



FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES January 18, 2024

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:

Diana Mott – Becket Alternate (arrived late in the meeting, no audio)

Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate

Caleb Darcy – Dalton Delegate

Pedro Pachano – Great Barrington Delegate

Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate

Keith Harrison – Hinsdale Delegate

Leanne Yinger – Lanesborough Delegate

Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate

Laura Mensi – Monterey Delegate

Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield, Delegate

Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate

Amanda Hamilton – Tyringham Delegate

Roger Bolton – Williamstown Alternate

Doug McNally – Windsor Delegate

Towns with no Delegate or Alternate present:

Adams, Alford, Clarksburg, Egremont, Florida, Hancock, Lenox, Mount Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Washington, West Stockbridge

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko, Marianne Sniezek, Kate Hill Tapia, Laura Brennan, Mark Maloy, Jocelyn Latvalla

Laura welcomed new staff member, Economic Development Program Associate Joceyln Latvalla.

Others Present:

PCTV; Andrew Fitch, North Adams City Council; Marie Saucier, Savoy Select Board; Anne Gobi, MA Director of Rural Affairs; Lindsey (left early)

C. Approval of November 16, 2023 Minutes

Doug McNally moved to approve the November 16, 2023, draft meeting minutes; Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The minutes were approved with a roll call vote with Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Amanda Hamilton, Roger Bolton and Doug McNally voting to approve.

Abstained: Keith Harrison

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

None

III. Comments from the Public

Andrew Fitch introduced himself as a North Adams City Councilor and the Community and Economic Development Advisory Council Chair. He will be at the MMA meeting tomorrow, January 19.

IV. Presentation of Executive Committee Actions

There were no questions or discussions about the Executive Committee actions taken on the Commission's behalf at its December 7, 2023, and January 4, 2024, meetings.

V. Vote to Amend the BRPC Bylaws

The Commission Development Committee recommended amending the BRPC Bylaws to allow Officers and Committee members to serve for two-year terms instead of one year. This amendment requires a two-thirds vote of the Delegates or Alternates attending the meeting.

Roger pointed out that municipalities will continue their annual elections and appointments to boards and commissions.

Doug McNally moved to amend the BRPC Bylaws to allow Officers and Committee members to serve for two-year terms instead of one-year. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved the bylaws amendment.

Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Amanda Hamilton, Roger Bolton and Doug McNally

VI. Commonwealth's Economic Development Plan

Director of Rural Affairs Anne Gobi reviewed the Healey administration's economic development plan, "[Team Massachusetts: Leading Future Generations](#)." The plan must convert to a proposed law and go through committee processes. A document about the plan was reviewed and will be emailed to Delegates and Alternate Delegates and posted on the website under this meeting's materials.

The Governor's priorities are greater affordability, competitiveness, and equity. The plan addresses affordable housing, transportation, infrastructure, tourism, and leading in climate technology, life sciences, and advanced manufacturing. It mentions encouraging third-party investors to create capital for businesses, recruiting immigrants for unfilled positions, keeping young people in the state, better support for small businesses, \$24 million for rural communities on top of Chapter 90 funding,

Accessory dwelling units by right, mills as housing, promoting Massachusetts as an affordable and desirable place to live and work, capitalizing on the USA's upcoming 250th anniversary, and child care were also mentioned.

Commission members emphasized to Director Gobi the need to address rural housing, transportation, and early childhood education and care as integral to economic development. Increasing PILOT payments was also mentioned. Director Gobi expects the Governor to recommend a PILOT increase, but not as much as inland rural communities want.

She urged members to identify what they want the bill to focus on and participate in the legislative process, including contacting state representatives to file amendments, etc.

VII. Educational/Informational Emphasis for Commission

The BRPC Commission Development Committee asked for input from Delegates and Alternates about the Commission's educational/information efforts and if people would participate in person.

There is interest in in-person gatherings on 5th Thursdays as done in the past, perhaps at the BRPC office with a light supper or drinks and appetizers at another location to keep costs down.

Topics could be pulled from the proposed Economic Development Plan to educate Commissioners. Suggested topics: regionalization, housing success stories, what actions invite people to live here, transportation such as a presentation on the on-demand project in southern Berkshire County, and pushing BRTA to offer micro-transit.

VIII. Presentation of the Berkshires Outside Website

GIS Data and IT Program Manager Mark Maloy presented the new Berkshires Outside website: <https://berkshiresoutside.org>, a nearly two-year project to establish this one-stop resource for all things outdoor recreation in the

Berkshires, such as hiking, boating, skiing, hunting, mountain biking, cycling, sports courts, and ice skating rinks.

The site was welcomed enthusiastically, and BRPC staff were encouraged to promote it, including as an example of what the Planning Commission can accomplish. Partner 1Berkshire is handling the promotion which includes New York city. The state's director of outdoor recreation is very impressed with the site.

IX. Executive Director's Report

A. District Local Technical Assistance 24 (DLTA)

The DLTA applications are due on Friday, January 26, 2024. Submitting an application approved by the Select Board or Mayor makes a community eligible for technical assistance from BRPC staff at no cost for eligible projects. Solicitation [HERE](#). Fillable application [HERE](#). Contact CJ Hoss, Community Planning Program Manager, choss@berkshireplanning.org, for more information.

B. 9C Cut

The Berkshire Funding Focus's (BFF) state legislative earmark BRPC was subject to a so-called 9C cut by the Governor. Section 9C of Chapter 29 of the Massachusetts General Laws requires that when projected revenue is less than projected spending, the Governor must act to balance the budget. BFF aims to help communities, non-profits, and businesses get grants, especially federal ones.

C. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)

The Transportation staff have begun developing the next TIP for Berkshire County, a prioritized list of transportation projects for the next several years. This document is a prerequisite to receiving federal funding for eligible highway, bridge, and transit projects. Contact Principal Transportation Planner Anuja Koirala, akoirala@berkshireplanning.org for more information.

X. Adjournment

Sheila Irvin motioned to adjourn, seconded by Pedro Pachano and approved by roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.

Peter Traub, Caleb Darby, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Amanda Hamilton, Roger Bolton and Doug McNally