



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, October 5, 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

Chair Malcolm Fick called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. 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. He stated that BRPC was recording the meeting, and anyone else who wanted to record it needed to inform him.

II. Roll Call:

Read by Office Administrator Kate Hill Tapia:
Malcolm Fick, Chair, Gt Barrington Alternate
Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate
Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Lee Delegate
Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate
Kyle Hanlon, At-large, North Adams Delegate

Staff Present: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager; Kate Hill Tapia, Office Administrator; Laura Brennan, Assistant Director and Economic Development Program Manager; Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert, Environmental & Energy Planner

III. Approval of September 7, 2023 Minutes

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the September 7, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Kyle Hanlon and approved by a roll call vote from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Kyle Hanlon, and Roger Bolton.

IV. Financial Reports

A. September 1 to September 30, 2023 Expenditures Report

Roger Bolton moved to accept the report as presented, and Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

It was confirmed that insurance companies reimburse the large vaccine purchases.

B. Accounts Receivable Report/Assessments September 30, 2023

The over-90-day Dalton CDGB invoice is the standard time frame for CDGB funding. Payments have been received, and progress has been made on other outstanding invoices.

C. Line of Credit Report

It has not been used.

V. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates

None

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Approve (after the fact) a Grant Application to the New England Rural Health Association (Root Causes Solutions)*

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the New England Rural Health Association (Rural Causes Solutions) program. The Equity in Heat Emergencies Project is in response to the increasing frequency and duration of heat emergencies for which Berkshire County has no unified structure to address. This \$30,000 grant would research and identify best practices for heat emergencies for the marginalized, underserved living on lower incomes, in rural/remote or inadequate housing, without transportation, with a disability, or living alone. Partners include Emergency Management Directors, Regional Emergency Planning Committees, Councils on Aging and at-risk individuals. No match is required. Senior Public Health Planner [Matthew Bryan](#) is the BRPC contact.

Roger Bolton motioned to approve (after the fact) submitting a grant application and signing any contracts and agreements to the New England Rural Health Association (Rural Causes Solutions) program for an Equity in Heat Emergencies Project. Kyle Hanlon seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

B. Vote to Approve Comments to the Department of Public Utilities on their Proposed Draft Guidelines and Template for Municipal Aggregation

The Executive Committee was requested to approve the submission of comments to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) on their proposed draft Guidelines and Template for Municipal Aggregation. As stated by the DPU, the template is to guide prospective and existing municipal aggregations, establish a uniform set of rules and requirements for municipal aggregation plans consolidated into two documents, and help expedite Department review of municipal aggregation plans. Municipalities would be eligible for expedited review of proposed municipal aggregation plans by DPU when they comply with all elements of the Template Plan, including the specific requirements for expedited review. A copy of the comments was in the meeting materials. The staff lead on the project is Planner [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#).

Despite the purpose of streamlining guidelines, there is agreement that the proposed Guidelines and Template are unnecessary and burden small municipalities. Commenting on these types of documents is seen as an important role for BRPC. The MMA is also strongly against this document. The committee noted that the letter, drafted by Sherdyl, is well written.

Kyle Hanlon motioned to approve the recommended submission of comments to the Department of Public Utilities (DPU) on their proposed draft Guidelines and Template for Municipal Aggregation. Buck Donovan seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Kyle Hanlon, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

VII. Committee Reports and Discussion

A. Berkshire Brownfields

The Brownfields Committee met on September 14 and approved environmental site assessments for Hide Mound (a pile of partially tanned hides), North Adams, and Carpenter's Variety, Great Barrington. Minutes were not yet available.

B. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)

The CEDS met on September 27 and heard updates on the Economic Development District funding and Berkshire Innovation Center's EDA ARPA grant to develop a "Manufacturing Academy." Year 1 reporting to EDA was discussed, including summary data, goals progress, and priority projects. A proposal is in the works to EDA for developing and launching a Small Business Resiliency Assessment Tool. The next meeting will be November 8 or 15. Minutes were not yet available.

C. Regional Issues Committee

The RIC met on September 27. Colonial Power presented the draft municipal aggregation guidelines from the Department of Public Utilities. Comments to DPU were approved. Christine Rasmussen was elected Vice Chair and will be presented to the full Commission meeting in November for approval as the new RIC Chair. The next meeting is October 25. Minutes were not yet available.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

Received or initiated from 8/31/2023 to 9/28/2023.

- New England AIDS Education and Training Center – Hepatitis C Initiative - \$25,000
- Clarksburg - Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness - \$215,143
- Environmental Protection Agency - Air Quality - \$465,589
- Monterey – Open Space and Recreation Plan - \$15,000
- Berkshires Tomorrow – Berkshire Benchmarks - \$25,000
- Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Asset Mapping - \$14,485
- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Inspection Services FY24:
 - o Peru - \$9,240

- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Public Health Nursing Services FY24:
 - o Peru - \$2,310
 - o Hancock - \$2,205
- Berkshire County Sheriff's Office – Opioid Abuse Prevention - \$50,000
- Economic Development Administration - Partnership Planning - \$210,000
- Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs – Greylock Glen Outdoor Center Exhibit - \$75,000
- Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services – Southern Berkshire County - \$96,632.57

Grants and Contracts not received.

BRPC did not receive the \$1,875,000 five-year Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) application 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.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI)

There has been no recent activity of Berkshires Tomorrow.

C. Staff Update

Accepted Positions

- Daniel Hassett - Public Health Housing Specialist Berkshire County, 9/18
- Alison Dixson, Environmental & Energy Project Specialist (part-time offsite), 10/2
- Jazu Stine, Public Health Food Specialist (offsite), 10/2

Open Positions:

- Community Engagement Specialist – Digital Equity (full time, offsite, temporary, one year)

Award Nominations:

- Laura Kittross – Berkshire 25 recognition from Berkshire Magazine (TBD fall of 2023)
- HEALing Communities/Andy Ottoson – 1Berkshire "Celebrate the Berkshires" Trendsetter award nomination (event 9/14)

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission met on September 8, 2023. Anne Gobi reported on settling into her role as Director of Rural Affairs. Senator Mark and Representative Blais gave House and Senate updates. Amie Shei from RCAP Solutions spoke about An Act to Promote Safe Drinking Water. Also discussed were rural priorities for the upcoming Housing Bond Bill and the state economic development plan. Steve Ellis discussed the \$25m of additional Chapter 90 to be allocated using a rural formula.

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail - The Special Commission to address West-East Passenger Rail governance and operations was supposed to complete its work by June 30, 2023. That deadline was missed, and the Commission Co-Chairs announced no new time frame.
- Berkshire Flyer - The Berkshire Flyer is about to finish its season (through October 9th). Plans will have to start soon for next year.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – There has been limited recent activity.

F. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Fall Webinar Series

The schedule for the Fall CPTC webinar has not been finalized.

G. Division of Local Services / Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies Regionalization Conference

The Division of Local Services(DLS) / Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies (MARPA) Regionalization Conference will be held on Tuesday, October 10, 2023.

Breakout sessions include:

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

Register [HERE](#).

H. Dalton CDGB Grant

In 2020, with Dalton as the lead municipality, including Becket, Stockbridge, and Sheffield, an application was made and received for a Community Development Block Grant primarily for housing rehabilitation. BRPC administers the program on behalf of Dalton. A target number of rehabilitation projects in each community was initially established. Due to several factors, those targets were not met in Stockbridge and Sheffield, who have expressed dissatisfaction. Tom is working to understand more fully what occurred and address the concerns in Stockbridge and Sheffield.

I. Mass Department of Agricultural Resources - Richmond Farm Acquisition Reduction of Notice Period

Tom received a "consent to reduction of notice period" from 120 to 60 days for a proposed land acquisition next to an existing large agricultural preservation restriction (APR) farm on Dublin Road in Richmond. Tom takes the lead from the

municipality in these cases to support their preference and will approve the waiver.

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

A. November 16 Commission Meeting

The next Full Commission meeting is November 16.

Potential topics include:

- Kristen Elechko, Governor Healey's Western Massachusetts Director
- DLTA new solicitation; A. funding for help with grant applications
- Solar
 - Where is it going, technically?
 - Advances to reduce costs
 - Parking lots and rooftops vs. green space; preventing ecosystem destruction
 - Subsidies for elevated solar fields vs. using green space to equalize the investment and create incentive

X. Adjournment

Sheila Irvin motioned to adjourn the meeting at 3:32 p.m., seconded by Buck Donovan, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote: Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Roger Bolton, and Kyle Hanlon.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of the September 7, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee Meeting
- September 1 to September 30, 2023 Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Report – September 2023
- Line of Credit Report
- Executive Director's Memorandum
- Alison Dixon, Resume
- Daniel Hassett, Resume
- Jazu Stine, Resume
- August Technical Assistance Memo