



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements



Welcome Community Planning Program Manager CJ Hoss!

BRPC welcomes CJ Hoss, AICP, as the new Community Planning Program Manager. This new position will lighten the load for Executive Director Tom Matuszko and provide more support to Community Planning staff. Community Planning activities have tripled in the past year. This Program area supports municipalities with master plans, open space planning, zoning bylaws, shared services, and more.

As most of you know, CJ has been Pittsfield's City Planner for the past 11 years. His work focused on modernizing land use regulations, administering the Community Preservation Act fund, and neighborhood planning. He has served as Pittsfield's alternate delegate to the Commission for almost a decade and as a member of the Executive Committee as Chair of the Regional Issues Committee. CJ has also previously worked in urban and rural communities for public and private sector entities related to development review, zoning and land use planning, environmental review, and fiscal and demographic analysis.

Originally from New York's Harlem Valley, CJ and his family have lived in Pittsfield for the past decade. Outside work, you may find him riding his bike around Pittsfield and trying to keep up with his two small children. CJ looks forward to this opportunity to broaden his commitment to the Berkshires. choss@berkshireplanning.org; 413-442-1521, ext. 44.

Grants & Opportunities

Community One Stop Expressions of Interest (EOIs) will open soon!

The Community One Stop for Growth application portal will again host 12 statewide grant programs in FY24. EOIs open in mid-December, allowing you to get your proposed project(s) in front of grant administrators BEFORE you complete a full application in the spring of 2023.

Last year, **75% of successful applicants statewide participated in and received feedback through the Expression of Interest (EOI) process.** If you would like assistance in researching One Stop opportunities, refining a project profile, or filling out an Expression of Interest form, please [CONTACT US](#) soon.

Western Massachusetts Passenger Rail Commission Public Hearing Notice
Friday, December 9, 11:00 am, Berkshire Innovation Center, 45 Woodlawn Ave, Pittsfield, MA

This is the first of six public meetings of the Commission, which are being held pursuant to §60 of Chapter 176 of the Acts of 2022. The legislature established this commission to investigate and receive public testimony concerning potential public entities with the ability to design, permit, construct, operate and maintain passenger rail service proposals from the East-West Passenger Rail Study Final Report.



Members of the public wishing to view and participate in the meeting remotely may do so by

accessing a [livestream](#) of the meeting that will be made available on the MassDOT website; additionally, if you wish to submit written testimony, please email commission staff at: Siobhan.Morrissey@mahouse.gov.

Level UP

Webinar & Workshop
Series for Nonprofits

Free webinars and in-person workshops for Berkshire County nonprofits. Offered by the Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires, in partnership with BRPC. Registration is limited to 20. Details and registration [HERE](#).

December 6, 6-7:30 pm: Creating Awareness of Your Organization Through PR & Outreach

December 8, 9:30-11:30 am: Building Awareness for Your Organization through PR & Outreach

December 13, 10:30 am -12:30 pm: Donor Cultivation (in-person workshop)



Save the date: **2023 Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Annual Conference: March 18, 2023**

Click workshop titles to register.

Monday, December 12, 5:30 pm, [Vested Rights and Nonconforming Structures & Uses](#), \$25, Vested rights under zoning and subdivision law, why they exist, and how they affect Zoning Boards of Appeals and Planning Boards.

Tuesday, December 13, 6:00 pm, [Roles & Responsibilities of Planning Boards and ZBAs](#), \$25, For new members or building inspectors. This program will launch you into your role as a local official, introduce you to the functions of the two boards and the main tools of planning and zoning.

Thursday, January 12, 2023, 6:00 pm, [Zoning with Overlay Districts](#), \$25, Overlay zoning is a popular and useful tool allowing municipalities to implement land use policies and strategies with greater flexibility than traditional zoning, without the necessity of amending the underlying zoning. This course illustrates the various types of overlay districts, explains how they differ from traditional zoning measures, and describes the form and contents of an overlay district.

MassTrails 2023 Grant Round Open

Funding available for project development, design, engineering, permitting, construction, and maintenance of recreational trails, shared use pathways, and the amenities that support trails! Online submissions only. Details at: [MassTrails Grants Program](#). **Deadline February 1, 2023.**

Application webinar **December 14, 12-1:30 pm, [pre-registration required](#)**. Questions to amanda.lewis@mass.gov, MassTrails Program Manager, 617-645-8314.



Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Action Grant

The MVP Program is accepting Expressions of Interest for FY24 Action Grant ideas. MVP Grants are intended to make municipalities more climate resilient. Fill out an [EOI form here](#). The Expression of Interest (EOI) deadline for detailed feedback is Friday, **January 20, 2023**. The final deadline to submit is Friday, **February 3, 2023**. Exciting news that the MVP Program has widened the eligibility of applicants to "the commonwealth's political subdivisions" and any authorities, commissions, boards, and instrumentalities of those eligible entities. This is in addition to the eligibility of municipalities. If you have an eligibility question, please reach out to kara.runsten@mass.gov.

As always you can contact [Courteny Morehouse](#), Energy & Environmental Planner, to discuss this and other opportunities. 413-442-1521 ext. 26

MHC Announcing MPPF Round 29 & Workshops

Round 29 of the Massachusetts Preservation Projects Fund (MPPF) grant program has been scheduled. It is anticipated that funding will be in the range of \$1,000,000. Administered by the Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC), the MPPF is a state-funded 50% matching grant reimbursement program established to support the preservation of properties, landscapes, and sites listed in the State Register of Historic Places. Applicants must be a municipality or nonprofit organization. The program is administered in accordance with 950 CMR 73.00. Please note that grant disbursement is subject to the reauthorization of the capital accounts and the availability of sufficient allocated funds.

Eleven (11) pre-application workshops will be held in person and virtually. Dates, locations, and application at <https://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhcmppf/mppfidx.htm>

Please call the MHC at 617-727-8470 or e-mail [Paul Holtz](mailto:Paul.Holtz@mhc.state.ma.us) with questions or to receive hard copies of the application and instructions. Deadline: **March 17, 2023**

Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance

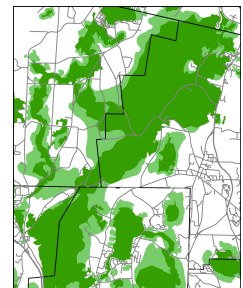
Dept. of Ecological Restoration (DER) has released a Pre-RFR for their Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance (CRMA) Grant Program. This is to help towns meet Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards when doing culvert replacement projects. Read more about the [Massachusetts Stream Crossing Standards](#) here. Pre-RFR is open through **February 1, 2023**. To submit, email your project idea to Holden Sparacino at DERCulverts@mass.gov.

Grant Materials, including FAQs and program summary information will be posted on [COMMBUYS](#) with other technical resources available on the Division's website mid-January, 2023. Pre-RFR Grant Briefing Presentation will be held on Monday, **January 30** at 1pm. Application deadline is anticipated **mid-March, 2023**.

Data & Information Services

BioMap3 Released

MassWildlife and The Nature Conservancy have released a new version of BioMap, a comprehensive tool used to guide conservation. BioMap3 builds on previous iterations with the continued goal of protecting the diversity of species and natural ecosystems within the Commonwealth. The updated data can be found online at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/massgis-data-biomap-the-future-of-conservation>.



Economic Development

MBI's [Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#) is accepting applications.

The ability to engage in digital equity planning activities will be a critical step for municipal leaders and staff to build a broad understanding of how internet access, or lack thereof, affects residents of their community, and to develop actionable solutions to bridge the digital divide.

Specifically, Massachusetts Broadband Institute (MBI) Municipal Digital Equity Planning activities will support municipalities in:

- Decision-making and investments related to services and infrastructure that will increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet for the populations most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Preparing to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal opportunities related to solving the digital divide.

BRPC is a pre-qualified consultant to provide services to municipalities participating in this program. Get full program details and apply [HERE](#).

Mass Save Community First Partnership

With winter fast approaching and rising energy costs, now is the season to focus on energy-saving and cost-saving tactics for private and public buildings. Reviewing your ongoing energy and new energy projects can improve the comfort of your home, space, and wallet. The [Green Communities](#) program, through the office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, is supporting towns throughout Berkshire County to reduce their energy use and costs by providing funding and guidance to complete energy efficiency upgrades and green energy projects.

BRPC provides technical assistance to several Berkshire Green Communities. Towns looking to help residents reduce energy costs and make their homes warmer and more comfortable throughout the winter months can look to the Mass Save Community First Partnership, which is completing its first year in Williamstown. The program offers incentives and pathways to improve home energy efficiency and reduce costs for homeowners, renters, landlords, and small businesses.

Public Health



Seven members of the BRPC Public Health Program - Laura Kittross, Lydia Shulman, Marie Brady, Andy Ottoson, Jaymie Zapata, Matt Gilbert, and Leslie Drager (not shown) joined roughly 10,000 of their public health peers at the annual American Public Health Association (APHA) Conference on November 6-9 at the Boston Convention Center.

In addition to choosing between hundreds of educational sessions and networking with public health professionals from around the country, the Public Health Program staff found time to have dinner together at Pink Taco, and share some delicious ice cream in a fish-shaped cone.

Regional

Online Permitting Software Update Grant

BRPC has received an Efficiency and Regionalization grant from the state to update the Berkshire Online Building Permit Program and the Public Health Alliance Board Of Health Online Permitting Program. This grant will fund the update of the building permit software for Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Hinsdale, Lanesborough, Lee, Lenox, Middlefield, Monterey, New Marlborough, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, West Stockbridge, and Windsor. The Alliance Health Permit program will be updated for Adams, Becket, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Lanesborough, Middlefield, New Marlborough, Peru, Richmond, Sheffield, Washington, and Windsor. In total, 23 municipalities will see upgraded software due to this grant. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).

Transportation

“Try Transit” Free BRTA Bus and Paratransit Services: Nov 25th - Dec 31st, 2022

The Berkshire Regional Transit Authority (BRTA) announced that beginning Friday, **November 25 through Saturday, December 31, 2022**, all the BRTA bus and paratransit services would be free, thanks, in part, to a grant included in the state budget and awarded by the Massachusetts Department of



Transportation. The “Try Transit” initiative is supported by the state grant awarded to all fifteen of the Commonwealth’s Regional Transit Authorities who worked together to submit a joint application and plan for implementation.

“Removing the cost of transportation for this ‘Try Transit’ event provides a great opportunity for anyone interested in learning how to ride the BRTA,” stated BRTA Administrator Robert Malnati. “Although primarily designed to attract new customers by easing access to services, ‘Try Transit’ will also offer a financial reprieve for current BRTA riders during these times of high inflation. It is expected that the savings and increased mobility offered by BRTA’s services will translate into increased spending at local businesses.”

Questions regarding the “Try Transit” fare-free month should be directed to BRTA’s Operations at 413-499-2782 ext. 1. Please

visit <https://berkshirerta.com/> for route information.

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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