



FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES January 16, 2025

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.30A sec.20 until March 31, 2025.

I. Opening

A. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 p.m.

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. The following Commission members were present:

John Duval – Adams Alternate
Peter Traub – Cheshire Delegate
Mary McGurn – Egremont Delegate
Pedro Pachano – Great Barrington Delegate
Malcolm Fick – Great Barrington Alternate
Leanne Yinger – Lanesborough Delegate
Buck Donovan – Lee Delegate
Laura Mensi – Monterey Delegate
Sheila Irvin – Pittsfield Delegate
Sari Hoy – Sheffield Delegate
Lee Buttala – Sheffield Delegate
Christine Rasmussen – Stockbridge Alternate
Don Gagnon – Washington Delegate
Samantha Page – Williamstown Delegate (late & left early)
Douglas McNally – Windsor Delegate

Towns with no Delegate or Alternate present:

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

Staff Present:

Thomas Matuszko, Marianne Sniezek, Laura Brennan, Kate Hill Tapia, Cornelius Hoss, Nick Russo

Others Present:

iBerkshires – recorded the meeting, Pittsfield Community Television, Brooke Healy, Lee Town Planner

C. Vote to Approve Minutes of the November 21, 2024 Commission Meeting

Pedro Pachano motioned to approve the November 21, 2024, draft meeting minutes. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved it: John Duval, Peter Traub, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Christine Rasmussen, and Don Gagnon.

Abstained: Douglas McNally

II. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternate Delegates

None

III. Comments from the Public

There were no comments.

IV. Presentation of Executive Committee Actions

Executive Committee actions taken at the December 5, 2025, and January 2, 2025, meetings were in the meeting's materials packet. There were no comments.

V. Presentation and Discussion about Bike and Multi-Use Path Planning and Development in Berkshire County

Senior Planner Nick Russo reviewed bike and multi-use path planning and development in Berkshire County with a focus on the Adventure to Ashuwillticook Trail (or A2A Trail Project), which recently received a \$17.3 million award from the U.S. Department of Transportation's RAISE (Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity) Program.

The grant will fund planning, design, and permitting for a 9.3-mile stretch of shared-use pathway connecting the existing Ashuwillticook Rail Trail to the Williamstown Mohican Path by way of downtown North Adams and the rotary of the MASS MoCA campus. This comprehensive preparation phase will move a unique regional opportunity for connectivity to 100% design and "shovel-ready" status.

See the presentation slides at berkshireplanning.org to learn about all the bike-related projects, including initiatives to [eliminate traffic deaths and life-altering injuries](#). The Vision Zero Working Group is accepting applications for volunteer members.

VI. Vote to Approve Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Fiscal Year 2026 Assessment as Recommended by the Executive Committee at its December 5, 2024 meeting to include a 2.5% increase over Fiscal Year 2025.

By law, BRPC must notify municipalities by February of their assessments to be included in city/town budgets. With municipal budget preparation starting earlier and earlier, the BRPC Executive Committee voted to recommend the FY26 assessment increase by 2.5% over the FY25 assessment. This allowed BRPC to send a preliminary invoice to municipalities, but it needed a vote by the Full Commission.

Doug McNally moved to approve the recommended FY26 assessment increase by 2.5% over the FY25 assessment. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. A roll call vote approved it: John Duval, Peter Traub, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Christine Rasmussen, Don Gagnon, Samantha Page, and Douglas McNally.

VII. Presentation about the District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) Program

Community Planning and Development Program Manager CJ Hoss reviewed the DLTA Program through which municipalities receive technical assistance from BRPC staff on topics such as housing-related bylaws or ordinances, assessments or plans; best practices; and growth activities such as master and open space and recreation plans. Applications are due Friday, February 21, 2025, [District Local Technical Assistance 2025 - Berkshire Regional Planning Commission](#). All municipalities are eligible, regardless of whether they were awarded funding in the previous year. DLTA funding may serve as a match for other municipal grants. Contact choss@berkshireplanning.org with questions.

VIII. Discussion about Accessory Dwelling Unit Bylaw Activities by Municipalities

The provision to allow protected use Accessory Dwelling Units by right as enabled by the Affordable Homes Act goes into effect in February. Commission members reported on their town's bylaw activities and concerns.

Great Barrington has had by right ADUs for several years. Additional ADUs based on a previous special permit for nonconforming structures are not currently allowed. The new regulations may require that to change. Currently, farm dwellings may have more than one ADU for employees. A concern to be clarified is waiving GB's parking requirement if the property is near a BRTA route.

Windsor thinks their ADU bylaw will stand without changing occupancy regulations. It is unclear if their "one ADU per parcel" will comply with the new regulations.

Most of Lee's ADUs were approved by special permit, so confirmation of the new state regulations will clarify how many per property must be allowed.

Egremont is in the first phase of overhauling its zoning and has a special town meeting soon to vote on the changes they believe comply with the anticipated state regulations. The "right" to a second ADU (based on the first being approved by a special permit) has not been clarified by the [Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities \(EOHLC\)](#).

The new regulations are expected to be announced by February 2, allowing municipalities time to propose needed bylaw changes in time for town meetings.

IX. Report and Possible Discussion of the Executive Director's Memo

A. RAISE Grant Award for planning, design, and permitting for the Adventure to Ashuwillticook Trail, North Adams to Williamstown

There was a presentation earlier in the meeting on this project and the \$17,341,247 federal grant award to fund this phase.

B. Transportation Funding

The Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center released an in-depth analysis and thorough explanation of where transportation funding comes from and goes: [What Does Massachusetts Transportation Funding Support and What Are the Revenue Sources? - Mass. Budget and Policy Center](#).

X. Adjournment

Pedro Pachano made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. A roll call approved the motion: John Duval, Peter Traub, Mary McGurn, Pedro Pachano, Leanne Yinger, Buck Donovan, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Sari Hoy, Christine Rasmussen, Don Gagnon, and Douglas McNally.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:18 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 7:00 p.m.