



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

1 Fenn Street, Suite 201
Pittsfield, MA 01201
T: (413) 442-1521 · F: (413) 442-1523
TTY: 771 or (800) 439-2370
berkshireplanning.org

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MINUTES

Thursday, January 4, 2024

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 4:00 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; Jaymie Rubin Zapata, Public Health Senior Planner

Others: Jonathan James, New Marlborough, Delegate; James – Citizen 84 North Pl Rd; Mayor Peter Marchetti; Justine Dodds, Pittsfield, Alternate

III. **Approval of December 7, 2023 Minutes**

Doug McNally moved to approve the December 7, 2023 meeting minutes. The motion was seconded by Roger Bolton and approved by a roll call vote from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, and Sam Haupt.

IV. Financial Reports

A. December 1 to 27, 2023 Expenditures Report

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

B. Accounts Receivable Report December 2023

There are no problematic receivables.

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 Changes to the BRPC Personal, Family, and Medical Leave Policy to Allow for a Paid Leave Option

The Executive Committee was requested to approve changes to the BRPC Personal, Family, and Medical Leave Policy to allow for up to a 12-week paid leave option for employees who have worked at BRPC for at least one year. Effective January 1, 2024.

To qualify, employees must use any short or long-term disability benefit, sick leave, compensatory time, holiday, or floating holiday time, and all but 35 hours of vacation time.

Another proposed change is adding a negative sick leave balance of up to 35 hours to employees who have used their sick leave.

These changes are proposed so BRPC remains competitive without the bureaucratic requirements and additional costs to the employees and the Massachusetts Paid Family and Medical Leave Act agency.

Doug McNally motioned to approve the BRPC Personal, Family, and Medical Leave Policy changes to allow for a paid leave option, effective January 1, 2024. Sheila Irvin 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.

B. Vote to Approve Submission of a Grant Application to the Rural Health Network Development Planning Program in the Health Resources and Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a Rural Health Network Planning grant application and sign any

resulting contracts and agreements to the Health Resources and Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. The Program aims to plan and develop integrated healthcare networks that collaborate to achieve efficiencies, expand access to and improve the quality of basic healthcare services and outcomes, and strengthen the rural healthcare system. This program supports one year of planning and brings together members of the health care delivery system, particularly those entities that may not have collaborated in the past, to establish and/or improve local capacity to strengthen rural community health interventions and enhance care coordination. The grant is for up to \$100,000 and does not require a BRPC match. There may be subcontractors. [Laura Kittross](#), Public Health Program Manager, is the BRPC contact.

Doug McNally motioned to approve the Rural Health Network Planning grant application and sign any resulting contracts and agreements to the Health Resources and Administration (HRSA) Federal Office of Rural Health Policy. Kyle Hanlon 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 Approve Entering into a Contract with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council Related to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation MassTrails Grant Program

The Executive Committee was requested (after the fact) to authorize the Executive Director to sign any contracts and agreements with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council related to its Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation MassTrails grant program. Through this grant, BRPC will work with other regional planning agencies and state partners to finalize the design of a statewide GIS trail standard, such as defining what a trail is. The grant runs through June 15, 2024. This grant would provide \$8,000 in funding, with \$2,000 in-kind match required. [Mark Maloy](#) is the BRPC contact.

Sam Haupt motioned to authorize the Executive Director to sign any contracts and agreements with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council related to its Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation MassTrails grant program. Roger Bolton seconded it. A roll call vote approved it from Malcolm Fick, John Duval, Sheila Irvin, Buck Donovan, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

Tom announced that the berkshiresoutside.org website is up and running and encouraged everyone to use it.

VII. Committee Reports and Discussion

A. Regional Issues Committee

The committee met on December 13, 2023 and discussed the Draft Report of the Clean Energy Transmission Working Group (CETWG). Comments were due by December 15, 2023. A copy of the comments is in this meeting's

packet and emphasizes local input via hearings and the use of existing corridors and lines. Minutes were not yet available.

B. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee met on December 14, 2023 and approved the FY 2023 Audit. A Summary of the Auditor's Results, Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances, and the Audit Management Letter is attached. The minor recommendations have been implemented. Chair Buck Donovan complimented Marianne and her team on a great job. The Committee also discussed and reviewed a draft Investment Policy. The next meeting has been proposed for May 2024 about the FY 2025 budget. Draft unapproved minutes were in the packet.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 12/1/2023 to 12/27/2023.

- Richmond – Economic Development Planner - \$10,000
- Department of Energy Resources - Regional Energy Plan Assistance - \$66,350
- Metropolitan Area Planning Council - Western Region Homeland Security Advisory Council - Equity in Emergency Management - \$9,950
- Communities/Organizations - Cultural Districts - ArtWeek Berkshires - \$20,000
- New England Rural Health Association – Root Cause Equity in Heat Emergencies - \$30,000
- Lanesborough – Master Plan - \$10,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

We are not aware of any grants that have not been received.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI)

The BTI Board approved accepting \$15,000 from Mill Town Foundation to support the Berkshire Benchmarks initiative, which will provide staffing for BRPC and cover the cost of the Berkshire Benchmarks website. The BTI President was authorized to sign any contracts. The funding will be from January 1 to December 31, 2024.

C. Staff Update

- Accepted Positions:
 - Jocelyn Latvalla - Economic Development Program Associate – Focus on digital equity; starts January 9.
- Open Positions:
 - Internships - Outdoor Recreation and Arts & Culture Planning
 - Public Health Nurse -Health Educator
 - Senior Planner – Housing

D. Rural Policy Advisory Commission (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in December 2023. The

next meeting is scheduled for January 12, 2024.

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail – BOSTON — The Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) announced that up to \$500,000 has been awarded to the Rail and Transit Division through the Federal Railroad Administration's (FRA) Corridor Identification and Development Program (Corridor ID) to support planning for additional train service connecting Boston and Albany, New York through Springfield, and Pittsfield. This corridor would provide up to eight daily round-trip passenger trains on an existing alignment owned by CSX Transportation. Amtrak's once-daily long-distance Lake Shore Limited is the only passenger service on this corridor.

The Corridor ID Program is a comprehensive intercity passenger rail planning and development program that will help guide intercity passenger rail development throughout the country and creates a pipeline of intercity passenger rail projects ready for implementation and funding through FRA's Federal-State Partnership-National Network Program.

- Berkshire Flyer - There was no known activity over the last month.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – There was no known activity over the last month.

F. Farmland Action Plan

In December, the Healey-Driscoll Administration released the [Massachusetts Farmland Action Plan](#), a long-range strategic initiative to address Massachusetts' farmland needs. The plan sets goals and priorities around increasing farmland conservation and protection, addressing farmland access, and preserving and expanding farms' economic and environmental viability across the state.

G. Economic Development Plan

The Healey administration released the state's economic development plan, [Team Massachusetts: Leading Future Generations](#). The plan reflects a vision for Massachusetts organized around three main priority areas:

- Fundamentals: Investing in the fundamentals to enable economic growth
- Talent: Retaining and attracting the world's best talent across all backgrounds
- Sectors: Supporting businesses that power the state's economy

It was agreed that this would be a good topic for a Commission meeting.

H. Blueprint: Building the Foundation for Recovery

For the past 18 months, the Public Health Program has worked with others on

reducing opioid overdoses. Partners from across the Berkshires joined together in the HEALing Communities Study to increase naloxone distribution, raise awareness of all pathways to treatment and recovery, and reduce stigma around substance use disorder.

Blueprint is a documentary film where members of the Berkshire community share their recovery stories. The thirty-minute film is available at [Blueprint: Building the Foundation for Recovery](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=...) (youtube.com).

I. Housing Bond Bill

On October 18, 2023, Governor Healey and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll unveiled the [Housing Bond Bill or the Affordable Homes Act](#) (H. 4138), a comprehensive bill to create smart housing and invest in livable communities. Tom encouraged Commission members to participate in a hearing about it on January 18, 11 a.m. – 5 p.m. [at the State House](#).

VIII. Old Business

A. Comments on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan

At the December meeting, the Executive Committee approved a set of comments to the Massachusetts Broadband Institute on the Massachusetts Internet for All Plan. The Committee also approved submitting a second set of comments on the implementation portion of the Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) plan. The comments due December 15 are in the meeting's materials. The plan can be accessed at [Massachusetts Internet for All Plan | MBI \(masstech.org\)](#).

IX. New Business

A. January 18 Commission Meeting

A presentation on the Economic Development Plan was chosen as the main topic for January, along with a review of the BerkshiresOutside.org website and maybe a discussion about micro-transit.

Potential topics previously mentioned include:

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

X. Adjournment

Roger Bolton motioned to adjourn the meeting at 5:00 p.m., seconded by Kyle Hanlon, 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 December 7, 2023, Executive Committee Meeting
- December 1, 2023, to December 27, 2023, Expenditures Report
- Accounts Receivable Report – December 2023
- Line of Credit Report

- Executive Director's Memorandum
- BRPC Personal, Family, and Medical Leave Policy draft
- Clean Energy Transmission Working Group Draft Report Comments
- FY2023 Summary of the Auditor's Results,
- FY2023 Statement of Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balances
- FY2023 Audit Management Letter
- Unapproved Minutes of the December 14, 2023 BRPC Finance Committee Meeting
- Jocelyn Latvalla Resume
- Broadband Equity, Access, and Deployment (BEAD) comments
- November Technical Assistance Memo
- October Technical Assistance Memo Revised