



A Newsletter for Community Planning in the Berkshire Region

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Staff Announcements



BRPC is happy to welcome the following new staff members!

[Ryan Griffis](#) has joined the Transportation Program as a Planner. His focus is supporting the Metropolitan Planning Organization's activities, Safe Streets and Roads for All, analyzing readiness for electric vehicles and charging stations, and addressing the mandates of the State's Clean Energy and Climate Plans. Ryan has dual master's degrees in regional planning and sustainability science and most recently completed research and an application to have UMass Amherst recognized as a Bike-Friendly University.



[Matthew Bryan](#) is the new Public Health Emergency Preparedness Senior Planner. He has a BS in Behavioral Neuroscience and a BA in German from the University of Evansville and is currently pursuing his MPH from Oklahoma State University. Matthew has worked on emergency planning, epidemiology, public health research, disease intervention, and health education in Connecticut and Oklahoma. He provides staff support to municipalities for emergency planning, training, exercises, and response. He lives in Pittsfield with his partner and two cats and enjoys eating food and traveling.

[Dan Hassett](#) has started as a Housing Specialist with the Public Health Program. He is training to enforce housing codes and local regulations and conduct environmental health inspections. Dan will support inspectional services and the development of a local Public Health Excellence Training Hub. He has a strong background in laboratory and general operations management, manufacturing, quality control, and safety. A lifelong resident of the Berkshires, Dan graduated from MCLA with a BS in Biology and minor in Chemistry. An avid outdoorsman, he grew up hiking, hunting, fishing, and skiing throughout the region. Dan enjoys reading, teaching youth archery, gaming with friends, and adventures with his family. He lives in Pittsfield with his wife, son, and two cats.



[Alison Dixon](#) is joining the Environmental & Energy Program as a part-time Project Specialist supporting local communities, and conservation organizations with projects related to climate change and sustainability, natural hazard mitigation, nonpoint source pollution and stormwater, and protection of the natural environment. Alison is well known in the community from her many years with [Housatonic Valley Association](#).

We are also thrilled that [Jazu Stine](#), started 10/2 as a Public Health Food Specialist. We will tell you more about him in the November Common Ground.

Grants & Opportunities

2023 Community Health Equity Survey

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) is conducting a statewide community health equity survey to enable DPH to improve its Programs, make decisions about funding and resources, and support policies to improve health inequities. It takes approximately 15 to 25 minutes to complete and can be accessed at <https://www.mass.gov/chei>.

Municipalities with more than 30 responses will receive a municipal-level analysis. So we encourage you to push it to your residents!

2023 Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference, Tuesday, October 10, 2023

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll invites you to the Municipal Partnerships Conference for municipal officials and staff, co-hosted by the Massachusetts Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) and Division of Local Services (DLS) at the College of the Holy Cross Campus Center.

Breakout sessions include:

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

The \$20 fee can be paid upon registering via PayPal or credit card. Checks can be mailed to the [Metropolitan Area Planning Council](#). Only checks will be accepted for day-of check-in. Register [HERE](#).

Community Compact Program

[Best Practices Program](#) applications can be submitted by municipalities *that did not apply in FY23 for a Compact*. **Applications are being accepted on a rolling basis, and will close very soon.** Click [HERE](#) for the complete set of best practices.

The [Community Compact IT Grant Program](#) is focused on driving innovation and transformation at the local level via investments in technology. Using the transformative powers of IT to drive innovation, make government more efficient, save taxpayer money, and make it easier for residents to interact and transact with their local government. The application period is **September 11 to noon on October 13, 2023**. *Cities and towns that were awarded an IT Grant Program grant in FY23 are not eligible in FY24.*

The purpose of the [Efficiency and Regionalization](#) (E&R) program is to provide financial support for governmental entities interested in implementing regionalization and other efficiency initiatives that allow for long-term sustainability. These grants fund one-time or transition costs for municipalities, regional school districts, school districts considering forming a regional school district or regionalizing services, regional planning agencies and councils of governments. The application period is from **January 8 to noon on February 9, 2024**. Access the application page [HERE](#). Applications cannot be saved once they are started and should be completed all at once.

The [Municipal Fiber Grant Program](#) assists municipalities with the construction of municipal fiber broadband infrastructure and related projects and expenditures. It requires a match. The application period is from **March 11 to noon on April 12, 2024**. Contact [Sean Cronin](#), Senior Deputy Commissioner of Local Services with questions.

Massachusetts Historical Commission Fall 2023 Virtual Workshops

MHC's fall 2023 virtual workshop details and registration: [HERE](#). Two ticket options are offered: "Live" tickets provide Zoom information to attend in real time and a recording of the workshop. "Recording" tickets will only provide a recording after the workshop ends. You do not need to register for both tickets to receive the recording.

- **Historic Resources Survey, Tuesday, October 10, 7:00 pm**

- The National Register of Historic Places, Wednesday, October 25, 1:00 pm
- Architectural Styles, Forms, and Building Technologies of Massachusetts, Friday, November 10, 10:00 am
- State and Federal Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits, Monday, November 20, 7:00 pm
- Understanding the Secretary of Interior's Standards, Thursday, December 7, 10:00 am

Accessible Trails Discussion Part III: Funding Your Project with MassTrails October 23, 5:00 - 6:30 pm

Join [MassTrails](#) and host [Berkshire Natural Resources Council](#) for a virtual discussion on how to get accessible trail projects funded through the MassTrails Grant Program. Hear the requirements for accessibility, tips on complementary funding sources, project challenges, and lessons learned from previous projects. Please RSVP by clicking [HERE](#).

Missed BNRC's Accessible Trails Discussion Part I or Part II? No need to fret! You can watch recordings by following the links below.

[Accessible Trails Discussion Part I: Importance, Wayfinding, and Information Sharing](#)

[Accessible Trails Discussion Part II: Building, Modification, and Maintenance](#)

MaPIT 5.0 Virtual Trainings: October 24, 30, November 2, 10:00 am

Massachusetts Project Intake Tool (MaPIT) 5.0 is MassDOT's project initiation platform for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the State Transportation Improvement Program (STIP). In collaboration with MassDOT, UMass Transportation Center is offering three free virtual training sessions. Register [HERE](#).

Jamie Pottorn from [American Farmland Trust](#) and BRPC are hoping to work on a Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources request for proposals to support education about leasing and conserving municipally owned land for farming. The Trust is hosting an in-person event **December 5** for Berkshire farmers to learn more about leasing. Details at <https://farmland.org/event/berkshire-farm-leasing-winter2023/>

Community Planning

Monterey Master Plan Adoption

The Town of Monterey has completed a new Master Plan, with the Planning Board scheduling its adoption this month. The plan was funded by a Community Compact Grant from the State of Massachusetts and can be viewed at [Monterey MA |](#). Berkshire Regional Planning worked directly with the Monterey Planning Board to create a new Master Plan. The town last adopted a Master Plan in 2003.

From June 2022 to September 2023, the Planning Board conducted a series of interactive public forums, interviewed stakeholders and town officials, conducted an extensive survey of town residents, and worked with the consultants to draft and edit the plan. Survey responses came from full and part-time residents with more than 20% of the full-time residents responding. A total of 385 responses were received, 230 of those permanent residents. Monterey has approximately 1,100 residents.

As a result, the town has identified four categories with approximately 30 actions to work toward in the coming 20 years. The outreach work in the town clearly identified a need to promote environmental resilience and sustainability, preserve and enhance open spaces, support new business opportunities, enhance the town center, and diversify transportation improvements.

Senior Community Planner [Seth Jenkins](#) worked with the community to develop the Monterey Master Plan. He would be happy to talk with you about the process of updating the Master Plan in your community. 413-442-1521 extension 24

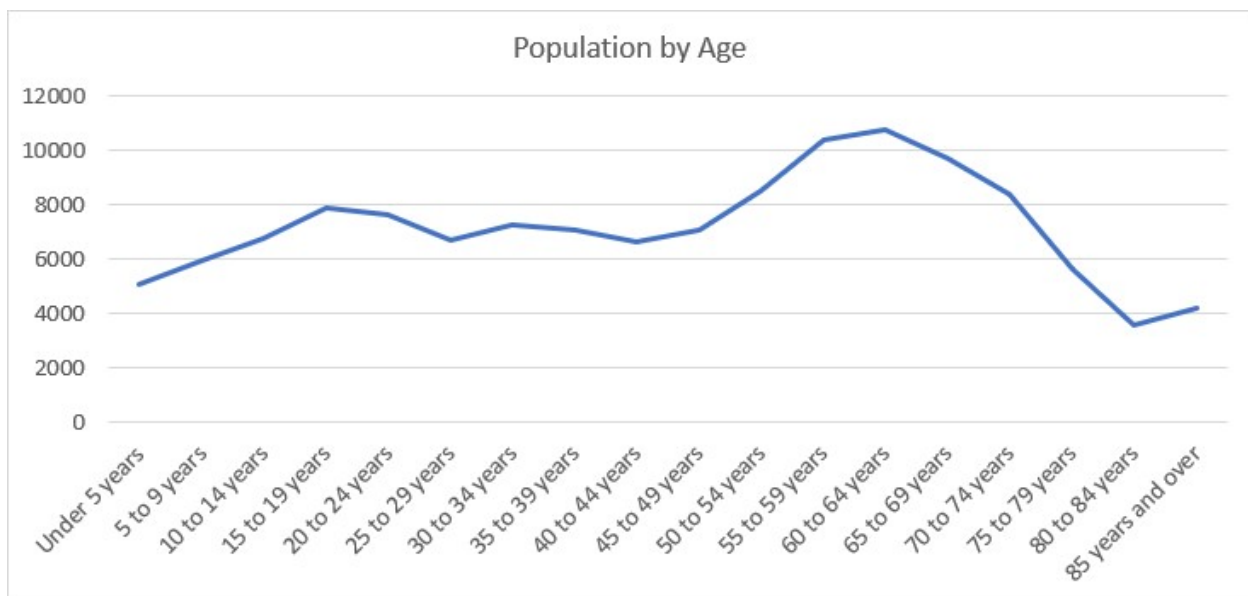


Monterey Master Plan Public Forum

Data & Information Services

Census 2020 Age Distribution

The US Census Bureau has been releasing the 2020 Census results over the last several months. One of the releases contained age data. The new data shows a steady population between age 10 and 50, with each year cohort averaging about 7000 people. Above age 50, the population jumps, with over 10,000 people in the three 5-year cohorts between age 55 and 69. Above age 70, the population drops as one would expect. The population is also low below the age of 10; however, Censuses often undercount children. Even with the undercount, the low number (~5000 age 0-4) indicates we do not have enough children to keep our population level. The significant difference between the 55-69 and younger populations is of particular concern. This imbalance will lead to significant population changes in the future years, including reduced workforce numbers and a steep decline in total population. For more information, contact [Mark Maloy](#).



Economic Development

Call for Submissions: New Priority Projects for inclusion in the 2024 Berkshire CEDS Report

The 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS contains a Priority Project list which inventories regionally significant economic development projects. Through December 31, 2023, BRPC staff and the CEDS Committee invite submission of additional projects not yet listed in the 2023-2027 CEDS.

Please note that this is **NOT** a grant application. BRPC, which manages the Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), is requesting this information in order to

track the most impactful projects throughout the region.

Read more and submit a Project [HERE](#).



Last Call to Register for [ArtWeek Berkshires](#), October 14-22

BRPC provides staff support to a collaborative effort of the five Berkshire County Cultural Districts. Now in its third year, [ArtWeek Berkshires](#) is a county-wide, crowd-sourced, celebration of creativity. Schools, libraries, and community-based groups participate by offering an interactive, hands-on, or participatory event between October 14th and 22nd, 2023. Register online before October 6 [HERE](#).

Environmental & Energy

Green Communities Update

As fall arrives with its cool weather, apple desserts, and pumpkin spice drinks, it's time to gear up for your Green Communities Annual Report. Green Communities must submit this report to demonstrate their continued adherence to the Five Designation Criteria and remain eligible for program grants. The annual report also tracks progress toward the community's 20% energy reduction goal.



New This Year - Web-Based Reporting!

That's right, say goodbye to large, clunky Excel workbooks because Annual Reporting is going digital! This new feature streamlines the process by automatically importing data from previous reports, including energy conservation measures, building stock changes, and permitting. This change simplifies reporting and speeds up the review process. Look out for the new form, set to launch during the first week of October, with training opportunities.

However, there's a learning curve, as with any new system or change. Consequently, the FY23 Annual Reports deadline will be slightly extended compared to previous years, requiring completion by December 1.

Start Preparing For Your Annual Reports

Getting a head start is key to a smooth reporting process. Start by contacting staff or department heads responsible for data collection and have them begin preparing now. This might include individuals handling payments to fuel vendors for deliverable fuels like propane or oil. Additionally, commence generating reports on your fleet's fuel usage by department. Consider the following questions:

- Have any building changes happened that could impact the town's energy consumption?
- Have energy-saving projects been implemented to reduce energy bills?
- Did you purchase electric or fuel-efficient vehicles, such as EVs or start-stop vehicles?

Preparing ahead of time ensures a more seamless reporting experience and a clearer path towards meeting your Green Communities goals. If you have questions about being a Green Community or are interested in pursuing energy-saving projects, please get in touch with [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#), Environmental and Energy Planner.

Public Health

Events and Education

Board of Health 101 Training

We are thrilled that the Berkshire Public Health Alliance's (BPHA) recent Board of Health 101 training session drew an impressive, in-person turnout of 13 enthusiastic participants. This annual training plays a pivotal role in our mission to enhance community health and well-being, and we are delighted to see such strong interest. Our participants' dedication and enthusiasm

truly reflect BPHA's spirit. We extend our heartfelt thanks to all who joined us and look forward to continuing educational initiatives to benefit our community.

Berkshire County Board of Health Association (BCBOHA) Fall Dinner

We are excited to announce the BCBOHA Fall Dinner on **Thursday, October 12**. This promises to be an enlightening evening featuring a distinguished speaker, Susan Waite, from the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), who will delve into the critical topic of waste reduction programs. It is a fantastic opportunity to deepen your understanding of sustainable practices and connect with like-minded individuals while enjoying a delectable dinner at the Pittsfield Country Club. To secure your spot, please register via [Eventbrite](#).

Upcoming Shelter Training

Watch for details about a webinar training on shelters tentatively scheduled for the afternoon of October 17. This invaluable training will equip participants with the skills and knowledge to provide essential assistance during times of crisis and emergency.

Email Berkshire Public Health Alliance Coordinator [Lydia Shulman](#) with questions about these opportunities.

Transportation

Berkshire MPO Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Workshop

The TIP is a five-year program prioritizing federally funded Berkshire County transportation projects. It implements the region's long-range transportation plan by programming federal funds for transit, highways, bridges, transportation enhancements, bike paths, safety, and air quality improvements. The TIP projects list is updated annually.

Join BRPC's Transportation Program staff virtually on **October 17, 2023, at 2:00 pm** to learn about the steps involved, from "Project Identification" by the Towns to the projects listed in the final document for implementation. This is an opportunity to ask MassDOT and BRPC staff questions regarding the TIP process. Visit the Events calendar for the Zoom link. For more information, contact Principal Transportation Planner [Anuja Koirala](#), extension 18.

Williamstown Mohican Recreational Trail Dedicated in September

On a sweltering late summer morning, dozens of attendees from Sheffield to Bennington, VT gathered under the shade of bright purple canopies on a ballfield at Williams College to formally dedicate and cut the ribbon on the Mohican Recreational Trail. State Highway Administrator Johnathan Gulliver, MassDOT Secretary and CEO Gina Fiandaca, State Representative John Barrett III, State Senator Paul Mark, and Berkshire Bike Path Council President Marjorie Cohan gave remarks. All speakers emphasized the collaborative and detail-oriented process that went into designing this trail, the first in the county that did not follow the path of a former rail bed. This created new challenges in design and permitting. Following remarks, a ribbon cutting was held on the trail.



The Mohican is the newest segment of off-road hiking and biking facilities in Berkshire County,

clocking in at approximately 2.3 miles. The Mohican Trail hugs the southern banks of the Hoosic River, connecting new trailheads at The Spruces Park in the east and Syndicate Road in the west. There is also trail access at a mid-point, where it crosses Cole Avenue and various points on the Williams College campus. The trail is also accessible via pathways in Lower Linear Park, off Route 2. While much of the trail is paved, the segment within Spruces Park is a gravel surface. Unlike rail trails that are often flat and straight, the Mohican is a winding, rolling path that meanders with the river and crosses several streams with newly built bridges. Canopies of trees shade the path surface and paint it with dappled sunlight. It was a pleasure to ride as a group representing the Berkshire Bike Path Council traveled to the ceremony by bike, starting from the Lower Linear Park trailhead.



The future vision of the Mohican Recreational Trail is to link beyond Williamstown to the North Adams Adventure Trail in the east (currently in planning) and an envisioned Bennington Trolley Line Trail to the north. With a final connection to the Ashuwillticook Rail Trail between Hodges Cross Road and downtown North Adams at MASS MoCA (currently in very early feasibility planning), a continuous northern Berkshire Bike Path from Williamstown to Pittsfield would be complete. As with the Mohican Recreational Trail, BRPC continues to provide support and involvement with the development of these trail

segments. You can help keep the momentum going on this work by expressing your support for the [Berkshire Bike Path](#) to your local leadership and joining the conversation on the Berkshire Bike Path Council's outreach list for occasional updates. Email Senior Transportation Planner [Nick Russo](#) to be added to the email list.

New Fleet Owner Reporting Requirements for Medium and Heavy Duty Vehicles (MHD)

On September 1, the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) adopted new regulations governing the usage of medium- and heavy-duty vehicles (MHD). 310 CMR 7.41 *Large Entity Reporting Requirement* requires large entities (fleet owners, businesses, government agencies, municipalities, brokers, etc.) to submit a one-time report on MHD (vehicles greater than 8,500 lbs.) operated or dispatched in Massachusetts. Specific information must be reported, including the vehicle type, usage characteristics, and registration. Exemptions exist for vehicles awaiting sale and emergency vehicles.

Reporting must be completed and submitted to MassDEP by **5:00 pm on Friday, March 1, 2024**, through the Massachusetts Large Entity Reporting Portal. More information and instructions are at: <https://www.mass.gov/how-to/large-entity-reporting-requirement>

Please contact [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#) for assistance or any questions that you may have.

October

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4 BRPC Executive Committee 3:00 BRPC & BCSEA Annual Meeting & Reception 4:00	5	6	7
18	9	10 Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference 9:00 – 1:00	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25 Regional Issues Committee 4:00	26	27	28
29	30	31	1	2 BRPC Executive Committee 4:00		

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
www.berkshireplanning.org



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