



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Thursday, June 1, 2023

Virtual meeting as allowed by Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023 extending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20 until March 31, 2025.

### **I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement**

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 pm.

Chair John Duval called the meeting to order as a virtual meeting as allowed by Ch. 2 of the Acts of 2023 extending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30 sec.20 until March 31, 2025.

### **II. 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

Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Lee Delegate

Rene Wood, Commission Development Committee Chair, Sheffield Alternate

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate

Kyle Hanlon, At-large, North Adams Delegate

Sam Haupt, At-large, Peru Delegate

Others Present: Jim - citizen; Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Alternate (joined 4:25 pm)

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

### **III. Approval of May 4, 2023 Minutes**

Rene Wood moved to approve the May 4, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by a roll call vote from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon. Sam Haupt abstained.

### **IV. Financial Reports**

#### **A. May 1 to May 24, 2023 Expenditures Report**

Rene Wood moved to accept the report as presented, and Roger Bolton seconded the motion. BRPC's credit card does not earn rewards and cannot as a business. A roll vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, & Sam Haupt.

#### **B. Accounts Receivable Report/Assessments May 2023**

There was discussion about the CDGB home repair program's chronically

delayed payment process, and it was suggested to lobby representatives and the new administration to address it.

**C. Line of Credit Report**

There has been no need to draw on the line of credit.

**D. Line of Credit Increase**

TD Bank approved the line of credit increase; implementation is in process.

**V. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates**

**Director of Rural Affairs, Mass Office of Economic Development**

Rene is pleased with the appointment of Anne Gobi to this role. The Rural Policy Advisory Council will meet with her in a few weeks and receive an update on the new state economic development plan.

**MassDOT Chapter 90 Advance Bids**

Due to a staffing and procedure change, Rene reported that Sheffield can no longer get advance bids for highway materials, which causes several issues. She asked that the BRPC Transportation Program staff investigate ways to address this at the state level, with the new Secretary of Transportation, Berkshire County legislators, and or via the MPO. Lining up bids based on "contingent" funding has worked.

**VI. Items Requiring Action**

**A. Approval of Grant contract (after the fact) from the Western MA Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition to Analyze the Equity in Emergency Issues in Western Mass**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to approve a grant contract (after the fact) from the Western MA Health and Medical Coordinating Coalition to Analyze the Equity in Emergency Issues in Western Mass for \$15,558; the contract ends June 30, 2023.

Malcolm Fick motioned to approve the grant contract; Rene Wood seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**B. Approval of Memorandum of Understanding with the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce & Cultural District for ArtWeek Management**

The Executive Committee was requested to approve a Memorandum of Understanding with the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce & Cultural District for ArtWeek Management. The Economic Development Program will manage and coordinate ArtWeek 2023 expenses for the county's Cultural Districts. Each District will contribute \$3,000 to the total budget.

Malcolm Fick motioned to approve the Memorandum of Understanding with the Williamstown Chamber of Commerce & Cultural District for ArtWeek Management; Rene Wood seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John

Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**C. Approval to Submit a Grant Application to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) Program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) Program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. BRPC's Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) will build on existing capacities to develop and implement community-driven, evidence-based interventions to reduce the onset and progression of substance misuse and its related problems while promoting mental health services and community resiliency. This \$1,875,000 five-year grant would be a collaborative project between BRPC, The Brien Center, Northern Berkshire Community Coalition, 18 Degrees, Railroad Street Youth Project, and other community partners.

Tom mentioned that there are sub-recipients vs. subcontractors, and fewer administrative costs are covered by the former. BRPC prefers to be a subcontractor for managing such a large grant. He thinks the application will likely be funded based on the great work BOAPC has done.

Rene Wood motioned to approve submitting the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework-Partnerships for Success (SPF-PFS) Program in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Sheila Irvin seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**D. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Green Communities Division for the Regional Energy Planning Assistance Program.**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Green Communities Division for the Regional Energy Planning Assistance program.

Rene Wood motioned to approve submitting the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Green Communities Division for the Regional Energy Planning Assistance program; Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**E. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the US Environmental Protection Agency Healthy Communities Grant Program.**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the US Environmental Protection Agency Healthy Communities Grant Program. The maximum available is \$150,000. BRPC would enter into MOUs with several member municipalities to assist them with energy planning and technical assistance services.

Rene Wood motioned to approve submitting the US Environmental Protection Agency Healthy Communities Grant Program; Sam Haupt seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**F. Approval to Submit (after the fact) Two Grant Applications to the Planning Assistance Program with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA)**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit two grant applications to the Planning Assistance Program with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA).

Rene Wood motioned to approve submitting two grant applications to the Planning Assistance Program with the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA); Sheila Irvin seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**G. Approval to Submit Grant Application to Mass Tech Collaborative related to Digital Equity Planning and Regional Asset Mapping.**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to Mass Tech Collaborative related to Digital Equity Planning and Regional Asset Mapping for \$15,000. The project would assist municipalities in enrolling in the Massachusetts Broadband Initiative (MBI) Digital Equity Planning program and identifying digital equity-related assets.

Committee members congratulated Wylie on her great presentation at the May Commission meeting and her patience in dealing with MBI.

Roger Bolton motioned to approve submitting a grant application to Mass Tech Collaborative related to Digital Equity Planning and Regional Asset Mapping; Malcolm Fick seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**H. Approval to Submit Grant Application to the Massachusetts Community One Stop for Growth Program for the Berkshire County Municipal Employee Pipeline Program.**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Community One Stop for Growth Program for the Berkshire County Municipal Employee Pipeline Program.

\$100,000 is requested to work with municipal officials, high schools, and colleges to develop and promote internship and apprentice programs, advancement and training programs for existing employees, and an educational campaign on the value of municipal service.

Rene Wood motioned to approve submitting a grant application to the Community One Stop for Growth Program for the Berkshire County Municipal Employee Pipeline Program; Sheila Irvin seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**I. Approval of Revisions to BRPC Telework Policy.**

The Executive Committee was requested to approve the revision to the BRPC Telework Policy, extending the policy until June 30, 2024.

Rene Wood motioned to approve the proposed revisions to the BRPC Telework Policy; Sheila Irvin seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Rene Wood, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**VII. Committee Reports and Discussion**

**A. Transportation Advisory Committee**

The TAC met May 16, 2023. The final 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) and Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan were recommended for approval, and highlights about the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Unified Planning Work Program were provided. Draft unapproved minutes were in the packet.

**B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee (CEDs)**

The CEDS Committee met May 17, 2023. Agenda items included an update on the state economic planning process, a report on the CARES Act funding, an update on Berkshire Funding Focus, and follow-up activities related to the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. Draft unapproved minutes were in the packet.

**C. Metropolitan Planning Organization**

The MPO met May 23, 2023. Several 2023-2027 TIP amendments were approved, the 2024-2028 Transportation Improvement Program was endorsed, the Coordinated Human Services Transportation Plan was authorized for release for public comment, an update on the Regional Transportation Plan was given, and highlights about the Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Unified Planning Work Program were provided. Draft unapproved minutes of the meeting were in the packet.

**D. Regional Issues Committee**

The RIC Committee met May 24, 2023. Discussion centered around municipal employee attraction and retention and making the case that strong communities result in a strong economy. Draft minutes are not yet available.

## **E. Environmental Review Committee (ERC)**

GZA GeoEnvironmental, Inc. submitted the Initial Environmental Notification Form (ENF) for the Hinsdale George Schnopp Road Dam Breach Emergency Stabilization on behalf of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Office of Dam Safety. This was filed under MEPA's Emergency Action Provisions. It was not clear if the ERC has a role in reviewing this ENF, as there is no regional significance. The plan is to widen and restore the stream flow. The owner (a trust) cannot be found; the state will cover the costs. Sam suggested a property lien.

Regarding New England Power's modernization of the power line that passes through several northern Berkshire communities, the proponent filed a lengthy Environmental Notification Form (ENF). They wanted to file a final Environmental Impact Report (EIR), skipping the draft that would be available for public comment. Based on Environmental Review Committee's dissent and other organizations, including Secretary Tepper, they must file the draft EIR. A good example of the process working.

## **VIII. Executive Director's Report**

### **A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements**

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 5/1 – 5//2023.

- Williamstown – Open Space and Recreation Plan - \$5,000
- Northampton Health Department - Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Site-Based Program - \$10,000
- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Inspection Services FY24:
  - Becket - \$31,186
  - Egremont - \$11,730
  - Middlefield - \$5,200
  - Washington - \$4,500
  - Windsor - \$9,030
- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Public Health Nursing Services FY24:
  - Adams - \$4,367
  - Becket - \$3,858.75
  - Clarksburg - \$3,070.46
  - Hinsdale - \$3,141.60
  - Washington - \$2,310
  - West Stockbridge - \$3,000
  - Williamstown - \$6,846.90

Grants and Contracts not received.

BRPC is not aware of any grants and contracts not received.

### **B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI)**

- The BTI Board authorized the President to sign Award documents with the National Endowment for the Arts to support the development of a community-led cultural plan and any agreements. The NEA recommended award is \$75,000, from

September 1, 2023, to October 31, 2024. In addition, the BTI board authorized the President to sign an agreement with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and any other contracts to support this project and not exceed \$75,000, including a 2% administrative fee.

- The BTI Board authorized the President to sign a grant and any agreements if awarded. The Massachusetts Growth Capital Corporation Small Business Technical Assistance grant would enable Berkshire Funding Focus (BFF) to expand services to underserved small businesses through the deployment of culturally appropriate outreach materials and messaging, translation of online material and in-person technical assistance into Spanish, and pre-qualifying grant professionals with experience working with underserved populations. Underserved small businesses include minority-owned, women-owned, LGBTQ-owned, Cooperatives owned by low-moderate-income owners, US Military Veterans, Cooperatives, non-native English speakers, or disabled individuals. Through these funds, BFF will emphasize building and strengthening relationships with Latinx-owned small businesses. The estimated total amount is \$100,000.

### **C. Staff Update**

- Open Positions:
  - Transportation Planning position
  - Public Health Housing Specialist
- Newly Hired BRPC Staff:
  - Monasia Ceasar - Public Health Trainer Inspector
- Newly Hired Intern:
  - Evan Boyle - Public Health
- Resignation:
  - Ned Saviski, Public Health Inspector Training Specialist
  - Allison Eagan, Public Health Principal Planner

### **D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update**

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in May.

### **E. Passenger Rail**

- West-East Rail - The Special Commission to address West-East Passenger Rail governance and operations held two hearings on May 16, 2023 in Worcester and Natick. The focus was a presentation about South Station, how the lack of capacity impacts the current service, and how it would limit future demand.
- Berkshire Flyer - All available tickets for the Berkshire Flyer's inaugural 2023 trip were sold. Hopefully, this is the beginning of a trend.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail - A virtual briefing for local, state,

and federal officials and economic development stakeholders on the current study to examine the relaunch of passenger rail along the Route 2 / Northern Tier / Patriot Corridor to include an update and information about, process, timeline, and potential will be held on June 5 @ 2 pm.

#### **F. New Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) Workshop**

CPTC is offering a virtual workshop, Roles and Responsibilities of Boards on June 12th. This complements the Introduction to the Zoning Act held on May 23. Both workshops are oriented toward new planning board, board of appeals members, and those wanting a refresher. Registration is required. The cost is \$35. Go to <https://masscptc.org/index.php/training/webinar-series/> for more information.

#### **G. State Housing Secretary**

Former Worcester City Manager Edward (Ed) M. Augustus was recently appointed the state's first Housing Secretary in over 30 years. Augustus, who helped to create thousands of new housing units at all income levels during his tenure in Worcester, will lead Governor Healey's new Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities beginning June 1.

#### **H. Director of Rural Affairs**

Senator Anne Gobi was appointed Director of Rural Affairs in the Executive Office of Economic Development. In this new role, she will serve as an advocate and ombudsman cultivating economic development within rural communities, ensuring that the needs of rural and regional economies are incorporated into the economic development plan and coordinating with secretariats and state agencies to ensure that state government is attuned to the unique needs of these towns. She starts June 5. Tom communicated with her, and she was enthusiastic about participating in a BRPC meeting.

#### **I. Brownfields Grant Award**

Thanks to the good work of BRPC's Environment & Energy Program Manager Melissa Provencher, BRPC was awarded \$2.35 million through EPA's non-competitive supplemental funding program to successful existing Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) Grant programs that have already achieved success in their work to clean up and redevelop brownfield sites. This funding will help Berkshire communities continue to address the economic, social, and environmental challenges caused by brownfield sites.

The Power House Square project got an extension on loan repayment; it is still partially paid.

#### **J. State Economic Plan**



As announced at the recent Commission meeting, an incoming administration must develop a State Economic Plan within their first year. The May 19th session in Springfield was productive. The previously tentatively scheduled June 8th Berkshire County session was postponed to a date to be determined in July.

**K. Housing Code Updates**

Tom reported that administrative (not legislative) changes have made housing codes more stringent as of April, bringing them closer to the Stretch Code. This will take some affordable housing off the market since they will not pass inspections. It also increases building costs. A Public Health Program staff member can review this with Commission members, starting with the Regional Issues Committee.

**VIII. Old Business**

**A. No Old Business to Discuss**

**IX. New Business**

**A. Policy Related to Public Comments at BRPC Meetings**

It has been BRPC's long standing practice to allow public comments as a standing agenda item at Full Commission meetings but only at the will of the Committee Chair at other standing or special committees, such as the Executive Committee. The rationale for this is that other BRPC meetings are more working meetings. With the recent Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling on public comments, counsel has advised the BRPC should have a policy if we want to set some parameters, such as limiting speakers to a set time or limiting the overall time in the meeting for comments. Tom sought input if such a policy should be pursued.

Committee members thought different policies for different committees may make sense and that it is odd to have public comments late in a meeting after all decisions are made; or too early, before topics are discussed. There was agreement that the Chair should manage the comments and tell people to stick to agenda topics. Setting an individual person's time limit of three minutes was suggested, but some thought an overall time limit is not a good idea.

Members shared their towns' policies such as Sheffield's Select Board's recently adopted five-point policy and Great Barrington's requirement that there be public comments at every public meeting with proponents and opponents getting equal time. Leaving things as they are, without a written policy, would give Chairs the flexibility to do what they think is best.

It was suggested that Tom take the feedback and draft a policy that the committee can review later.

**B. FY 2024 Meeting Schedule, July Executive and Full Commission meetings**

The July meetings will be on Thursday, 6/20:

- Executive Committee 4:00 pm
- Commission 6:00 pm

### **C. July Commission Meeting Topics**

The July meeting is somewhat of a "business / organizational" meeting. Items required or potential or previously mentioned include:

- Election of BRPC Officers for FY 2022
- Regional Transportation Plan
- Unified Planning Work Program for FFY24
- Endorsement of Committee Chairs and At-Large Executive Committee Member Appointment for FY 2023
- Ratification of Commission Representatives to Related Groups
- Authorization for Executive Committee to Act on Behalf of the Commission
- Meet with legislators
- Meet with Governor Healey's Western Mass Director – Rene recommended waiting
- Housing Code

It was recommended that a shorter meeting is better. Tom and John will figure out the agenda.

### **X. Adjournment**

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 pm, seconded by Malcolm Fick, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote:

John Duval, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of the May 4, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee Meeting
- May 1 to May 24, 2023 Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Reports – May 2023
- May Line of Credit Report
- Transportation Advisory Committee Draft Unapproved Minutes May 16, 2023
- Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Draft Unapproved Minutes May 17, 2023
- Metropolitan Planning Organization Draft Unapproved Minutes May 23, 2023
- Executive Director's Memorandum
- Resume - Monasia Ceasar Resume
- Resume – Evan Boyle
- Press Release – Director of Rural Affairs
- Press Release – Housing Secretary
- CPTC Training
- April Technical Assistance Memo