



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, November 2, 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 4:01 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
John Duval, Vice-Chair, Adams Alternate - absent
Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate
Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Lee Delegate
Doug McNally, Commission Development Committee, Chair, Windsor Delegate
Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Williamstown Alternate
Kyle Hanlon, At-large, North Adams Delegate
Sam Haupt, At-Large, Peru 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

Others: Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Alternate; Cory Campbell, Williamstown Delegate; Leanne Yinger, Lanesborough Delegate; Jimmy, Great Barrington (joined after 4:30 p.m.)

III. Approval of October 5, 2023 Minutes

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the October 5, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton and approved by a roll call vote from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Kyle Hanlon, and Roger Bolton. Doug McNally and Sam Haupt abstained.

IV. Financial Reports

A. September 30 to October 18, 2023 Expenditures Report

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report/Assessments October 26, 2023

Several of the 90-day plus invoices have been paid.

C. Line of Credit Report

It has not been used.

V. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates

Roger asked about the implications for BRPC if the Rest of the River committee disbands. Tom said a decision may be made at the November meeting, and the intergovernmental agreement expires on December 6. He isn't sure what role BRPC will play in the future. Perhaps technical assistance to municipal employees if requested.

Doug announced that the BRTA is working to extend evening hours, and finding three CDL drivers is a sticking point. BRTA is working with the Workforce Board to find drivers. Tom said BRPC is working on a meeting with BRTA.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Approve (after the fact) a Grant Application to the National Environmental Health Association (NEHE) and US Food & Drug Administration (FDA)

The Executive Committee authorized the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the National Environmental Health Association (NEHE) and U.S. Food & Drug Administration (F.D.A.) program. The \$5,000 grant would cover food-related inspection training expenses for BRPC Public Health Inspectors and staff. There is no match. Senior Public Health Planner [Sandra Martin](#) is the BRPC contact.

Doug McNally motioned to approve (after the fact) submitting a grant application and signing any contracts and agreements to the National Environmental Health Association (NEHE) and US Food & Drug Administration (FDA) for food-related inspection training for Public Health staff. Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

B. Vote to Approve University of Baltimore Center for Drug Policy and Prevention's Combating Overdose through Community-level Intervention (COCLI) Subaward

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the University of Baltimore Center for Drug Policy and Prevention's Combating Overdose through Community-level Intervention (COCLI) Subaward and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Berkshire Overdose Addiction Prevention Collaborative (BOAPC) would supplement and enhance the implementation of the [Berkshire Post](#)

[Overdose Program](#) (BPOP). This new initiative provides EMS and Behavioral Health co-response to those who have recently experienced an overdose or are at higher risk for overdose. This \$150,000 one-year grant would be a collaborative project between BRPC, the New England High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (NEHIDTA) program - Overdose Response Strategy (ORS), Berkshire Harm Reduction, Northern Berkshire EMS, County Ambulance, Southern Berkshire Ambulance Squad, The Brien Center, and other community partners involved in BOAPC. There is no match required. Staff lead on this project is [Andy Ottoson](#), ex. 37

Roger Bolton motioned to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the University of Baltimore Center for Drug Policy and Prevention's Combating Overdose through Community-level Intervention (COCLI) Subaward and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Sheila Irvin seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

C. Vote to Submit 2 Grant Applications to MassCEC's EMPOWER Innovation and Capacity Building Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit two grant applications to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. These grants would prepare the way to apply for implementation funding.

Application 1: Working with West Side Legends and Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT), Environmental and Energy Program staff are applying for \$50,000 to develop a road map for a sustainable solar power pilot program for the West Side and Morning Side communities. The funding would build the capacity of the project partners to develop and support community-based solar programs. The result will be a road map for a community-based solar program developed through community outreach and support.

Application 2: The Environmental and Energy Program is applying for \$50,000 to fund the development of a road map for deploying housing resources effectively countywide. The goal is to connect Housing Authorities and Affordable Housing Trusts to provide technical assistance for effectively spending federal and state money to have the biggest impact on housing energy efficiency upgrades. As part of this capacity building grant, BRPC staff will explore the need and viability of creating a revolving loan fund in partnership with other housing organizations.

MassCEC's expectation is that Innovation and Capacity Building Grants will serve as "seed" funding for the planning of innovative program models or projects. Grant recipients will then apply in a subsequent funding round to implement the project under an Implementation Grant of up to \$150,000 (\$300,000 if the project meets certain priority goals). Application 2 falls into

one of Mass CEC's Priority funding categories, making a future implementation grant application eligible for up to \$300,000.

These applications have no BRPC match requirement. The primary staff contact for these grant submissions is [Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert](#).

Doug McNally motioned to authorize the Executive Director to submit two grant applications to the MassCEC EmPower Innovation and Capacity Building Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Application 1: Development of a road map for a sustainable solar power pilot program for Pittsfield's West Side and Morning Side communities. Application 2: Development of a road map to deploy housing energy efficiency upgrades via Housing Authorities and Affordable Housing Trusts that may include a revolving loan fund. Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

D. Approval of Surplus Equipment

The Executive Committee was requested to approve a list of surplus equipment. According to BRPC Policy, depending on the value and condition of equipment, it is offered to municipalities, non-profits and then advertised for sale or offered to staff. Finally, if there is no interest, it is responsibly destroyed.

Roger Bolton motioned to approve the list of surplus equipment. Kyle Hanlon seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

E. Vote to Approve a New Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement

The Executive Committee was requested to approve the Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement. The ADA Policy Statement is a new BRPC policy statement to inform employees and applicants that BRPC is committed to complying with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Sheila Irvin motioned to approve the Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement. Doug McNally seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

F. Vote to Approve a New Pregnancy Anti-Discrimination & Accommodations Policy

Approval was requested to approve the Pregnancy Anti-Discrimination & Accommodations Policy. The new policy states that BRPC will comply with all federal and state laws concerning the employment of pregnant persons or persons with pregnancy-related conditions and nursing mothers.

Doug McNally motioned to approve the Pregnancy Anti-Discrimination & Accommodations Policy. Kyle Hanlon seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

VII. Committee Reports and Discussion

A. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on October 25, 2023. Discussion continued about commercial scale solar. Concerns were raised that attempts to incentivize solar in the Commonwealth have involved pushes for greenfield development vs. grey field/parking lot/rooftop development. This may disproportionately impact the Berkshires given low population densities, availability of large tracts of land, and lower property values compared to the balance of the state. Sheila noted that Christine did a great job facilitating the meeting.

There was a discussion about school buildings using renewable energy. It was agreed that a letter to the relevant Commonwealth energy should be sent urging prioritization of renewable energy investments for long-term savings and climate goals. Tom said the Municipal Modernization Bill may be an opportunity for this.

B. Other Committees

The Finance Committee will meet when the audit is ready. Auditors were in the office for three days this week; it was a lot of work for the Administration Program staff. There were no findings.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 9/29/2023 to 10/24/2023.

- BTI – National Endowment for the Arts - \$45,440
- MassDOT – Transportation Planning - \$758,322
- Department of Justice – Berkshire Post Overdose Program - \$1,300,000
- Baystate Medical Center – Digital Equity Partnership - \$91,640
- Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Planning Services – Dalton - \$32,992.32
- Massachusetts Technology Collaborative - Municipal Digital Equity Focus Group - \$14,221

Grants and Contracts not received.

- Community One Stop for Growth Application, "Emergency Services Planning in Rural Massachusetts" (\$100,000.) This project would have assessed rural and small-town fire departments and EMS services, leading to recommendations about personnel, equipment, and training needs and how sustainable improvements could be accomplished.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI)

- Berkshires Tomorrow was awarded \$5,400 from the Health New England mini-grant program for Public Health Community Outreach.
- Berkshires Tomorrow board approved an application to Mill Town Foundation for Berkshire Funding Focus. The grant application is for \$10,000. The grant will support the continued hosting of the Berkshire Funding Focus initiative.

C. Staff Update

- Patrica Mullins Celebrates 15 Years of Service at BRPC.
- Accepted Positions:
 - Samantha Elliot – Public Health Intern (resume)
- Open Positions:
 - Economic Development Program Associate – Digital Equity (full-time, benefitted, temporary - one year)
 - Public Health Senior Planner Substance Use Disorders (SUD) (full-time onsite)

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 did not meet in October 2023. The November meeting date has not been set yet.

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail - The Co-Chairs of the Special Commission to address West-East Passenger Rail governance and operations provided a draft report to Commission members for review. The final report may be released soon.
- Berkshire Flyer - The Berkshire Flyer finished its season (through October 9th). The oversight group will have a de-brief meeting in December to discuss what worked well or didn't and then start preparing for next year.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – There was a virtual public meeting on the Northern Tier Rail Study on Thursday, October 26, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. <https://www.mass.gov/northern-tier-passenger-rail-study>. The primary focus of this meeting was a review of additional alternatives (so-called Phase 2), developed based on earlier public comments.

F. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Fall Webinar Series

Citizen Planner Training Collaborative (CPTC) will hold its first Western Mass in-person half-day conference on Saturday, December 2, 2023 in Greenfield, MA, 8:30 – 12:30. Attendees will be able to

choose two sessions:

- Roles & Responsibilities of Planning Boards and Zoning Boards of Appeals
- Creating Master Plans
- Drafting Zoning Amendments
- Special Permits & Variances

Preregistration is required at <https://bit.ly/west-conf-2023>

G. Housing Bond Bill

On October 18, 2023, the Healey Administration filed the Affordable Homes Act, a comprehensive bill related to many aspects of housing development. While the legislature must approve this, which may take several months, it contains many strong elements to support housing development. More information at [Housing Bond Bill | Mass.gov](#)

H. ResilientMass Plan

The Healey Administration recently released the ResilientMass Plan. This State Hazard Mitigation and Climate Adaptation Plan (SHMCAP) integrates a hazard mitigation plan and a climate change adaptation plan. It identifies strategies and specific, measurable actions state agencies can take—individually or through interagency partnerships— to address risks to the human health and safety, communities, critical assets and infrastructure, natural resources, governance, and economy of the Commonwealth. More information can be found at [MA Climate Change Clearinghouse \(mass.gov\)](#)

I. Starter Home Zoning – Chapter 40Y

In late 2022, amendments were made to MGL 40R. Along with other changes, the amendments uncoupled the Starter Home provisions from 40R and created a new chapter, MGL 40Y. "Starter Homes" are statutorily defined as "a single-family home not exceeding 1,850 square feet in heated living area." The Starter Home Program is a voluntary incentive program to encourage municipalities to adopt zoning that allows housing development of at least four units/acre. The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities seeks input as it develops new regulations to comply with the changes. Contact Bill Reyelt at william.reyelt@mass.gov.

Roger suggested that the program would also benefit retirees, not just first time homeowners. This may be a topic for a Commission meeting. The regulations will be issued in January.

J. Public Health Performance Standards

The Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) established for the first time a set of performance standards, credentials, and workforce training requirements for local public health departments. These standards, created in close collaboration with local public health partners, are an important step toward providing consistent, high-quality public health services for all Commonwealth residents. More information is at [Performance Standards for Local Public Health | Mass.gov](#).

K. Community One Stop for Growth Awards

On October 25, 2023 the Healey administration announced the Community One Stop for Growth awards, including the MassWorks awards. The Berkshires received 19 awards in 10 municipalities, including 10 municipal awards, totaling \$8.2 million of the \$164 million to 338 projects in 161 Massachusetts awarded statewide.

L. Recommendations of the Climate Chief

The Healey administration created the Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience and appointed Melissa Hoffer as the nation's first cabinet-level Climate Chief. This office has reviewed the present organization, staffing, and policy-making practices of the Commonwealth's executive department agencies and offices and has prepared a report and recommendations, [Recommendations of the Climate Chief | Mass.gov](#). The report presents 39 recommendations focused on concrete strategies around funding, protecting environmental justice communities, advancing the workforce, and economic development.

M. Other

VIII. Old Business

None

IX. New Business

A. November 16 Commission Meeting

The next Full Commission meeting is scheduled for November 16.

Kristen Elechko, Governor Healey's Western Massachusetts Director, will be invited. Her schedule is dependent on the Governor's plans. There will likely be a description of DLTA and DLTA-A. DLTA-A provides grant application and management assistance to municipalities. Mark Maloy could go over the 2020 Census Population Projections.

Approval of Christine Rasmussen as Regional Issues Committee Chair will be on the agenda.

Tabled for now are:

- Presentation of ResilientMass Plan
- Presentation on Recommendation of the Climate Chief

X. Adjournment

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 4:55 p.m., seconded by Sheila Irvin, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote:

Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

Attachments:

- Unapproved Minutes of the October 3, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee Meeting

- September 30, 2023, to October 18, 2023, Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Report – October 2023
- Line of Credit Report
- Executive Director's Memorandum
- Surplus and Disposable Equipment List 2023.10
- Americans with Disabilities Act Policy Statement
- Pregnancy Anti-Discrimination & Accommodation Policy
- Samantha Eliot Resume
- Western MA CPTC Conference Registration Form
- Affordable Homes Act Overview
- Copy of Press Release ResilientMass 2023
- Starter Homes / 40Y Overview
- Copy of Press Release – Public Health Standards
- FY 24 Community One Stop for Growth Awards
- September Technical Assistance Memo