



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements

Justin Gilmore: My time at BRPC

It is bittersweet that I announce my departure from BRPC. Over the last five years, I've had the opportunity to work on a wide range of fun, creative projects with a great group of talented co-workers and municipal officials. Special shout-out to fellow transportation staffers Clete, Anuja, and Nick - it's been a pleasure working with each one of you. I've benefitted from your insight and wisdom and know you will continue to do great work for Berkshire County. Special thanks to the environmental team, Melissa and Courteny - it's been an absolute joy to have worked with you both. And to other staff members I've had the pleasure of working with, I will be forever thankful to have had the opportunity to learn from you and am similarly confident that you will continue to make the Berkshires a wonderful place to live and work. As I look forward, I'm very excited to be joining MassDOT as a Right of Way Agent in the District 1 office. I will be based in Lenox and will be working on projects in both District 1 and District 2. Thank you to everyone at BRPC, it's been a wonderful experience and *please keep in touch*. Farewell for now!

Sincerely,
Justin



BRPC staff and Commission members are very grateful for Justin's contributions and that Berkshire County will continue to benefit from his dedication and skills. All the best Justin!

Employment Opportunities

Senior Planner or Planner, Transportation This position is intended to focus on developing and maintaining relationships with stakeholders and the public through active outreach efforts, presentations, and preparing/administering surveys. Projects include the Regional Transportation Plan, Transportation Improvement Program, Unified Planning Work Program, electric vehicle acquisition and charging station development.

Senior Planner or Planner, Community Planning

The primary focus of this position is housing planning, working with municipalities to promote housing development readiness, identifying housing needs and opportunities, recommending ways to address those needs, and working to implement measures to promote housing development. In addition, this position would participate in a larger effort to advocate for and advance housing initiatives in Berkshire County and Western Massachusetts.

Public Health Inspector and Training Specialist

Full-time offsite Project Specialist sought to provide environmental health inspections, support the inspectional services program, and help develop a new local Public Health Excellence Training Hub for Berkshire and Hampden Counties, Massachusetts. Inspection and Training Hub Specialists will help build the Training Hub program according to state standards and requirements and local needs.

Follow title links for full descriptions.

Community One Stop application portal is open for FY24

The [Expression of Interest](#) period continues through **March 17, 2023**. Last year, 75% of successful applicants statewide participated in and received feedback through the Expression of Interest process. Full Applications are also now OPEN. Applicants may log into the [IGX system](#) to begin working on full applications online. Applications may be submitted as early as May 1 and are due no later than **June 2, 2023**. If you would like assistance with preparing a One Stop application, please [CONTACT US](#) soon.

American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Training

ARPA has brought millions in public dollars to public entities to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences. This training discusses the differences between sub-recipients and contractors under the federal rules, fiscal recovery fund spending that is presumed eligible due to the nature of the beneficiaries or the type of project, and rules relating to using fiscal recovery funds on capital expenditures. Presented by the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General on **February 21, 10-11:30 am**. Register [HERE](#)

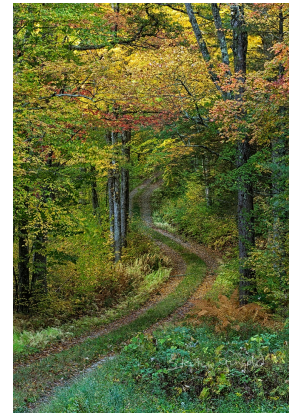
[Massachusetts Historical Commission's Spring 2023 Workshops](#)

- Architectural Styles, Forms, and Building Technologies of MA, Friday, Feb. 10, 1 pm
- Historic Resources Survey and the National Register, Thursday, Feb. 23, 1 pm
- Administering Local Historic Districts and Design Review, Monday, March 6, 7 pm
- State and Federal Historic Resources Review and Compliance, Tuesday, March 21, 1 pm
- Developing an Historic Preservation Plan, Thursday, April 6, 10 am
- Adopting a Demolition Delay Bylaw or Ordinance, Friday, April 21, 10 am

Sign up for the [MassHistPres email listserv](#) | Register for [virtual workshops](#)

The Forest Climate Resilience Program Focus Group *Developing a Northwestern Massachusetts Virtual Forest Center*

February 27, 7 pm. The Forest Climate Resilience Program is working in partnership with organizations across Northwestern Massachusetts to develop a Virtual Forest Center (VFC) to support communities to better understand threats to their forests, including climate change, and how forest stewardship can help to address those threats. This is the first in a series of four focus groups seeking input on what residents would like to see in a virtual forest center. For more information contact [Andrew Randazzo](#), Forest Ecologist with Mass Audubon, 413-252-9534. Register [HERE](#).



National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Long Island Sound Futures Fund can help with water quality projects including green infrastructure, stream restoration, and more. A webinar for is being hosted **March 2: [Navigating the Long Island Sound Futures Fund 2023 Grant Opportunity for Massachusetts Municipalities](#)**

MassDEP has formed a **Deconstruction Workgroup** to explore the feasibility of bringing deconstruction to Massachusetts. Rather than quick demolition by machine with all materials going into a landfill, deconstruction mandates that a building slated for demolition be disassembled with materials reused where possible. The previous two Deconstruction Workgroup meetings can be viewed [here](#). While there is a core planning team of MassDEP and colleagues, the Workgroup meetings are open to anyone interested in the topic.

MassDEP's next virtual Deconstruction Workgroup meeting is **March 15, 1:30-3:00 pm**, and will focus on how deconstruction and historic preservation can work together. Register [here](#) to attend.

[The Massachusetts Dept. of Ecological Restoration Culvert Replacement Municipal Assistance Grant](#) deadline is expected to be mid-March.

March 18, 2023: [Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Annual Conference](#)

The CPTC Annual Conference is back this year at Holy Cross College in Worcester. CPTC is offering 18 workshops in core and current topics on municipal planning in Massachusetts. Workshops will include sessions on climate change/municipal vulnerability, local action units in affordable housing, using the Community One Stop grant application system and more. The conference includes a continental breakfast and catered lunch. *Registration will open in mid-February.*

Massachusetts Select Board Association will host its third [Western and Rural Massachusetts Municipal Conference](#) on Saturday, [April 1](#) in Holyoke. Registration available late February. \$35

[2023 Local Solutions: Climate Migration](#), May 16 - 17, Keene, New Hampshire

The goal is to convene stakeholders to build capacity in the Northeast region for socially just and equitable migration and enhanced regional climate resilience, creating a region that can become a climate refugia that is resilient, revitalized, socially just, and decarbonized.

Community

Windsor Completes Master Plan

The Town of Windsor completed its [Master Plan](#) after a year-long process that involved interviewing town stakeholders, surveying the town's populace, and then developing and drafting the document that directs town activities for the coming 10-20 years. The Planning Board appointed a steering committee composed of individuals across the spectrum of town boards, including the Parks and Recreation Committee, Select Board, Finance Committee, Green Committee, Finance Committee, Police and Fire Department, and Zoning Board of Appeals. The project was funded by a Community Planning Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Community feedback from the 22-question survey completed by 19.5% of the town's eligible population provided the committee with a host of actionable items that then led to the development of an implementation plan.

The document provides a brief description of the town's population characteristics and defines the existing services and facilities in the town. Available housing, land use, and open space are addressed in the plan and were important aspects of why Windsor residents choose to live in the community. Many residents also referred to the low tax rate and natural amenities right in their backyards as reasons to live in Windsor. Another reason that individuals are attracted to Windsor is the newly installed Broadband network overseen by the town's Municipal Light Plant Board. The ability to connect to reliable and fast internet services is increasingly viewed as a necessary utility, especially with remote working opportunities, making Windsor a more viable location to live and work.

In planning for the future, the plan addresses issues such as the availability of developable land and how that impacts available services, housing affordability and short-term rentals, assessing senior and community center needs, and attracting volunteers to participate in town governance and capacity. With the adoption of a Master Plan, the town has charted a course for the near term and enabled a greater variety of state funding for town programs.

For more information about Master Plans, contact [Cornelius Hoss](#), Community Planning Program Manager.

Community Development & Housing

[The Berkshire Regional Group Purchasing Program](#) (BRGPP) is preparing to launch the FY24 Bidding Season. Please keep an eye out for the following events:

Informational Zoom meeting for municipal administrators and DPW supervisors:
Thursday, February 23, 2 pm.



We anticipate releasing the FY24 Product Survey on **March 1, 2023**, with responses due on

Wednesday, March 22. Your participation in the Zoom meeting will allow us to talk with you about new products being offered this year and receive input about the quality of the products and services the Program and vendors provided in FY23. As always, we'd appreciate suggestions from BRGPP participants on ways we can improve!

Reminders, including invitations to the Zoom meeting, will be sent to municipal staff. For additional information, contact [Christie Lewis](#) at (413) 442-1521 x23.

Data & Information Services

Race and Ethnicity

The U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) Office of the Chief Statistician released preliminary recommended revisions to Race and Ethnicity standards. These standards define how the U.S. Government collects and reports race and ethnicity. This review is the first step to updating the 1997 standard the federal government currently uses. The proposed update was undertaken to ensure that the standards better reflect the racial and ethnic diversity of the U.S. population. The initial proposal calls for collecting race and ethnicity with a single question, adding a response category for Middle Eastern and North African, and updating terminology, definitions, and question wording. Information on the proposed changes is available [online](#).

[Mass Municipal Data Hub](#)

The MMA has launched a new, online Data Hub created as a digital replacement for the annual Massachusetts Municipal Directory. The Data Hub provides a wealth of information about each city and town, plus the ability to compare communities based on anything from forms of government, population, road miles, tax rates, or school enrollment, to total expenditures, and much more. The data spreadsheet seamlessly blends information from a number of trusted sources.

Economic Development

Join BRPC's Shared Economic Development Planning program

The Shared Economic Development Planner program allows each participating town to access services that fit its specific needs and budget. Communities receive assistance with creating a welcoming environment for businesses and residents through a range of tactics, as well as support in developing economic development-related grant applications or collaborations with neighboring towns. All municipalities in Berkshire County are invited to contact BRPC to learn more about enrolling in the Shared Economic Development Planner program for FY24. Contact [Laura Brennan](#).

Massachusetts Broadband Institute [Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#)

BRPC is a pre-qualified consultant to provide services to municipalities participating in MBI's Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program. The program is appropriate for last-mile towns that have high-speed broadband to most residences and towns that do not yet have this service.

Participating in the Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program will:

- Help guide decision-making and investments related to services and infrastructure that increase access, adoption, and usage of the internet for populations most impacted by the pandemic.
- Prepare your community to submit grant proposals to existing or forthcoming state or federal opportunities related to solving the digital divide. Full program details and application [HERE](#).

Environmental & Energy

Best Practices to Reduce Salt in Water Supply

This winter has given us a few snowstorms to contend with, and salt, aka chloride, has been one of our most readily used tools to manage road safety. Salting roads no doubt keep our roadways

ice-free and safer, but it comes at a cost to surface water and groundwater quality. Chloride is one of the few common pollutants that isn't easily treated through green infrastructure control measures. Instead, chloride is most effectively reduced during application. In other words, to reduce groundwater contamination from chloride, it's important to use best practices to reduce the need for its application in the first place.

New Hampshire is leading this effort by training plow contractors through the [Green SnowPro Certification program](#) on technologies and winter maintenance practices that reduce the need for salt. An online training of this program called [Smart About Salt](#) is available through July 31, 2023. Another great resource is the Clear Roads initiative which funds research into winter maintenance impacts and best practices. Clear Roads has recently published its [Annual Survey of State Winter Maintenance Data](#), which compiles data on winter resources, materials, and costs from 36 states for the 2021-2022 winter season.

Public Health

Six months into the [HEALing Communities Study](#), Berkshire County community members have met in Coalition and subcommittee meetings to develop strategies on overdose education and Narcan distribution as part of a nationwide effort to reduce opioid overdose deaths. Narcan, aka naloxone, is a nasal spray used to reverse an opioid overdose immediately and is completely safe to administer to people experiencing a suspected opioid overdose.

As part of these efforts, BRPC's Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative, or [BOAPC](#), will assist with larger communications campaigns about reducing the stigma around carrying Narcan and making it as normal as a fire extinguisher or first aid kit. These efforts include the "Faces of Narcan" campaign with community members' faces on billboards and Berkshire Eagle ads sponsored and paid for by the Healing Communities grant.



In addition, efforts will promote BOAPC's ["Find Naloxone"](#) page, containing a map of locations to access Narcan. The map will be updated as more locations become available. In the future, these locations will have overdose rescue kits or NaloxBoxes, containers housing Narcan, instructions on how to use them, and signs of an overdose. BRPC Public Health staff will coordinate these efforts throughout the year. BRPC/BOAPC will eventually provide naloxone through the mail for those unable to access it elsewhere. For more information contact [Andy Ottoson](#).

Transportation

Governor Baker Signed New Law to Reduce Traffic Fatalities

A traffic safety bill under consideration in legislative sessions since 2011 was signed into law on the last day of Governor Charlie Baker's administration. Among other provisions, the new law enacts several new regulations:

1. **4-foot passing law:** When a motor vehicle or truck driver desires to overtake a vulnerable road user (someone walking, cycling, using a scooter, wheelchair, or other low-powered mobility devices), the driver must move aside to there are at least four feet of separation between the side of the vehicle and the vulnerable user. Crossing the centerline of the road is permitted when determined safe to do so.
2. **Truck safety enhancements:** Any trucks or trailers purchased by the Commonwealth must be equipped with side-guard panels or skirts, additional mirrors, and backup cameras.
3. **Speed limit modifications:** Local jurisdictions may petition MassDOT to lower speed limits on state-jurisdictional roads. MassDOT has 90 days to respond to the request and, upon approval, will install new speed limit signage in the targeted areas.

This Act joins the transportation bond bill passed by the state legislature in the summer of 2022, which legally classified electric bicycles as either Class I or II in the Massachusetts General Laws for the first time. Classes are based on the level of assisting power provided by the electric motor and whether the bike has a throttle control. This allows for more nuance when regulating their operation in certain areas, like multi-use paths. Together, these new acts represent important

SS4A

BRPC Awarded Comprehensive Safety Action Plan Grant

The Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Transportation Team is pleased to announce that they have been selected for funding in the nationally competitive [Safe Streets and Roads for All \(SS4A\)](#) grant program. This funding is provided through the US Department of Transportation (USDOT), as authorized by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). Approximately \$1 billion is authorized each year for the next five years to fund the SS4A program. It consists of two parts: Action Plan Grants and Implementation Grants. BRPC has been awarded Action Plan Grant funding. Completing an Action Plan opens the door for the opportunity to receive Implementation Grants in future years. Along with support from the MassDOT Office of Transportation Planning (OTP), the budget for BRPC's Action Plan initiative is \$248,231.

Berkshire County joins 509 other awardees from around the United States who will be working to bring the number of fatalities and serious injuries on our roads down to zero in the future. In January of 2022, the USDOT released its [National Roadway Safety Strategy \(NRSS\)](#), a new direction in the fight to turn the tide of rising road fatalities and injuries during this past decade. The SS4A is providing funding to Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), cities, towns, and tribal governments to begin tackling the initiatives posed in the NRSS. The five overarching initiatives spelled out in the NRSS are: safer people, safer roads, safer speeds, safer vehicles, and better post-crash care.

The Berkshires' Action Plan process intends to study the local implications of each of the five NRSS safety initiatives and what systemic and infrastructural changes could be proposed to achieve gains in each. The process will kick off with convening of a steering committee composed of elected and non-elected stakeholders from throughout the region, including town administrators, highway crews, first responders, planners, engineers, and advocacy organizations. From there, measurable goals and data points for the five NRSS safety initiatives will be decided upon, and data will be gathered in a comprehensive way to help the committee discern where the most appropriate and cost-effective safety interventions could be proposed. A final report will indicate desired projects and programs for future implementation. The report will open the door for future funding opportunities to implement safety enhancement projects in Berkshire County. [Nicholas Russo](#) is the BRPC contact if you would like to participate or want more information.

February

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2 Executive Committee 4 pm	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 1 pm	16	17	18
19	20	21 Transportation Advisory Committee 4 pm	22 Regional Issues Committee 4 pm	23 FY24 Group Purchasing Information Zoom 2 pm	24	25
26	27	28 Municipal Planning Organization 4 pm	1	2 Executive Committee 4 pm	3	4

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