



MEETING NOTICE

There will be a meeting of the
BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION
on Thursday, September 21, 2023 at **7:00 p.m.**

This will be 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.

To participate virtually join Zoom meeting at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3926128831>
Meeting ID: 392 612 8831, Phone: 646.558.8656, 301.715.8592, 312.626.6799

Meeting Materials are posted at www.berkshireplanning.org. Click on the meeting in the Events Calendar to open them.

Agenda

(All times approximate)

- I. Opening (7:00-7:05)**
A. Call to Order and Open Meeting Law Statement
B. Roll Call of Commission Members Attending the Meeting
C. Vote to Approve Minutes of the July 20, 2023 Full Commission Meeting
- II. Comments from and Discussion with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates Issues (7:05-7:10)**
Delegates and Alternates may bring up any issue not on the agenda for discussion. Any possible action will be referred to a future meeting.
- III. Comments from the Public (7:10-7:15)**
Members of the public may offer comments regarding topics on the agenda or other matters they wish to bring to the Commission's attention. Comments are to be directed to the Commission. Commenters must state their names and the city or town they are from.
- IV. Presentation of Executive Committee Actions (7:15-7:20)**
Executive Committee actions taken on the Commission's behalf at its July 20, 2023 and September 7, 2023 meetings are presented for discussion.
- V. Presentation on the Amendments to Housing Regulations that were Adopted Earlier this Year. (7:20-7:40)**
BRPC Senior Planner Sandra Martin and Senior Housing Specialist Trainer Katherine Dagle with the Department of Public Health will present on Amendments to the State Sanitary Code Related to Housing and the Important Role Local Boards of Health have in Providing Safe Housing.
- VI. Vote to Endorse Committee Chairs for FY 2024 (7:40-7:45)**
The BRPC bylaws require the Commission to approve the Committee Chairs as recommended by the BRPC Chair.
- Commission Development Committee Chair – Doug McNally, Windsor
- Berkshire Brownfield Committee Chair – Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield

- VII. Vote to Ratify Appointment of Representatives to Related Groups Not Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission (7:45-7:50)**
The BRPC bylaws require the Commission to ratify the appointment to related groups not under the jurisdiction of the Commission made by the Executive Committee.
- Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee - Doug McNally, Windsor
- VIII. Vote to Appoint Representatives to Related Groups Not Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission (7:50 – 7:55)**
The BRPC bylaws require the Commission to appoint representatives to related groups not under the jurisdiction of the Commission
- Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts- Christopher Cozzaglio
- IX. Presentation on 2020 Census Results (7:55-8:15)**
BRPC GIS, Data and IT Manager Mark Maloy will provide a brief overview of the 2020 decennial census results.
- X. Review of BRPC Website (www.Berkshireplanning.org) (8:15-8:25)**
BRPC uses its website to post meeting notices and material, information about projects and initiatives and other informational resource material. We will give a brief overview.
- XI. Executive Director’s Report (8:25–8:30)**
The Executive Director is available to discuss items in his report
- XII. Adjournment (8:30)**

Other interested citizens and officials are invited to attend.

All times listed are estimates of when specific agenda items may be discussed.

City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice



DRAFT FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES **July 20, 2023**

This was 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.

I. Opening

A. The meeting was called to order at 6:01 pm.

Vice Chair Malcolm Fick stated that per the open meeting law, BRPC was recording this meeting. Others may record the meeting after informing the meeting Chair. Documents presented must be provided to the Chair at the meeting. Josh Bloom reported that he was recording the meeting.

Tom Matuszko announced that Economic Development Program Manager Laura Brennan has been promoted to an additional role as Assistant Director. She will assist with outreach, Commission development, and agency operations.

B. Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
Richard Roussin – Hinsdale Alternate
Leanne Yinger – Lanesborough Alternate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Jonathan James – New Marlborough Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Peter Matson – Washington Alternate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate

Towns with no Delegate or Alternate present:

Adams, Alford, Becket, Cheshire, Clarksburg, Dalton, Egremont, Florida, Hancock, Lenox, Monterey, Mt. Washington, New Ashford, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Tyringham, West Stockbridge, Windsor

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko, Marianne Sniezek, Kate Hill Tapia, Laura Brennan, Clete Kus, Nick Russo

Others Present:

Gail Ceresia, Paula Chenail, Josh Bloom

C. Approval of Minutes of May 18, 2023, Meeting

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the May 18, 2023, draft meeting minutes, and Rene Wood seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The minutes were approved with a roll call vote.

Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

II. Comments from and Discussion with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates Issues

None

III. Comments from the Public

Lee resident and Rest of the River (RoR) Committee Alternate Josh Bloom referenced concerns raised by Lee Alternate Bob Jones at the Executive Committee meeting (held earlier on 7/20, at 4:00 pm) regarding "intentionally misleading" the Town of Lee RoR representatives regarding disclosing information from the RoR Committee's lawyer. Josh said that Rene Wood, present at both Commission meetings and a RoR member, tried to trivialize the emails. After the Attorney General's Office found Open Meeting Law (OML) violations, they got Tom's emails showing that he wanted to mislead the Town of Lee so they would not have essential information. Josh claimed the Executive Committee did not "rebuke his actions or discipline Tom." Josh was traveling in his car and lost his telephone connection.

Paula Chenail, owner of Gould Farm in Adams next to Greylock Glen, shared a map of her family's farm. She is happy that the Regional Transportation Plan 2024-2044 addresses the lack of a shoulder and turnaround on Gould Rd. She wants to remind planners that funding for a connector road from Gould to West Mountain Rd. is needed. She asked that plans be sensitive to the needs of the farm. In 2021 Williams College students documented traffic, illegal parking, and congestion issues. Paula asked if that was considered in the discussion for the plan. Malcolm, the meeting Chair, noted that there would be more discussion on the Regional Transportation Plan later in the meeting, and staff can be asked then.

Tom Matuszko stated that BRPC is complying with public records law requests from Lee residents within the required timeframe.

Gail Ceresia, a Lee resident, tried to fill in for Mr. Bloom. She said the RoR met in Executive Session, excluding some interested parties, and various people have been trying to get minutes. Mr. Matuszko ran meetings and did not let people talk. Many people in Lee are upset with the settlement agreement, do not want the dump, and feel the other four towns (Lenox, Stockbridge, Great Barrington, and Sheffield) are benefiting financially and

bullying Lee. She suggested "the railroad" solution (vs. trucks) for removing PCBs and fears PCB dust can go into the air and threaten the water source. She claims that Rene Wood "has voted against Lee." Gail stated that towns are getting "a lot" of money, and Lee's \$25 million means "absolutely nothing." Gail said Tom Matuszko has collaborated with GE, EPA, and the other four towns. She asked that Josh be permitted to speak again. The meeting Chair decided to continue with the agenda.

IV. Presentation of Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions.

V. Vote to Elect BRPC Officers for FY 2024

The Nominating Committee proposed the following slate of officers for FY 2024:

- Chair: Malcolm Fick, Great Barrington Alternate
- Vice Chair: John Duval, Adams Alternate
- Clerk: Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield Delegate
- Treasurer: Buck Donovan, Lee Delegate

No nominations were made from the floor.

Rene Wood moved to elect the slate of officers as proposed; it was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by a roll call vote:

Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

VI. Vote to Endorse Committee Chairs and At-Large Executive Committee Member Appointments for FY 2024

The BRPC bylaws require the Commission to approve the Committee Chairs and At-Large Executive Committee members as recommended by the BRPC Chair.

- Environmental Review Committee: Roger Bolton, Williamstown
- Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee: Kyle Hanlon, North Adams
- At-Large Executive Committee members: Kyle Hanlon, North Adams, and Sam Haupt, Peru

Rene Wood moved to endorse the Committee Chairs and At-Large Executive Committee member appointments for FY 2024 per the recommendations of the Chair; Shelia Irvin seconded the motion. A roll call vote authorized the endorsement.

Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

VII. Vote to Authorize the BRPC Chair to Vote to Approve the 2024 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) at the July 25, 2023 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting

Nick Russo, Senior Transportation Planner, reviewed the 2024-2044 proposed Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), laying the groundwork for Berkshire County's transportation investments. The document distills data, feedback, and budgets and recommends projects, programs, and activities for planning staff. It must be filed with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) for eligibility for federal dollars. The presentation is posted on the [BRPC website](#).

Richard Roussin commented that we need more recreational bike routes vs. commuting, there isn't enough funding to maintain roads, and it must be difficult to estimate costs in the future.

Richard Roussin moved to authorize the BRPC Chair to vote to approve the RTP at the Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting on July 25. Rene Wood seconded the motion. A roll call vote authorized the vote.

Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

VIII. Vote to Authorize the BRPC Chair to Vote to Approve the October 1, 2023 – September 30, 2024 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) at the July 25, 2023 Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Meeting

Clete Kus, Transportation Program Manager, reviewed the draft Unified Planning Work Program for FY 2024. It establishes the transportation planning work BRPC staff will be involved in for the coming year. Some tasks include Title VI and economic justice, management of the 3C process, traffic and travel data, mapping, pavement management, bicycle and pedestrian studies, safety initiatives, scenic byways, rail expansion, and land use planning. Clete's presentation is on the [BRPC website](#).

In response to an e-bike safety question, Clete said the plan allows for safety education. That could include police departments.

Sheila Irvin moved to authorize the BRPC Chair to vote to approve the UPWP at the Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting on July 25. Buck Donovan seconded the motion. A roll call vote authorized the vote.

Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

IX. Authorization for Executive Committee to Act on Behalf of the Commission

BRPC bylaws require Commission members to vote annually, reconfirming the Executive Committee's authorization to act in the name of and on behalf of the Commission. Details on three easy ways to vote by **Friday, August 4**, were described in an attached memo: email response, SurveyMonkey poll, or return the form in the packet. The memo will be sent via email to Delegates.

X. Recruitment to BRPC Committees

An outline of committee opportunities will be shared with Delegates and Alternates. Environmental Review, Regional Issues, and Community Development are especially looking for new members.

XI. Ethics Law Compliance Records

Annually, Commission Delegates, Alternates, and committee members must confirm they are current on their Conflict of Interest Training certificate and acknowledge receipt of the Conflict of Interest Law. Follow up will happen via the same email reminding Delegates to vote on authorizing the Executive Committee to act on behalf of the full Commission.

XII. Economic Development District "Survey" of Commission Members

Laura Brennan explained that Berkshire County sought and received an Economic Development District designation from the federal Economic Development Administration. The designation requires BRPC to report the work backgrounds of Delegates and Alternates to confirm the diversity of experiences and expertise on the Commission. An email with a brief survey will be sent to the Alternates and Delegates.

XIII. Executive Director's Report

A. BRPC Staff Changes and Recognition

Tom announced that Laura Brennan was promoted to BRPC Assistant Director. She will remain as the Economic Development Program Manager as well. She will focus on operations assistance, development and implementation of agency plans and goals, public relations and outreach, and Commission Development.

Based on their recent fine performance, Seth Jenkins, Jaymie Zapata, and Marie Brady have been promoted to Senior Planners.

Also, BRPC has had a strong group of summer interns. Tom thanked Evan Boyle, Michael Keegan, Avery Kolenski, Adam Sussbauer, and Alison Zhang for their helpful efforts.

B. BRPC FY 24 Meeting Schedule

The Executive Committee approved the draft FY 24 schedule at their 7/20, 4:00 pm meeting Chair. Meetings will be sent via Outlook.

XIV. Adjournment

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn, seconded by Sheila Irvin, and approved by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:18 pm.

Peter Traub, Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Dick Roussin, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Jonathan James, Sheila Irvin, Rene Wood, Christine Rasmussen, Peter Matson, Roger Bolton

DRAFT



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

MALCOLM FICK, Chair
JOHN DUVAL, Vice-Chair
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer
THOMAS MATUSZKO, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Delegates and Alternates, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director
DATE: September 18, 2023
SUBJ: Executive Committee Actions for July 20, 2023 & September 7, 2023

Per the bylaws, actions taken by the Executive Committee on the Commission's behalf are reported and presented for discussion at the next Commission meeting. The Executive Committee took the following actions at the September meeting. There was no August meeting.

Executive Committee Actions on July 20, 2023

Approved the minutes of the June 1, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee meeting

Approved the May 24 to June 30, 2023, Expenditures Report

Approval for the Executive Director to Enter into Intergovernmental Agreements and Contracts with Municipalities

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director to enter into intergovernmental agreements and contracts for services with municipalities in FY 24.

Authorization for the BRPC Assistant Director Position to be a Signatory on BRPC Checks

The Executive Committee authorized the BRPC Assistant Director position as a signatory on BRPC checks.

Approval (after the fact) of the Submission of a Grant Application to the Woodlands Partnerships Implementation Grant Program (Regional)

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the MA EOEEA Woodlands Partnership Implementation Grant program. Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC), in collaboration with partners, will design and implement an indoor educational exhibit at the Greylock Glen Outdoor Center.

Approval to Submit a Grant Application for Funds Provided through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Home and Community-Based Services as Administered by AgeSpan

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements for funds provided through the Commonwealth of Massachusetts under the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Home and Community-Based Services as administered by AgeSpan. The Public Health Program's \$25,000 proposal is for the acceleration of age-and dementia-friendly diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) work.

Vote to Approve the Executive Director Position Description

The Executive Committee voted to approve the Executive Director position description with no changes. The bylaws require a review of the description at least every five years.

Executive Committee Actions on September 7, 2023

Approved the minutes of the July 20, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee meeting

Approved the July 1 to September 1, 2023, Expenditures Report

Approved a Response to a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute for Outreach and Engagement Services to Support Digital Equity Statewide Plans / RFQ No. 2023-MBI-09

The Executive Committee approved (after the fact) a response to a request for qualifications to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute for Outreach and Engagement Services to Support Digital Equity Statewide Plans in Berkshire County.

Approved a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) Related to Mobile Addiction Services

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to the MA Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) related to Mobile Addiction Services and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements.

Approved an Application to the Advancing Equity in Aging Funding Opportunity with the NextFifty Initiative

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director (after the fact) to apply to the Advancing Equity in Aging Funding Opportunity with the NextFifty Initiative and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements.

Approved a New BRPC Written Information Security Policy

The Executive Committee approved the new BRPC Written Information Security Policy (WISP) to create effective administrative, technical, and physical safeguards for the protection of Personally Identifiable Information (PII).

Approved a Revised Use of the Internet and Communications Systems, Including Phones & Cell Phones Policy

The Executive Committee approved the revised Use of the Internet and Communications Systems, including phones & cell phones originally adopted on 11/07/2013.

Approved a Grant Application to MIIA Wellness Program

The Executive Committee approved the Executive Director to (after the fact) submit and accept a \$5000 grant application to the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Wellness grant program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements.

Approved a Grant application to the Partnership Planning Program under the Economic Development Administration (EDA)

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director to submit a \$70,000 application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the EDA's Partnership Planning grant program for 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS implementation.

Approved Kusik Award

The Executive Committee chose a 2023 Kusik Awardee.

Approved Executive Director FY 23 Performance Review and FY 24 Salary

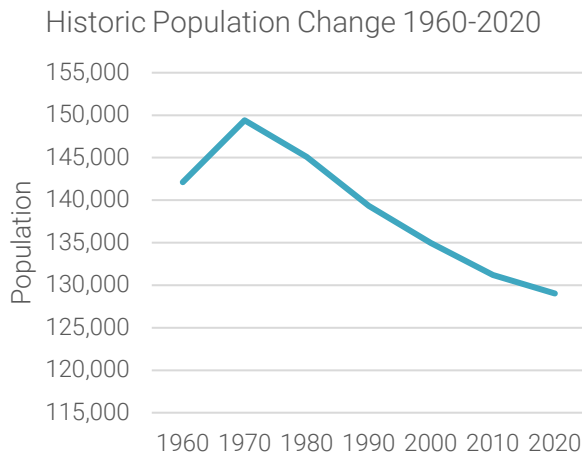
The Executive Committee approved the Executive Director's FY 23 performance review and FY 24 salary.

2020 CENSUS SUMMARY

Key Takeaways from the 2020 Decennial Census for Berkshire County

The U.S. Census Bureau released a complete set of results from the 2020 Decennial Census in May 2023. These results provide a clearer picture of the demographics of our region than the earlier release in January 2021 and are more accurate than the annual American Community Survey. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a disruption to the 2020 U.S. Decennial Census, which may have impacted some of these numbers.

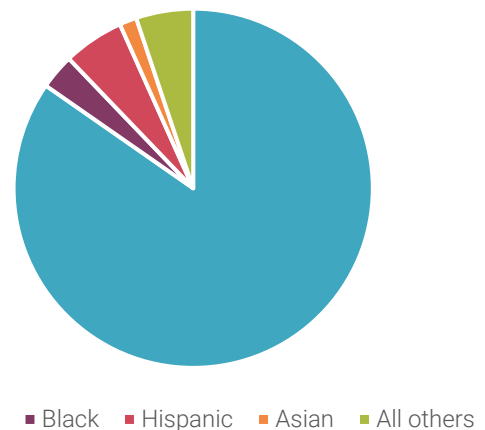
The overall population in 2020 was 129,026, which is down from 131,219. This represents a loss of 2,193 people or 1.7% of the population. Becket, Egremont, Monterey, and Tyringham gained over 100 people. In contrast, Hancock, New Ashford, and Sandisfield gained less than 100 people but more than 5% of their population. Meanwhile, Adams, Dalton, Hinsdale, Lee, North Adams, Pittsfield, and Williamstown lost over 100 people. Florida, Savoy, Washington, and Windsor lost less than 100 people but more than 5%.



In addition to having fewer people, the population is getting older. The median age in the Berkshires in 2020 is 47.8 years, a gain of 3.1 years since 2010. Alford is the oldest town, with a median age of 61.3, followed by Stockbridge at 59.6 and Richmond at 58.3. Williamstown is the youngest town at 36.1 years, followed by North Adams at 42.6 years and Pittsfield at 44.2 years.

The county has continued to get more diverse. In 2020, 19,763 people, or 15.3% of the population, were classified as BIPOC. This is up from 12,293, or 9.4% of the population. Pittsfield is the most diverse community, with 9,741 people, or 22.2%, BIPOC. This is followed by Williamstown with 1,626 people, or 21.6%, and Great Barrington with 1,355 people, or 18.9% of the population. Peru is the least diverse, with 36 people, or 4.4% of the population, followed by Otis, with 96, or 5.9%, and Clarksburg, with 90 people or 5.4%.

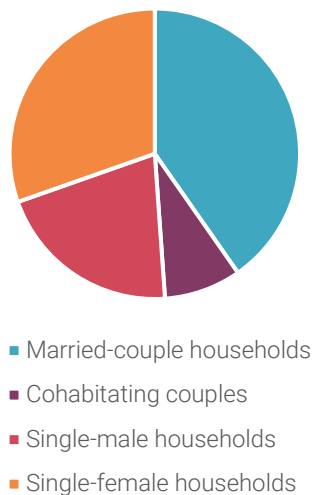
Race and Ethnicity 2020



There are 57,015 households in the county, amounting to 2.26 people per household. The county has seen an increase in households from 2010 (56,091 households). Still, due to the decrease in population, the number of people per household decreased from 2.34 people per household in 2010. Municipalities range from 2.00 in Mount Washington and 2.1 in Lenox to 2.98 in Williamstown.

In 2020, 40.3% of households were married couples households. Another 8.6% were cohabitating couples. Single male households amounted to 20.7%, while single female households are 30.4%. Of households with children under 18, 56% were married couple households, 13% were cohabitating couples, 7% were male householders, and 24% were female householders.

Household Composition 2020

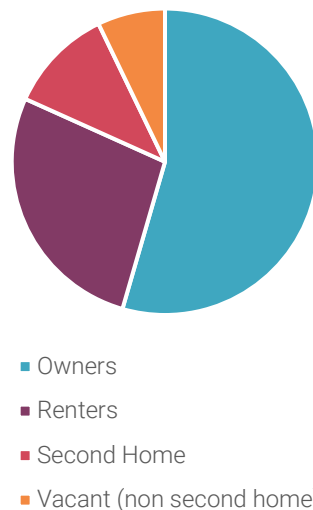


As the population ages, we see a high percentage of households (17%) comprised of people aged 65 years and older living alone.

The number of housing units has increased from 68,508 in 2010 to 69,759 in 2020, an increase of 1.8%. Of these, there are 12,744 vacant units, up from 12,417 in 2010. The most significant portion of these vacant units is classified by the Census Bureau as seasonal housing. There were 7,756 seasonal homes (second homes) in 2020, or 11.1% of all housing units. This is down from 7,894 seasonal units, or 11.5%. The three towns with the highest percentage of second homes are Hancock (63.6%), Otis (47.6%), and Becket (43.7%). The communities with the lowest percentage of second homes are Adams (90.9%), Clarksburg (1.7%), and North Adams (1.7%).

The non-second home vacant units are mainly comprised of units for rent, sale, and other vacant. There has been a decrease in the number of units for rent or sale but an increase in the number of units that have sold or are rented but not occupied. Lenox has the highest percentage of units available for rent, at 3.2%, followed by North Adams (3.0%) and Pittsfield (2.9%). Pittsfield (628) and North Adams (208) have the most significant number of units for rent. Washington has the highest percentage of units for sale at 3.3%, followed by Tyringham (2.4%) and other south county municipalities. North County communities, in general, had the lowest percentages of units for sale.

Housing Occupancy 2020



In 2020, owners comprised 66.7% (38,006) of housing units, while renters comprised the remaining 33.3% (19,009). The percentage of owners has gone down 0.6% from 2010. The municipalities with the highest percentage of owner-occupied homes were Peru (96.5%), Mount Washington (95.0%), and Windsor (94.2%). The highest percentage of renters can be found in North Adams (48.5%), Pittsfield (41.1%), and Adams (39.6%).

The self-response rate for the 2020 U.S. Census was 63.2%, slightly lower than the 2010 self-response rate of 63.7%. The housing units that do not respond are visited by census takers. If no one is home after several visits, the housing unit is subject to administrative records review, which involves the Census Bureau researching who lives there through governmental databases.

The accuracy of the 2020 Census is comparable to the previous decennial census, with undercounts in most BIPOC communities and children and overcounts in non-Hispanic white and Asian populations.

	Population	Median Age	Population < 18	Population 65+
Adams	8,166	44.6	1,526	1,800
Alford	486	61.3	75	200
Becket	1,931	52.9	307	465
Cheshire	3,258	50.1	573	799
Clarksburg	1,657	48.4	311	372
Dalton	6,330	47.2	1,228	1,511
Egremont	1,372	56.4	182	482
Florida	694	50.5	115	145
Great Barrington	7,172	49.6	1,296	1,981
Hancock	757	53.1	119	202
Hinsdale	1,919	53.4	294	483
Lanesborough	3,038	49.3	559	660
Lee	5,788	51.2	885	1,686
Lenox	5,095	56.9	741	1,846
Monterey	1,095	54.8	140	371
Mount Washington	160	57.5	14	58
New Ashford	250	53.5	36	66
New Marlborough	1,528	54.7	239	462
North Adams	12,961	42.6	2,227	2,646
Otis	1,634	56.8	194	477
Peru	814	49.7	131	163
Pittsfield	43,927	44.2	8,477	9,297
Richmond	1,407	58.3	174	477
Sandisfield	989	54.6	159	296
Savoy	645	52.1	67	158
Sheffield	3,327	52.1	531	907
Stockbridge	2,018	59.6	216	780
Tyringham	427	57.9	57	174
Washington	494	58.0	76	166
West Stockbridge	1,343	54.0	206	408
Williamstown	7,513	36.1	1,000	1,734
Windsor	831	54.0	103	220
Berkshire County	129,026	47.8	22,258	31,492

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2020



	White alone	Black or African American alone	American Indian and Alaska Native alone	Asian alone	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	Some Other Race alone	Two or More Races	Hispanic or Latino
Adams	7,353	103	7	41	0	17	419	226
Alford	447	2	0	4	0	2	10	21
Becket	1,779	10	0	9	0	3	67	63
Cheshire	2,995	22	2	31	5	0	124	79
Clarksburg	1,567	6	0	11	0	0	54	19
Dalton	5,812	56	2	60	0	16	223	161
Egremont	1,235	7	0	11	0	18	32	69
Florida	635	4	0	2	0	1	41	11
Great Barrington	5,817	163	8	208	2	20	311	643
Hancock	690	1	1	10	0	1	36	18
Hinsdale	1,799	9	2	10	0	9	61	29
Lanesborough	2,747	30	6	39	0	11	122	83
Lee	5,083	54	6	138	2	24	177	304
Lenox	4,570	50	4	102	2	16	128	223
Monterey	999	16	4	13	0	1	30	32
Mount Washington	145	0	0	6	0	1	7	1
New Ashford	228	7	0	1	0	1	11	2
New Marlborough	1,425	9	8	6	0	6	43	31
North Adams	11,111	314	22	98	1	80	744	591
Otis	1,538	3	6	9	0	2	47	29
Peru	778	1	0	0	0	1	24	10
Pittsfield	34,186	2,850	67	620	6	300	2,359	3,539
Richmond	1,285	11	0	23	0	10	39	39
Sandisfield	917	6	2	2	0	5	38	19
Savoy	592	14	0	1	0	3	27	8
Sheffield	2,963	26	6	13	0	10	139	170
Stockbridge	1,846	21	0	14	0	13	34	90
Tyringham	392	7	1	4	0	0	11	12
Washington	458	0	1	0	0	2	18	15
West Stockbridge	1,221	9	1	12	0	5	49	46
Williamstown	5,887	249	9	500	0	51	355	462
Windsor	763	4	0	1	0	3	41	19
Berkshire County	109,263	4,064	165	1,999	18	632	5,821	7,064

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2020

	Households	People per household	Married-couple households	Cohabiting couples	Single-male households	Single-female households	Population 65+ living alone
Adams	3,821	2.14	1,388	354	865	1,214	673
Alford	227	2.14	125	14	48	40	36
Becket	891	2.17	443	83	203	162	107
Cheshire	1,408	2.31	723	123	260	302	208
Clarksburg	691	2.40	365	70	110	146	84
Dalton	2,719	2.33	1,225	225	490	779	457
Egremont	634	2.16	299	66	96	173	106
Florida	329	2.11	156	28	80	65	42
Great Barrington	3,025	2.37	1,192	191	580	1,062	598
Hancock	333	2.27	174	34	62	63	45
Hinsdale	871	2.20	429	90	168	184	111
Lanesborough	1,301	2.34	650	123	239	289	130
Lee	2,592	2.23	1,157	187	468	780	502
Lenox	2,430	2.10	959	135	446	890	667
Monterey	499	2.19	231	49	81	138	91
Mount Washington	80	2.00	41	12	12	15	7
New Ashford	110	2.27	59	10	24	17	5
New Marlborough	679	2.25	352	49	116	162	97
North Adams	5,888	2.20	1,818	624	1,449	1,997	1036
Otis	773	2.11	417	40	164	152	99
Peru	344	2.37	205	33	59	47	29
Pittsfield	19,716	2.23	6,739	1,849	4,481	6,647	3181
Richmond	635	2.22	373	44	75	143	83
Sandisfield	392	2.52	196	21	81	94	64
Savoy	294	2.19	152	33	59	50	36
Sheffield	1,483	2.24	699	145	274	365	248
Stockbridge	960	2.10	417	57	195	291	228
Tyringham	175	2.44	109	10	24	32	18
Washington	214	2.31	133	10	38	33	26
West Stockbridge	618	2.17	318	44	101	155	95
Williamstown	2,518	2.98	1,213	110	414	781	492
Windsor	365	2.28	216	33	63	53	46
Berkshire County	57,015	2.26	22,973	4,896	11,825	17,321	9647

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2020

	Housing Units	Owners	Renters	Non-Seasonal Vacant Units	Second Homes
Adams	4336	2,308	1,513	478	37
Alford	337	205	22	10	100
Becket	1687	813	78	59	737
Cheshire	1539	1,207	201	76	55
Clarksburg	749	598	93	45	13
Dalton	2928	2,006	713	126	83
Egremont	941	532	102	63	244
Florida	362	292	37	18	15
Great Barrington	3686	1,877	1,148	278	383
Hancock	998	277	56	30	635
Hinsdale	1126	721	150	56	199
Lanesborough	1489	1,108	193	70	118
Lee	3398	1,697	895	204	602
Lenox	3184	1,586	844	212	542
Monterey	883	409	90	40	344
Mount Washington	173	76	4	42	51
New Ashford	126	87	23	6	10
New Marlborough	997	585	94	52	266
North Adams	6871	3,038	2,850	866	117
Otis	1609	685	88	70	766
Peru	416	332	12	19	53
Pittsfield	21738	11,604	8,112	1512	510
Richmond	885	569	66	30	220
Sandisfield	659	360	32	46	221
Savoy	350	274	20	23	33
Sheffield	1766	1,132	351	98	185
Stockbridge	1633	664	296	119	554
Tyringham	289	157	18	23	91
Washington	270	197	17	19	37
West Stockbridge	852	525	93	47	187
Williamstown	3009	1,741	777	234	257
Windsor	473	344	21	17	91
Berkshire County	69759	38,006	19,009	4988	7,756

Source: U.S. Decennial Census 2020



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

MALCOLM FICK, Chair
JOHN DUVAL, Vice-Chair
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer
THOMAS MATUSZKO, A.I.C.P.
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates & Alternates
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director
DATE: September 15, 2023
SUBJ: September 21, 2023, Commission Meeting

A. 2023 Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference

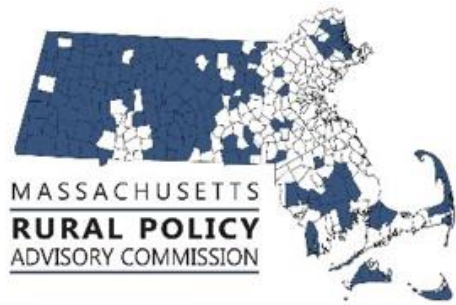
The 2023 Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference for municipal officials and staff, co-hosted by the Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and Division of Local Services will be held at the College of the Holy Cross on Tuesday, Oct. 10, 2023. Lt. Governor Driscoll and a panel of Cabinet members will start off the morning followed by breakout sessions on:

- Climate Resiliency and Climate Action Plans;
- Building Livable Communities;
- Post-Pandemic Public Health; and
- Rural Empowerment
- Federal Funding Opportunities

Register at [2023 MARPA / DLS Conference \(constantcontact.com\)](https://constantcontact.com)

B. Housing Bond Bill Priorities

The Healey Administration will soon be releasing a Housing Bond Bill. Attached are the Rural Policy Advisory Commission's priorities for items to be included in the bill.



September 11, 2023

Secretary Edward Augustus
Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities
100 Cambridge St, Suite 300
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Secretary Augustus:

As you create a Housing Bond Bill, the Rural Policy Advisory Commission would like to highlight the very real challenges of housing production in rural communities and offer recommendations that the Healy administration could implement to ensure that housing opportunities are improved in all parts of Massachusetts.

As background, the Rural Policy Advisory Commission was created by legislation in 2018 with the mission to enhance the economic vitality of rural communities. "Rural" is defined as Massachusetts municipalities with a population density of less than 500 people per square mile. Using 2020 Census figures, this totals 166 communities in Massachusetts, which is nearly half of the municipalities in Massachusetts. To enhance the economic vitality of rural communities, rural communities need high quality, sustainable, affordable and diverse housing options.

The need for housing is just as acute in rural areas of Massachusetts as in urban Massachusetts but the challenges to develop that housing is arguably more difficult in rural areas. Why?

- The cost to construct housing units can be more expensive in rural areas. Often there is no sewer or water infrastructure so infrastructure expansion or creation is required. Unlike urban areas, there is a greater need for parking areas and sometimes roads. Most importantly, developments are smaller so soft costs like design and engineering are absorbed by fewer units and smaller developments get less favorable volume pricing for construction materials.
- Many rural areas in western Massachusetts have soft real estate markets and have significantly lower wages. This means that an "Affordable" unit is not significantly less than an "affordable" unit for a typical rural wage earner; construction costs are not recouped by rental rates; and there are fewer construction firms serving western Massachusetts, which results in less competitive bidding.

- In rural communities with booming real estate markets like Cape Cod, the Islands and southern Berkshire County, workers earn too much for LIHTC units or earn more than 80% of AMI and yet the housing market and housing prices is driven by second home buyers and vacation rentals, which makes most housing dramatically unaffordable. This lack of affordability for typical year-round wage earners also means there is a lack of construction tradespeople, which then drives up construction costs.
- Rural developments are often not eligible for competitive or discretionary state housing funding programs: developments with smaller unit counts cannot compete with large, urban projects; limited transit in rural areas precludes rural areas from being eligible for funding geared toward transit-oriented sites; homeownership subsidies like the Commonwealth Builder program are not available in rural communities; and yields for state and federal tax credits are lower in rural markets.
- Projects are not financially feasible. To fit into the rural character of a community, projects are small in scale so do not benefit from the economies of scale or competitiveness already described. The state subsidy for rural areas does recognize required infrastructure upgrades. Distressed, small municipalities do not have funds to fill substantial gaps and market rents are too soft to subsidize ongoing operations.

Already most of rural Massachusetts has a housing shortage. These shortages will be compounded as our population ages and our household sizes get smaller. Population projections portend a shrinking of rural populations in decades to come. This should not be used as a reason or excuse to build less housing in rural areas. We consider population decline and an aging population to be among the biggest threats facing the economy and survivability of rural areas. Rural areas need housing for the current population and to attract future young, working families to bolster our future population.

For these reasons, we ask that you give dedicated thought to rural housing production needs as you develop the Housing Bond Bill. The following ideas would each make housing production more feasible in rural areas of the Commonwealth and assure equity of funding.

1. Increase funding to the Affordable Housing Trust Fund, Housing Stabilization Funds, and Housing Innovations Funds and create a rural set aside program to ensure equitable distribution of funding and projects.
2. Increase funding to the Rural Development Fund.
3. Waive the per unit subsidy cap in rural areas that are also historically soft housing markets.
4. Reintroduce the Community Scale Housing Program with a subsidy large enough to replace LIHTC equity.
5. Create a rural equivalent to the Commonwealth Builders Program.
6. The rural housing stock is the oldest in the Commonwealth. Enact the Massachusetts Healthy Homes Program to provide rehabilitation and energy efficiency funding for low income homeowners.
7. Extend/remove the 5-year sunset on the Community Investment Tax Credit program and increase funding for this program from \$12m to \$15m.

8. Create a program and provide funding for rural staffing/development capacity to assist municipalities with predevelopment and development activities, e.g. the former SEED program.
9. Enact or incentivize zoning reforms that encourage housing production:
 - a. Accessory Dwelling Units by right. For rural areas without sewer and water infrastructure, Title 5 issues will need to be addressed. (Vermont and Maine have adopted programs that provide subsidies to help homeowners upgrade septic systems. Such a program could be developed in MA.) Municipalities should also have the flexibility to limit the use of ADUs as short-term rentals.
 - b. Reduced lot sizes for areas with water and sewer infrastructure.
 - c. Infill development.
10. As the Massachusetts population grows older and the aging of the population is accelerating in rural areas, prioritize senior housing developments so seniors can age in place. (In past years, DHCD opposed senior housing developments. This policy should change if it has not already.)
11. Include the provisions of the Real Estate Transfer Tax bill (a local option tax for housing development) the HERO legislation (raises Deeds Excise Tax for housing development and climate resilience). Note: these bills will add tools to municipal housing development toolboxes but will not solve the housing production problem without the reforms and funding identified above and will have less impact in soft real estate markets and in rural communities with a limited tax base.

The RPAC would be very happy to discuss these recommendations further and we appreciate your attention on rural needs and issues. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Linda Dunlavy, Chair of the Rural Policy Advisory Commission

C Anne Gobi, Director of Rural Affairs
Senator Lydia Edwards and Representative James Arciero, Chairs, Joint Committee on Housing
Rural Legislative Caucus Members