



FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES January 19, 2023

This was a virtual meeting as allowed by Ch. 107 of the Acts of 2022, extending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20, until March 31, 2023.

I. Opening

A. The meeting was called to order at 7:02 pm.

Vice Chair Malcolm Fick stated that per the open meeting law, BRPC records all meetings. Others may record the meeting after informing the meeting Chair. Any documents presented must be provided to the Chair at the meeting.

B. Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Shirley Mueller – Alford Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Caleb Darby – Dalton Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Delegate
Pedro Pachano – Great Barrington Delegate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
Richard Roussin – Hinsdale Delegate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Mark Smith – Lenox Alternate
Laura Mensi – Monterey
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
Mark Anthony – Otis Delegate
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Nancy Socha – Stockbridge Delegate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington, Delegate
Kenneth Kuttner – Williamstown Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

Towns with Absent Delegates and no Alternate present:
Adams, Becket, Hancock, Lanesborough, Mt Washington,
New Ashford, New Marlborough, North Adams, Peru, Richmond,
Sandisfield, Savoy, Tyringham, West Stockbridge

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko – Executive Director
Marianne Sniezek – Administration Program Manager

Kate Hill Tapia –Office Administrator

Others Present:

Robert O’Connor, Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs

C. Approval of Minutes of November 17, 2022, Meeting

Rene Wood moved to approve the November 17, 2022, draft meeting minutes, and Doug McNally seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with a roll call vote.

Yes:

Shirley Mueller, Peter Traub, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Richard Roussin, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Mark Anthony, Nancy Socha, Don Gagnon, Kenneth Kuttner, Doug McNally

Abstained:

Caleb Darby, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood

II. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

III. Delegate & Alternate Issues

Housing funding based on area median income (AMI) was raised by the Great Barrington Delegate. Pedro Pachano brought this up as an issue to be addressed with legislators. The AMI has no relationship to real estate values. Tom will monitor what state legislation is filed and consider what advocacy steps can be taken. Support for market-rate housing from the government is needed.

IV. Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions about the Executive Committee's actions from the December 2022 and January 2023 meetings.

V. Approval of Community Assessments for FY 2024

The Finance Committee proposed a 2.5% increase in community assessments for FY 2024. By law, BRPC must notify municipalities of their assessments no later than February to be included in city/town budgets.

Doug McNally made a motion to approve the FY 2024 Assessments with a 2.5% increase from FY 2023, seconded by Rene Wood, and approved by a roll call vote:

Shirley Mueller, Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Richard Roussin, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Mark Anthony, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Nancy Socha, Don Gagnon, Kenneth Kuttner, Doug McNally

VI. Approval of BRPC Bylaw Amendments

The Commission Development Committee recommended amendments to the BRPC Bylaws. The proposed amendments were in the meeting materials. The changes include relieving the Chair of a voting membership in all subcommittees, defining the role of an Assistant Director, and improving wording. A correction was made in the open meeting law section to read: at **the** next full meeting.

Rene Wood made a motion to approve the recommended bylaw amendments as amended, seconded by Buck Donovan, and approved by a roll call vote:

Shirley Mueller, Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Richard Roussin, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Mark Anthony, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Nancy Socha, Don Gagnon, Kenneth Kuttner, Doug McNally

VII. BRPC Recommendation to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission

Approval was requested to recommend to Governor Healey that Executive Director Thomas Matuszko be re-appointed as the BRPC representative to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission as established by MGL 23A Section 66.

Doug McNally made a motion to recommend to Governor Healy that Executive Director Thomas Matuszko be reappointed as BRPC's representative to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission, seconded by Rene Wood, and approved by a roll call vote:

Shirley Mueller, Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Richard Roussin, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Mark Anthony, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Nancy Socha, Don Gagnon, Kenneth Kuttner, Doug McNally

VIII. Municipal Services

The Regional Issues Committee has been discussing how it is increasingly difficult for municipalities to attract and retain staff to provide essential services, such as Treasurer, Accountant, etc. Commission shared thoughts about the root of the problem and possible ways to address it.

IX. Resilient Land Initiative

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) released the [Resilient Lands Initiative Vision](#) on January 4. Bob O'Connor from EEA presented an overview. The Initiative will guide actions to conserve, restore and care for the land in a way that helps both nature and people. It is a powerful strategy to reduce the impacts of climate change on our most vulnerable populations.

X. Executive Director's Report

A. BRPC 2022 Audit

The Summary of the Auditor's Results and the Management Letter from the FY2022 Audit was distributed. There were no findings or questioned costs. The Commission is a low-risk auditee.

B. Staff Updates

Transportation Planner Justin Gilmore is resigning to take a position with MassDOT – District 1.

C. DLTA Program for 2023

Requests for assistance are due Friday, January 27. Additional funding enables BRPC to help municipalities or other local and regional public entities take advantage of federal, state, and other funding opportunities. Work can start in early February.

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission Update

A draft list of rural legislative priorities was in the meeting materials.

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail - The second public meeting of the Western MA Passenger Rail Commission will be on January 24 at 10:00 am at the Olver Transit Center in Greenfield. A hearing notice was in the materials.
- The Berkshire Flyer working group met. The Flyer is scheduled to run from Memorial Day through Columbus Day. Marketing will begin.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – A public workshop was held on January 11th, presenting a lower cost and higher cost alternative. The next step is to develop four other alternatives.

F. Healthy Soils Action Plan

On January 4, the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) released the [Healthy Soils Action Plan](#). The Plan provides an assessment of the condition of soils and a blueprint for how to effectively conserve, protect, restore, and properly manage soils to improve the vitality of nature and residents' health and quality of life.

G. Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program

The Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) continues to accept applications to its [Municipal Digital Equity Planning Program](#). Several Berkshire municipalities have submitted applications. The process will result in strategic documents identifying needs, interests, and key assets and provide a framework to guide future municipal decision-making, potential investments, and activities to increase internet access and usage for those most impacted by the pandemic. It will also prepare municipalities to submit grant proposals to existing or future state or federal programs supporting digital equity activities.

H. Housing in the Berkshires Coalition

The Housing in the Berkshires Coalition is a group of concerned residents and community leaders working to identify and advocate for affordable housing

solutions in our communities. Anyone is welcome. The first meeting (virtual) is Tuesday, January 31, 5:30 – 7.

XI. Adjournment

Rene Wood motioned to adjourn, seconded by Sheila Irvin, and approved by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm.

Shirley Mueller, Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Richard Roussin, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Mark Anthony, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Nancy Socha, Don Gagnon, Kenneth Kuttner, Doug McNally