to develop a program in Berkshire County to provide IT/Cyber Security planning and support to municipalities. The program would assist with surveying municipalities' cyber security systems, conducting inventories, developing IT plans, procurement of equipment and services, and developing an affordable plan for ongoing support. The project would be in two phases: Phase 1 for 18 months and cost of \$230,000, and Phase 2 for an additional 12 months and \$150,000. Staff leads are Mark Maloy and Sandra Martin.

Rene Wood motioned to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a proposal to the Western Massachusetts Homeland Security Advisory Council (WRHSAC) and approve any resulting contracts and agreements to provide IT/Cyber Security planning and support to municipalities. Sam Haupt seconded it. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

B. Approval to Submit Grant Applications to MassCEC's EMPower Program

The Implementation Grants

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application (after the fact) to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. The proposal is to augment current funding and expand the program to other communities focusing on low-moderate income and Environmental Justice Communities. These incentives to municipalities and

community-based organizations are in addition to existing energy efficiency incentives. Funding would enable BRPC to support communities, residents, and businesses in navigating the MassSave process. This application has no BRPC match requirement. The primary staff contact is Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert.

Innovation and Capacity Building

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application (after the fact) to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. The proposed project is to explore MassSave program implementation issues further. There would be a focus on heat pumps with a two-prong approach: 1) conduct outreach and education, so homeowners feel comfortable moving forward with installation; and 2) steps toward obtaining training to increase the pool of contractors who can install heat pumps. BRPC has the option to increase funding from \$25,000 to \$50,000. If awarded \$50,000, training for contractors and further investigation of the BCAC project process are proposed. MassCEC expects that Innovation and Capacity Building Grants will serve as "seed" funding for planning innovative program models or projects. Grant recipients will then apply for an Implementation Grant for up to \$150,000. This application has no BRPC match requirement. The primary staff contact is Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert.

Rene Wood moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit grant applications (after the fact) to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

C. Approval to Submit Grant Applications to MassSave's Community First Partnership Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit grant applications to the MassSave Community First Partnership Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. BRPC would conduct marketing and outreach to increase awareness and participation in MassSave Programs, focusing on low-moderate income and Environmental Justice Communities. Incentives to municipalities and community-based organizations are in addition to energy efficiency incentives already available to residents. Funding would enable BRPC to support communities, residents, and businesses in navigating the MassSave process. BRPC is submitting the following applications with no BRPC match requirement. The primary staff contact is Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert:

- Adams and North Adams, \$25,000 each year for two years
- Lee and Great Barrington, \$25,000 each year for two years
- Lanesborough (added to the current grant for Williamstown), \$25,000 each year for two years

Robert Bolton moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit grant applications to the MassSave Community First Partnership Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Rene Wood seconded the motion. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

D. Approval to Submit a Letter of Intent and, if selected, Full Application to the Digital Equity Partnerships Program with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a Letter of Intent and, if selected, an application to the Digital Equity Partnerships Program with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. The MBI seeks to designate Partners to implement digital equity initiatives in six areas:

- Digital Literacy Initiative
- Wi-Fi Access Initiative
- Public Space Internet Modernization Initiative
- Connectivity Initiative for Economic Hardship
- Device Distribution and Refurbishment Initiative
- Education, Outreach, and Adoption

\$50 million will be funded through 10-15 partnerships. BRPC would partner with the Franklin Regional Council of Government (FRCOG) to implement digital equity activities in Berkshire and Franklin counties where residents cannot afford broadband service and or devices or lack digital equity skills. There is no BRPC match required. The staff lead is Senior Economic Development Planner Wylie Goodman.

Rene Wood moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a Letter of Intent and, if selected, an application to the Digital Equity Partnerships Program with the Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. It was approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

E. Other (for information only)

V. Committee Reports

A. Metropolitan Planning Organization

The MPO met on October 25, 2022. There was a presentation on Safe Routes to School Grant opportunities and a discussion about the Regional Transportation Plan. Draft minutes were in the meeting materials.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The CEDS committee met on October 26, 2022, approved submissions for priority projects, and reviewed public comments and the action plan. There

was also a presentation on the Homeowner Surveys. Minutes were not yet available.

Roger noted that BRPC staff leading this process, Laura Brennan and Wylie Goodman, have been tremendously effective and the final CEDS document is a remarkably good product.

C. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on October 26 but did not have a quorum. Linda Dunlavy from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG) gave an informational presentation about FRCOG and its services. Solutions to the crisis of getting staff and board volunteers for small communities will be a topic at the next meeting. Minutes from the October meeting were not yet available. Draft unapproved minutes from the 9/28 meeting were in this meeting's materials.

D. Environmental Review Committee

Roger reported that the committee decided not to review the renovation of a pond at The Clark Institute, but noted it is an eyesore and dredging will restore it to attracting wildlife.

VI. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 9/30/2022 to 10/28/2022

- North Adams - Brownfields Assessment - \$5,700
- Monterey - Municipal Vulnerability Action Grant Program - \$23,220
- Lee - Hazard Mitigation and Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness - \$27,000
- MIIA Health Benefits Trust Wellness Grant - \$5,000
- Department of Housing & Community - Housing in Berkshire County - \$150,000
- Environmental Protection Agency - Regional Brownfields Assessment 2023 - \$500,000
- Western MA Health Association - Coalition for Local Public Health - \$4,000
- Housatonic Valley Association - Berkshire Clean Cold Connected Partnership - \$50,000
- MassDOT - Coordinated Transportation Planning 2023 - \$752,120
- New England AIDS Education & Training Center - Community Research Initiative - \$26,000
- Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources - Regional Energy Planning Assistance - \$9,000
- Berkshire County Sheriff's Office - Opioid Abuse Prevention - \$25,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

- Healthy Brain Initiative - Road Map Strategist Initiative for Dementia.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

There has been no recent activity

C. Staff Updates

- Britney Danials started October 6, 2022, as an Intern with the Environmental & Energy Program (resume was attached.)
- CJ Hoss accepted the Community Planning Program Manager position and will start in December (resume was attached.)
- Andy Ottoson was appointed to the statewide Opioid Recovery and Remediation Fund Advisory Council

Open positions:

- Public Health Trainer/Inspector

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in October.

E. Passenger Rail

There was no significant activity on passenger rail efforts.

F. Auditor Bumps' report: Fulfilling the Promise of Local Aid by Strengthening State-Local Partnerships

This excellent report reviews categories of state aid and reimbursement programs, estimates of increased funding, and priorities for a stronger partnership between the Commonwealth and municipalities and school districts. Key recommendations include:

- Continue financial commitments through the Student Opportunity Act
- Dedicate full funding to overlooked categories of school transportation.
- Increase Unrestricted General Government Aid by the level of actual state revenues, as opposed to projected estimates.
- Strengthen other local aid programs to guarantee full funding for lower-income communities (including full funding for the PILOT Program).
- Recognize the financial investment needed to fund other outstanding expenses.

G. Age and Dementia Friendly Design Considerations for Physical Infrastructure

Senior Public Health Planner [Sandra Martin](#) represents BRPC on the Massachusetts Advisory Council on Alzheimer's Disease and All Other Dementias. The council's report, [Age and Dementia Friendly Design Considerations for Physical Infrastructure Report](#), provides a guide to rethinking how we plan, design, build, renovate, and maintain the Commonwealth's built environment with a focus on residents' needs as they age. Sandra is available to answer questions on this important public health topic.

H. Massachusetts Broadband Institute Consultant Pre-qualification

MBI is a quasi-public entity providing broadband service to under-served communities, mostly in Western Mass. MBI is launching the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program in Fall 2022 to enable municipalities to engage in

planning activities, develop strategic documents related to digital equity, and bridge the digital divide. The program goals are to:

- Guide municipal decision-making and investments related to services and infrastructure; and
- Prepare municipalities to apply for state or federal digital equity grants.

BRPC has applied to assist Berkshire County municipalities with digital equity planning activities and hopes most communities will want to prepare these plans. We may be able to prepare a regional plan.

I. Housing Code Amendments

The Housing Code (105 CMR 410.000) sets forth minimum state-wide housing standards under the State Sanitary Code (M.G.L. c. 111, § 127A). Local Boards of Health enforce it. After an extended process, amendments to the Code are set to take place in April 2023. The Public Health Program is learning what these amendments mean for the housing supply in Berkshire County, but there may be a significant impact. The revised code is available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/housing-code-effective-april-2023>. We anticipate training and informational sessions in the coming months.

J. Community One Stop for Growth Awards

Massworks – almost all Berkshire County applications were funded

- Cheshire Route 116 Resurfacing & Guardrails
- Clarksburg Middle Road Central Artery Project
- Great Barrington Housatonic Homeownership Project
- Hinsdale FY23 Schnopp Roads Project
- Monterey Beartown Mountain Road Reconstruction
- Otis Reservoir Road over Fall River Culvert Replacement
- Pittsfield Economic Development Authority
WSBP Site 9 Redevelopment
- Sheffield Weatogue Road Reconstruction & Drainage Resiliency

Collaborative Workspace

- Pittsfield (Berkshire Black Economic Council)
BBEC Collaborative Workspace Feasibility Study
- Pittsfield (Berkshire Innovation Center, Inc.)
BIC Co-Working Expansion Feasibility Study

Community Planning Grant Program

- Egremont Zoning for Growth & Development in Egremont
- Lee Town of Lee Master Plan

Community Planning Grants Program & Rural and Small Town Development Fund

- Lenox North Lenox Sewer Improvement/Expansion
- Rural and Small Town Development Fund
Lanesborough Berkshire Mall Water Systems and Master Plan

Underutilized Properties Program

- Great Barrington (Alander Group) 343 Main Street
- Pittsfield (A.C. Enterprises LLC/Allegro Company)
Wright Building Block
- Williamstown (Wild Soul River LLC) Wheelchair ramp

Urban Agenda Grant Program

- Pittsfield (Blackshires Community Empowerment Foundation Corp)
Blackshires Leadership Academy Fellows Program

K. Regional Transportation Plan

The RTP Survey available through mid-December. Assistance was requested to share it to help collect important community input. The interactive mapper for reporting issues is the second link.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/RTP2024>

<https://berkshire.maps.arcgis.com/apps/CrowdsourceReporter/index.html?appid=51afbc759a934a24b27e6971da50c1ee>

VIII. Old Business

A. Succession Planning

Hiring a Community Planning Program Manager should significantly improve BRPC services to communities and reduce the Executive Director's workload. It will take a few months to get CJ up to speed. An Assistant Director position description is being researched, as is how other Massachusetts regional planning agencies approach such a position.

B. Other (for information only) - none

IX. New Business

A. Possible Bylaw Amendment

Section E1.1 of the BRPC Bylaws contains the following statement: "In consultation with the committee chairs, the Chair shall appoint the members of any special and standing committees and **shall** be an ex-officio voting member of all committees."

It was proposed to change "shall" to "may" to reduce this time burden on the Chair and empower committees to meet a quorum with fewer members. The Chair would commit at the beginning of the fiscal year to committee membership, thus confirming the quorum. Another option may be a Chair's designee.

B. November Commission Meeting

The next Full Commission hybrid meeting is November 17, 2022, an open house and potluck supper are being considered so delegates and alternates can meet staff and see the new office space.

Proposed agenda:

- CEDS plan approval due December
- Potential additional topics:
- Second Homeowner survey results
 - Berkshire Funding Focus
 - Digital Equity Planning

C. Other (for information only) - none

X. Adjournment

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:10 pm, seconded by Malcolm Fick, and unanimously approved.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of October 6, 2022, BRPC Executive Committee Meeting
- October 1 2022 to November 1 2022 Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Report / Assessments
- October Line of Credit Report
- Executive Director's Memorandum
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the October 25, 2022 Metropolitan Planning Organization meeting
- Draft Unapproved Minutes of the Sept. 28, 2022, Regional Issues Committee Meeting
- Resume Britney Danials
- Resume CJ Hoss
- September Technical Assistance Memo