



FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES November 16, 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 7:01 pm.

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.

B. Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Caleb Darcy – Dalton Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Delegate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
Leanne Yinger – Lanesborough Delegate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Laura Mensi – Monterey Delegate
Keith Torrico – Mount Washington Delegate
Kyle Hanlon – North Adams Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield, Delegate
Sari Hoy – Sheffield Delegate
Rene Wood – Sheffield Alternate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington, Delegate
Cory Campbell – Williamstown Delegate
Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate
Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

Towns with no Delegate or Alternate present:

Adams, Alford, Becket, Clarksburg, Florida, Hancock, Hinsdale, Lenox, New Ashford, New Marlborough, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Tyringham, West Stockbridge

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko, Kate Hill Tapia, Laura Brennan, Mark Maloy, CJ Hoss

Others Present:

PCTV, iBerkshires Brittany Polito, Kristen Elechko, Jonathan Schrag, Kwit iPhone

C. Approval of September 21, 2023 Minutes

Sheila Irvin moved to approve the September 21, 2023, draft meeting minutes, with the correction that Pittsfield was not represented; Pedro Pachano seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The minutes were approved with a roll call vote with Peter Traub, Malcolm Fick, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally voting to approve.

Abstained: Kyle Hanlon, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Don Gagnon, Cory Campbell

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

None

III. Comments from the Public

None

IV. Discussion with Western Massachusetts Director of the Office of Governor Healey, Kristen Elechko

Kristen Elechko discussed the Healey administration's priorities of affordability, equity and climate and invited input on what support municipalities need. She schedules events for the Governor and Lt. Governor and stands in when they are not available. She may be contacted at:

Kristen.elechko@mass.gov

Discussion included the inadequacy of PILOT and the need to fully fund Chapter 90 without requiring grant applications. It was noted that there is \$25 million going to rural roads and bridges, and allocation would be fairer based on miles of roads vs. population. Kristen will get back to Tom so he may share how that will be allocated.

Kristen asked for participation in the public comment opportunity on the Commonwealth's Digital Equity Plan led by the Massachusetts Broadband Institute. [BRPC is hosting two Zoom events to collect comments](#): November 30, noon, and December 5, 6:30 pm.

Hiring and maintaining staff for municipalities has been identified as a need. Jonathan Schrag pointed out that federal Inflation Reduction Act money has been earmarked to help towns with grant writing.

Laura Brennan shared the following link to register for Massachusetts Federal Funds Partnership meetings; the next one is Tuesday, November 28, they are scheduled through February 2024.

<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/federal-funds-information-for-local-governments>

V. Presentation of Population Projections

BRPC GIS, Data and IT Manager Mark Maloy provided an overview of

population projections based on the 2020 decennial census results. Berkshire County needs at least 650 people to come to or stay to maintain the current population level. There has not been an analysis of the potential impact of climate change. The data may be found at this [link](#).

VI. Discussion of the District Local Technical Assistance Program (DLTA) and the District Local Technical Assistance – Augmentation (DLTA-A) Program

BRPC Community Planning Program Manager CJ Hoss discussed the DLTA and DLTA-A programs for 2024 (assuming the Legislature funds them) that can provide BRPC staff assistance to communities for various planning needs. DLTA-Augmentation is newer funding that allows BRPC to provide grant writing services. CJ and Tom are happy to discuss ways BRPC staff can support towns via these funds. Details will be sent via email next week. There is an application; decisions are made in February or March. choss@berkshireplanning.org

VII. Discussion on Priority Topics for the Commonwealth's Climate Pollution Reduction Grant

Jonathan E. Schrag, Deputy Climate Chief & Director of Investment for Decarbonization and Resilience from the Governor's Office of Climate Innovation and Resilience, asked for input on priorities for the Berkshires as the Commonwealth prepares a federal Climate Pollution Reduction Grant application. April 1 is the application deadline. Action plans are due March 1.

The Commonwealth is pursuing three types of applications (and likely focus): statewide (decarbonization of school buildings), regional (offshore wind power development), and coalition partnerships (medium and heavy vehicle replacements), each at different funding levels as identified by the federal government.

Jonathan will participate in the November 28 Federal Funds Partnership municipal call mentioned previously. Reach out to Jonathan with more input, invitations or follow up: jonathan.schrag@mass.gov.

Commission members suggested addressing municipal aggregation, level 3 compatible vehicle chargers, and hydrogen vs. electric batteries.

VIII. Presentation of Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions or comments on the Executive Committee actions taken on the Commission's behalf at its October 7 and November 2, 2023 meetings.

IX. Vote to Endorse Committee Chair for FY 2024

The BRPC bylaws require the Commission to approve Committee Chairs as recommended by the BRPC Chair. Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Alternate, was recommended as Chair for the Regional Issues Committee.

Roger Bolton moved to ratify Christine Rasmussen as the Chair of the Regional Issues Committee. Doug McNally seconded the motion. A roll call vote authorized the appointment.

Peter Traub, Caleb Dary, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Keith Toricco, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Doug McNally

Abstained: Christine Rasmussen, Cory Campbell

X. Vote to Approve Community Assessments for FY 2025

By law, BRPC must notify municipalities of their assessments by February to include them in city/town budgets. This decision is being made earlier to help with municipal budget preparation. The BRPC Finance Committee met on November 13, 2023 and recommended a 2.5% increase in the assessment rate for a new rate per resident of .87260.

Doug McNally moved to approve a 2.5% increase in the FY 2024 Assessment rate for FY 2025. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. A roll call vote authorized the new FY 2025 Assessments.

Peter Traub, Caleb Dary, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Keith Toricco, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Christine Rasmussen, Don Gagnon, Doug McNally

Abstained: Cory Campbell

XI. Executive Director's Report

A. Citizen Planner Training Collaborative Fall Webinar Series

Tom encouraged registration for the Citizen Planner Training Collaborative's (CPTC) first Western Mass in-person half-day conference on **Saturday, December 2, 2023** in Greenfield, MA, from 8:30 – 12:30.

The conference may be canceled if there are not enough participants.

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>

XII. Adjournment

Doug McNally motioned to adjourn, seconded by Sheila Irvin, and approved by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:44 pm.

Peter Traub, Caleb Dary, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Keith Toricco, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Christine Rasmussen, Doug McNally

Abstained: Cory Campbell