



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES**

Thursday, December 7, 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 – a little late  
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  
Christine Rasmussen, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Stockbridge 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

For part of the meeting:

Andrew McKeever, Community Planner; Laura Kittross, Public Health Program Manager; Lydia Shulman, Berkshire Public Health Alliance Coordinator; Melissa Provencher, Environmental & Energy Program Manager

Others: Jimmy Citizen, GB (left early); James 84 North Pl, Great Barrington;

### **III. Approval of November 2, 2023 Minutes**

Sam Haupt moved to approve the November 2, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Sheila Irvin and approved by a roll call vote from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

#### **IV. Financial Reports**

##### **A. October 19 to November 30, 2023 Expenditures Report**

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

##### **B. Accounts Receivable Report/Assessments November 2023**

Nearly all of the over 90 invoices have been paid.

##### **C. Line of Credit Report**

It has not been used.

#### **V. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternates**

Buck Donovan noted that CJ Hoss, Community Planning Program Manager, is helping the Lee Planning Board with their Master plan and "has been incredible" providing useful information.

#### **VI. Items Requiring Action**

##### **A. Vote to Approve Submission of a Grant Application to the Executive Office of Technology Services and Security's Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant Program**

The Executive Committee was asked to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Services and Security's Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant program. Through this grant, BRPC would gain access to free cybersecurity training for all employees in 2024. Mark Maloy, GIS, Data and IT Manager, is the BRPC contact.

Tom noted that this program is also available to municipalities.

Sam Haupt motioned to approve submitting a grant application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Technology Services and Security's Municipal Cybersecurity Awareness Grant program for free cybersecurity training for BRPC employees in 2024. Doug McNally seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

##### **B. Vote to Approve Changes to the BRPC Personnel Pay Plan to Add a Public Health Social Worker Position and Change the Pay Range of the Public Health Nurse Position**

The Executive Committee was requested to approve changes to the BRPC Personnel Pay Plan to add a Public Health Social Worker position and change the pay range of the Public Health Nurse Position. The Social Worker position is salaried and funded via grants and vaccine insurance funds. An increase in the pay range for the Public Health Nurse Position is necessary to keep pace with the market.

Dough McNally motioned to approve changes to the BRPC Personnel Pay Plan to add a Public Health Social Worker position and change the pay range of the Public Health Nurse Position. Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**C. Vote to Submit Comments on the New England Power Company – E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)**

The Executive Committee was asked to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to MEPA on the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) on the E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project in Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe, submitted by the New England Power Company, based on the Environmental Review Committee's review. The Project seeks to upgrade existing electrical utility infrastructure and construct improved roadways by which the transmission line can be accessed. The draft comments were in the meeting materials.

Roger Bolton, Environmental Review Committee Chair, explained that this is a major construction project and NE Power's response to concerns has been unsatisfactory and general, such as saying that they are "working" on wetlands mitigation plans. One of the concerns is increasing capacity as reliance on electricity increases to meet climate goals. He also explained the review process. Tom pointed out that due to changes a few years ago, many fewer projects are under MEPA's review, and the process is very long.

Roger Bolton motioned to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to MEPA on the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) on the E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project in Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe submitted by the New England Power Company. Sam Haupt seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

**D. Vote to Approve Comments on the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA)**

The Executive Committee was asked to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to MEPA on the Draft Environmental Report (DEIR) about the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project ), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale submitted by the NSTAR dba Eversource Energy. The Project seeks to improve system reliability by reducing the number of tree fall-in risks in the Right of Way and creating a sustainable environment comprised of vegetation that can safely

coexist with the transmission lines. A draft Environmental Review Report was in the meeting's supplemental material. The draft comments were distributed at the meeting.

Roger pointed out that Eversources is the proponent and has been very responsive, including donating to Berkshire Natural Resources Council for abutting land acquisition and using technology for research to reduce the number of trees that need to be cut.

Roger Bolton motioned to approve the comments on the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project to MEPA. Doug McNally seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

#### **E. Vote to Approve Comments on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute**

The Executive Committee was asked to authorize the Executive Director to submit comments to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan. The plan has two elements and is the blueprint for how the Commonwealth will spend Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funds.

BRPC is working with 14 municipalities on Digital Equity Plans, which will be required to access some grant funds. Wylie Goodman, Senior Economic Development Planner, prepared the distributed draft comments on the State Digital Equity Plan (SDEP) element. Comments on the second element, Broadband Equity Access and Deployment Proposal (BEAD), are in progress. The plan and related documents can be accessed at Massachusetts Internet for All Plan | MBI ([masstech.org](https://masstech.org)).

Doug McNally motioned to approve the comments on both elements of the Massachusetts Broadband Institute's Massachusetts Internet for All Plan. Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

### **VII. Committee Reports and Discussion**

#### **A. Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee met on November 13, 2023 and agreed to present a 2.5% increase in FY 2025 Assessments for approval at the full Commission meeting. Draft unapproved minutes are in the packet. There is a meeting scheduled for December 14 at 4:30 p.m.

#### **B. Commission Development Committee**

The Commission Development Committee, led by new Chair Doug McNally, met on November 16, 2023. Engaging Delegates and Alternates was discussed, including visiting Select Board meetings of the communities that

do not participate in the Commission. Connecting Economic Development efforts to Housing and Transportation was discussed as a focus for FY 2024. Draft unapproved minutes are in the packet.

### **C. Environmental Review Committee**

The Environmental Review Committee met on November 27, 2023 and discussed the New England Power Company - E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe and voted to submit comments to Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office (MEPA). The committee's general practices and the need to revise the outdated procedures document were discussed. Draft minutes are not yet available. There was also a virtual meeting on December 5, 2023 to discuss the NSTAR WT-02 Transmission Right-of-Way Reliability Program (TRRP) Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Hancock, Lanesborough, Cheshire, Dalton, and Hinsdale.

### **D. Metropolitan Planning Committee**

The MPO met on November 28, 2023. The main topics were to approve an amendment to the Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) for a 21-day public comment period, an administrative adjustment to the UPWP, a presentation on Title VI report corrections, a discussion on the request to change the Urbanized Area Boundary to include Great Barrington, a report on Safe Streets and Roads for All work, and an update on BRTA route changes and additions. Access to driver training is a barrier to route expansion; several options are being pursued. BRTA is offering free rides through 12/31. Draft minutes are not yet available.

### **E. Regional Issues Committee**

The Regional Issues Committee met on November 29, 2023. Discussion continued about energy policy in Massachusetts, especially solar development, including related House and Senate bills. Meetings start at 3:30 p.m., and Senator Mark's staff member is participating. Draft minutes are not yet available.

## **VIII. Executive Director's Report**

### **A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements**

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 10/24/2023 to 11/30/2023.

- New Marlborough – Open Space and Recreation Plan - \$25,000
- Lanesborough – Stormwater Management - \$9,207.79
- Cheshire – Stormwater Management - \$6,509.70
- Housatonic Valley Association - Berkshire Clean Cold Connected Partnership - \$65,350
- Baystate Medical Center, Inc - MBI - Digital Equity Berkshire Advisor - \$45,820
- Pittsfield – Francis Avenue Parklet and Routing Study - \$233,150
- Dalton - Stormwater Management - \$9,432.85
- Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs – Lanesborough &

- Washington - \$78,000
- Lanesborough – Master Plan - \$10,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

At this time, we are not aware of any grants that have not been received.

**B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI)**

There was no recent activity related to Berkshires Tomorrow.

**C. Staff Update**

- Accepted Positions:
  - Nikki Lewis – Public Health Senior Planner Substance Use
- Open Positions:
  - Economic Development Program Associate – Focus on digital equity (full-time, offsite, temporary (one year))
  - Internships - Outdoor Recreation and Arts & Culture Planning
- Recognition
  - MassBike recognized Senior Transportation Planner Nicholas Russo as Advocate of the Year

**D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update**

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission met on November 9, 2023. Discussion centered on priorities related to the Housing Bond Bill and the promised municipal modernization bill.

**E. Passenger Rail**

- West-East Rail - The Co-Chairs of the Special Commission to address West-East Passenger Rail governance and operations have prepared and released a final report, [WMPR-Final-Report.pdf \(berkshireplanning.org\)](#).
- Berkshire Flyer - The Berkshire Flyer oversight group received a report on the 2023 season. They learned that MassDOT plans to extend the Berkshire Flyer Pilot in 2024 on a shorter schedule than in 2023 (the weekend before Memorial Day through Labor Day instead of mid-October).
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – There was no activity over the last month.

**F. The Commonwealth's Climate Report Card**

The Healey Administration released its first Climate Report Card on 12/1/2023, including data and assessments on the state's progress in meeting its climate mandates and goals to achieve net zero greenhouse gas emissions and build resilience to climate change. The report contains Policy, Environmental Justice, Transportation, Buildings, Power, Natural and Working Lands, and Climate Adaptation and Resilience sections. It can be found at [Massachusetts Climate Report Card | Mass.gov](#).

## **VIII. Old Business**

None

## **IX. New Business**

### **A. Discussion about Possibly Amending the BRPC Bylaws to Increase the Length of the Term of the Officers and Committee members from One Year to Two Years**

The BRPC Bylaws require "Each year at the first meeting after July 1, but to be held no later than August 31st, the Commission shall elect from among its membership a Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk, and Treasurer." The Bylaws are unclear about the term length for Committee members but imply those terms are one year. Committee members agreed that given there are relatively few meetings, the fact that it takes a fair amount of time to administer annual committee membership, it takes committee members several meetings to understand the workings of that committee, and many committee members stay in their role and on committees for multiple years, it may be more efficient to clearly extend the terms. This topic was referred to the Commission Development Committee.

### **B. January 18 Commission Meeting**

Potential items required or previously mentioned include:

- Micro-mobility - transit
- Presentation of ResilientMass Plan
- Presentation on Recommendation of the Climate Chief
- Presentation on the meaning of environmental justice communities

### **C. Other – [State Economic Development Plan Announced](#)**

## **X. Adjournment**

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:15 p.m., seconded by Sheila Irvin, and unanimously approved by a roll call vote:

Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, and Sam Haupt.

### **Attachments:**

- Unapproved Minutes of the November 2, 2023, BRPC Executive Committee Meeting
- October 19, 2023, to November 30, 2023, Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Report – November 2023
- Line of Credit Report
- Executive Director's Memorandum
- Personnel Pay Plan
- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Environmental Review Report, E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe

- Unapproved Comments to MEPA on the New England Power Company - E131 Asset Condition Refurbishment Project, Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), Adams, North Adams, Florida, and Monroe
- Unapproved Minutes of the November 13, 2023 BRPC Finance Committee Meeting
- Unapproved Minutes of the November 16, 2023 BRPC Commission Development Committee Meeting
- Nikki Lewis Resume
- October Technical Assistance Memo