



posted 3/17/2025 8:48 am KHT

## **MEETING NOTICE**

There will be a meeting of the  
BERKSHIRE REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
on Thursday, March 20, 2025 at **7:00 p.m.**

This will be 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.

The Meeting can be accessed at: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/3926128831?omn=85439357698>  
Meeting ID: 392 612 8831

**Meeting Materials** are posted at [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org). Click on the meeting in the Events Calendar to open them.

## **Agenda**

(All times approximate)

### **I. Opening (7:00-7:05)**

- a) *Call to Order and Open Meeting Law Statement*
- b) *Roll Call of Commission Members Attending the Meeting*
- c) *Vote to Approve Minutes of the January 16, 2024 Full Commission Meeting*

### **II. Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternate Delegates (7:05-7:10)**

*BRPC Delegates and Alternates may offer comments on any item not on the agenda. Any discussion or action will be referred to a future meeting and not discussed at this meeting.*

### **III. Comments from the Public (7:10-7:15)**

*Members of the public may offer comments regarding topics on the agenda or other matters they wish to bring to the Commission's attention. Comments are to be directed to the Commission. Commenters must state their names and the city or town they are from. Any discussion or action will be referred to a future meeting and not discussed at this meeting.*

### **IV. Presentation and Discussion of Executive Committee Actions (7:15-7:20)**

*Executive Committee actions taken on the Commission's behalf at its February 6, 2025 and March 6, 2025 meetings are presented for information and discussion .*

### **V. Presentation and Discussion about the **Building for Tomorrow** Report as prepared by the Unlocking Housing Production Commission (7:20-7:50)**

*Jennifer Raitt, Executive Director of the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (invited) and a member of the Unlocking Housing Production Commission will present the Building for Tomorrow Report, which provides over 50 recommendations to*

*increase the supply of housing and lower costs for Massachusetts residents, including some related to updating land use and zoning practices and streamlining local permitting.*

**VI. Vote to Have the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Allow Remote Participation in Accordance with the Requirements of 940 CMR 29.10, Applicable to all Subsequent Meetings of the Commission and its Committees, but such Adoption shall be Deemed Rescinded upon Passage by the Legislature of Remote Participation upon Terms Equal to or More Expansive than those Permitted under Section 20 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021. (7:50 – 7:55)**

*Without legislative action beforehand, the provision to allow flexible remote public meetings expires on March 31, 2025. Prior to the relaxation of the virtual option due to COVID, there was an option for remote participation subject to certain requirements, including the Commission would have to vote to allow remote participation, and there would need to be a quorum, including the meeting Chair, in person. This vote will provide the BRPC with another option should the legislature not act.*

**VII. Presentation and Discussion about the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program (7:55 - 8:20)**

*The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program was created to aid municipalities in their efforts to revitalize their downtown and commercial areas by encouraging the occupancy of long-term vacant storefronts. The program allows municipalities to use refundable tax credits as a tool to attract businesses to prominent vacancies within a community's downtown and/or commercial area. Programmatic changes this year increase the usefulness of this program for smaller communities.*

**VIII. Report and Possible Discussion of the Executive Director's Report (8:20– 8:25)**

**IX. Adjournment (8:25)**

Other interested citizens and officials are invited to attend.

All times listed are estimates of when specific agenda items may be discussed.

City and Town Clerks: Please post this notice

BRPC has adopted the BRPC website [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org) as its official posting method as allowed by 940 CMR29.00 section 29.03 (3) (b) since November 2010.

The Meeting Notice, Agenda and meeting materials are on BRPC's website: [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org). Click the calendar of events, then the meeting name, and follow the link to materials.



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## **DRAFT 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](http://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](mailto: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.



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

MALCOLM FICK, Chair  
JOHN DUVAL, Vice-Chair  
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk  
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer  
THOMAS MATUSZKO,  
Executive Director

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Delegates and Alternates, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director  
DATE: March 14, 2025  
SUBJ: Executive Committee Actions for  
February 6, 2025 and March 6, 2025 Meetings

Per the BRPC bylaws, actions taken by the Executive Committee on the Commission's behalf are reported and presented for discussion at the next Commission meeting. The Executive Committee took the following actions at the February 6, 2025 and March 6, 2025 Executive Committee meetings.

### **Executive Committee Actions on February 6, 2025**

Approved the minutes of the January 2, 2025, BRPC Executive Committee meeting.

Approved the December 19, 2024 – January 28, 2025 Expenditures Report.

Approved (after the fact) the submission of a grant application to the TURI grant program. This grant would allow for public education around plastics, conduct research, educate food establishments, especially those that do take out, about alternatives to plastics, and develop a municipal toolkit for reducing plastics. The amount requested was \$6500 for FY25, with an additional \$15,000 possible in FY26. No match was required.

Approved the submission of a grant application to the SAMHSA Strategic Prevention Framework – Partnerships for Success for Communities and Tribes Program. This grant would allow for work on alcohol use reduction and prevention for adults in Berkshire County. These five-year grants allow for funding of \$250,000 – \$600,000 per year. No match was required.

Approved the submission of a grant application to the HRSA's Rural Health Network Development Planning Program. This grant would allow coordination of access to health care in central Berkshire County. The amount requested was \$100,000. No match was required.

### **Executive Committee Actions on March 6, 2025**

Approved the minutes of the February 6, 2025, BRPC Executive Committee meeting.

Approved the January 29, 2025 – February 27, 2025, Expenditures Report.

Approved the submission of a grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to recapitalize the Berkshire Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund. No match was required.

Approved joining an Amicus Brief related to the Discontinuance of Roads, specifically the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court No. SJC-13721, Town of Concord, Plaintiff-Appellee, v. Neil E. Rasmussin, Anna Rasmussin, Brooks S. Read, Susannah Kay, Russell Robb III, Leslie Robb and Thomas Wray Falwell, Trustees of the Pippin Tree Land Trust, and President and Fellows of Harvard College, Defendants-Appellants.





## UNLOCKING HOUSING PRODUCTION COMMISSION



# Building for Tomorrow

*Recommendations for addressing  
Massachusetts' housing crisis*

**February 2025**



# Executive Summary

Massachusetts is in the midst of a housing crisis that threatens the Commonwealth's long-term economic growth, affordability, and livability. Decades of restrictive zoning, fragmented regulatory frameworks, and slow housing production have resulted in a severe supply-demand imbalance, driving home prices and rents to unsustainable levels. As a result, hundreds of thousands of households are priced out of homeownership, struggle to find suitable rental housing, or face displacement from their communities. Employers cite the housing shortage as a key challenge in attracting and retaining talent, while municipalities grapple with balancing local control and the need to accommodate new growth.

Recognizing the urgent need for on-going action, Governor Maura Healey established the Unlocking Housing Production Commission (UHPC) to identify and advance policy solutions that remove barriers to housing production.<sup>3</sup> The Commission was tasked with examining the structural, regulatory, and financial constraints that have limited housing development and identifying reforms that will ensure Massachusetts can produce the housing necessary to meet growing



demand. At the core of this effort is the recognition that Massachusetts has a 222,000-unit housing deficit—a shortfall that must be addressed to bolster economic stability, improve affordability, and meet the needs of future generations.<sup>4</sup>

This report presents a comprehensive set of policy recommendations designed to modernize Massachusetts’ housing policies, lower production costs, increase housing supply, and ensure that growth occurs in a sustainable and equitable manner. The Commission’s recommendations are organized into four major focus areas (*note: the order in which these topics and recommendations are presented does not necessarily reflect priority status*):

**1. Economic Incentives and Workforce Development**

Housing production is inherently tied to infrastructure (particularly water and wastewater systems) availability and capacity as well as workforce capacity. The Commission explores solutions to expand regional infrastructure access, increase financial incentives for modular and cost-efficient construction, and strengthen the state’s skilled trades workforce to ensure that housing production can keep pace with demand.

**2. Land Use and Zoning**

The Commission examined the ways in which outdated zoning laws have restricted housing development and contributed to rising costs. Recommended reforms focus on increasing housing density, reducing regulatory barriers, and fostering local zoning that aligns with long-term planning and state housing goals.

**3. Regulations, Codes, and Permitting**

The complexity and unpredictability of Massachusetts’ regulatory landscape and permitting processes significantly slow housing development. The Commission recommends limiting excessive regulations and ensuring that state and local approval processes support timely and cost-effective housing production.

**4. Statewide Planning and Local Coordination**

Many housing markets function at a regional level, yet permitting and zoning decisions remain highly localized. The Commission recommends implementing policies that compel all municipalities to contribute to housing development, encouraging intermunicipal collaboration to streamline decision-making and establishing a structure for facilitating interagency coordination at the state level.

The Affordable Homes Act, a record-breaking \$5.2 billion housing bond bill spearheaded by the Healey-Driscoll Administration, provides a historic foundation for addressing these challenges.<sup>5</sup> However, funding alone will not resolve



Massachusetts' housing shortage. Without significant zoning and regulatory reforms that maximize the impact of available state funding, housing production will remain slow, unpredictable, and insufficient to meet resident demand. The recommendations in this report provide a clear framework for unlocking housing production by addressing the root causes of Massachusetts' supply constraints.

The Commonwealth has an opportunity to lead the nation in smart, sustainable, and equitable housing growth. The time for incremental change has long passed. Bold, decisive, continued action is essential to ensuring that Massachusetts remains a place where people can afford to live, businesses can thrive, and communities can grow.



## **Executive Office of Economic Development**

### **Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program Guidelines**

#### **I. INTRODUCTION**

##### **A. About the Program**

The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program was created through Section 5 of chapter 288 of the Acts of 2018 to aid municipalities of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts in their efforts to revitalize their downtown and commercial areas by encouraging new occupancy of long-term vacant storefronts.

Municipalities may apply through the Community One Stop for Growth for access to up to \$50,000 per year in refundable tax credits to use as a tool to incentivize businesses to occupy storefronts that have been vacant for a minimum of six (6) months.

An award from the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program in the FY26 Round of the Community One Stop for Growth allows a municipality to request tax credits for Vacant Storefronts be assigned to an eligible business within the community by the Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC). The municipality will maintain access to the credits through the final quarterly meeting of the EACC in 2026, following which access to the tax credits will expire.

##### **B. What's New in FY26**

Several key improvements have been made to the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program for 2026:

- The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program is now administered as a competitive refundable tax credit incentive program through the Community One Stop for Growth.
- Municipalities may now apply for access to up to \$50,000 worth of refundable tax credits to be used to incentivize businesses to occupy vacant storefronts within the community's downtown and/or commercial areas.
- Communities are no longer required to establish a Vacant Storefront District in order to participate in the program. However, the program will take prior Vacant Storefront District adoption into consideration when evaluating applications.
- If awarded, a municipality will maintain access to the credits through the final quarterly meeting of the EACC in 2026.
- For the purpose of the program, a storefront is now considered vacant if it has been unoccupied for at least six (6) months.

##### **C. Community One Stop For Growth**

The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program is now part of the [Community One Stop for Growth](#), a single application portal and collaborative review process of community and economic development grant programs that make targeted investments based on a Development Continuum. It is designed to allow applicants to apply for consideration of multiple sources of funding to support multiple phases and facets of a project. For more information, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop).

The One Stop Full Application is organized into the following sections:

- Form 1 – Applicant Information
- Form 2 – Project Information
- Form 3 – Certification of Application Submission Authority

In order to be considered for refundable tax credits from the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program, applicants must include complete responses to all required questions.

### **Additional Information**

- For information on the One Stop, including key dates, frequently asked questions, and instructions on submitting an Expression of Interest and Full Application, please visit [www.mass.gov/onestop](http://www.mass.gov/onestop).
- The Expression of Interest is an optional, but highly recommended form that allows an applicant to seek guidance from the One Stop partner agencies. Applicants are encouraged to submit an Expression of Interest prior to starting their Full Application(s). Visit the [One Stop Expression of Interest webpage](#) for more information and access to the Expression of Interest form.
- All applications must be submitted electronically. The online application portal, IGX, can be accessed at <https://eohed.intelligrants.com>. An online webinar outlining the use of the system will be available on the site. The application form template and link to the portal will also be available on the [One Stop webpage](#).
- It is the responsibility of the applicant to be aware of all requirements and deadlines, and to ensure that their application is complete and submitted on time. All applications will be logged as to date and time received and kept on file as public record. Late submissions will not be considered.
- EOED reserves the right to request additional information from the applicant or external sources as may be necessary in order to complete the application review. EOED also reserves the right to recommend partial grant awards, as deemed appropriate.

## **II. PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS**

### **A. Eligibility Requirements**

All 351 municipalities in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts are eligible to apply. Only one application per municipality will be considered during each annual round under this program.

The Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program defines a “storefront” as a commercial space with at least one side that faces a public way. For purposes of this program, a storefront is deemed “vacant” if the space has not been occupied by a tenant during the preceding 6 months.

*Municipalities with Existing Vacant Storefront Districts:* Currently there are 30 approved Vacant Storefront Districts. Municipalities with existing districts will be eligible for requesting tax credits as outlined in the [prior Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program guidelines](#) through December 31, 2025. For access to Vacant Storefront tax credits in 2026 and beyond, all municipalities must meet the criteria outlined in these guidelines. Communities with an existing Vacant Storefront District in place will be assigned bonus points during the application review.

**B. Maximum Award Amount**

A municipality can apply for access for up to \$50,000 in refundable tax credits to be issued by the state to businesses occupying vacant storefronts within the community’s downtown and/or commercial storefront area. The tax credits may be applied to one or more storefronts in a single community.

**C. Municipal Application Criteria**

In the application, the municipality should identify the priority vacant storefronts within the downtown/commercial area, explain why access to the tax credits is needed to incentivize businesses to fill the vacancies, and describe how a local match (either by the municipality or property owner) will be administered to support the occupancy of the vacant storefronts.

In addition, the applicant should include:

- A map of the downtown or commercial area, with streets delineated, clearly identifying storefronts that have been vacant for 6 months or more and will be targeted for the use of tax credits.
  - Communities with existing vacant storefront districts may use their current district map, or a revised version, based on the new criteria outlined in these guidelines.
- A list of vacant downtown storefronts, identified by addresses and/or Parcel ID.
- A clear description of the community’s goals for the downtown’s development and explanation of how the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program supports existing efforts/tools to support the downtown vitality.
- A scope of work explaining how the municipality will use the tax credits to incentivize businesses to occupy vacant storefronts, including:
  - The name, contact information and position title of an employee from either the city or a local non-governmental organization who will be responsible for recruiting businesses into vacant storefronts.
  - An outreach plan that includes strategies for finding, identifying, and attracting businesses into vacant storefronts.
  - The criteria the municipality will use to determine whether to pursue tax credits for a prospective tenant.
- A letter of support from the Municipal Chief Executive or Chief Elected Official.
- Description of the amount of funds that will be dedicated to supporting this project. A project match is not required but is encouraged. Potential sources of match may include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - Cash match from municipality (i.e., general funds, funds from another municipal funding source)
  - Contributions for building owners (i.e. rent relief, assistance with buildout)
  - CDBG funded /other funding sources (i.e., loan programs, business assistance programs, sign and façade grant)
  - Permit/licensing fees dismissed (include documentation)
  - Staff time
  - Volunteer time (calculated using a rate of \$33.49 per hour)

**D. Municipal Application Evaluation Criteria**

Municipal applications will be reviewed to determine overall consistency with the goals of the Executive Office of Economic Development (EOED) and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, as well as the impact on downtown area revitalization efforts. EOED will evaluate applications based on the following:

- Ability to Execute and Leadership
- Achievable Timeline (ability to use the tax credits within calendar year 2026)
- Reasonable Tax Credit Request Based on Map with Identified Storefronts
- Description of How Match will be identified
- Outcomes and Impact

**E. Application Approval and Municipal Award Letter**

A municipality that receives an award from the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program through the Community One Stop for Growth will be sent an award letter from EOED indicating the quantity of Vacant Storefront tax credits available to the community.

Upon receipt of the award letter, the municipality may use the tax credits as a tool to incentivize businesses to occupy storefronts that have been vacant for a minimum of 6 months. The municipality may choose to use the tax credits to incentivize the occupation of one or more vacant storefronts.

The municipality will maintain access to the tax credits through the final quarterly Economic Assistance Coordinating Council (EACC) board meeting of 2026. Any tax credits not approved following the final meeting will expire.

**III. PROCESS FOR TAX CREDIT ALLOCATION**

Municipalities that receive a Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program award in the FY26 Round of the One Stop must submit a Vacant Storefront Tax Credit Application (“Tax Credit Application”) to EOED on behalf of any business seeking tax credits.

EOED will administer the process for bringing the business application to an EACC board meeting for a vote to approve the tax credits to the business(es). These meetings are held in March, June, September, and December. The Tax Credit Application may be submitted to EOED any time after the municipality receives the award notification, however no applications will be considered following the December 2026 board meeting. The municipality has the discretion to set the award amount for any business. The municipality will have access to these tax credits from receipt of award letter through the final quarterly board meeting of the EACC in 2026.

In order for a business to receive tax credits, the following steps must be taken:

**1. Municipality Submits Vacant Storefront Tax Credit Application to EOED**

The municipality will submit a Tax Credit Application to EOED requesting tax credits be approved for the business that will occupy a vacant storefront. The municipality will request access to the Tax Credit Application from the EOED Vacant Storefront Program administrator. The Tax Credit Application must include the following:

- A Certificate of Good Standing from the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR) and the Massachusetts Secretary of State and a Certificate of Compliance from the Massachusetts Department of Unemployment Assistance (DUA).
- A projected date for commencement of occupancy of the storefront and a



commitment by the applicant to occupy the space for a term of not less than one year.

If the business has been in operation for less than one year, the application must include a business plan that the municipality deems sufficient.

**2. EOED and the EACC Board Considers Approval of Tax Credits**

EOED will be responsible for vetting all tax credit applications and will determine if the application will be presented to the EACC for approval. EOED will take the following into consideration when reviewing the Tax Credit Application:

- The number of jobs to be created by the business
- The business' synergy with other downtown businesses
- Whether the business qualifies as a Minority- and/or Women-owned Business Enterprise (MWBE)
- Whether the business occupancy supports the municipal goals described in the FY26 Community One Stop for Growth application.

EOED will coordinate the presentation of the Tax Credit Application at an EACC board meeting.

**3. Business Contracts with EOED**

Businesses awarded tax credits are required to enter into a contractual agreement with EOED. Contracts will set forth the amount of tax credits the recipient is authorized to claim, the recipient's obligations, reporting requirements, and other information as necessary.

**4. Business Files Taxes**

A recipient of tax credits must submit personal income tax or business excise tax to the Massachusetts Department of Revenue (DOR). The tax credits reduce the recipient's tax liability to the Commonwealth; to the extent the tax credit award exceeds the tax liability, the difference will be refunded to the taxpayer. The tax credits can be claimed by the business upon their next filing of a tax return with the Commonwealth.

**IV. MUNICIPAL GRANTEE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

The goal of the Massachusetts Vacant Storefront Program is to fill vacant storefronts. Municipal grantees will be required to submit reports to EOED on a quarterly basis, detailing the municipality's efforts to recruit businesses, the amount of tax credits assigned to date, municipal match provided, map showing location of storefront utilizing tax credits, and other metrics.



# BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

MALCOLM FICK, Chair  
JOHN DUVAL, Vice-Chair  
SHEILA IRVIN, Clerk  
BUCK DONOVAN, Treasurer  
THOMAS MATUSZKO,  
Executive Director

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## MEMORANDUM

TO: Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates & Alternates  
FROM: Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director  
DATE: March 14, 2025  
SUBJ: March 20, 2025, Commission Meeting

### A. **Open Meeting Law**

The flexible provisions to allow public meetings to be held virtually or in a flexible hybrid fashion expire on March 31, 2025. If these provisions have been useful for your community, please encourage elected officials to extend them or make them permanent.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council has provided an easy to use form for you to sign on to a letter to legislative leadership, [sign on form for municipalities](#), as well as a [template letter](#) for you to contact our legislators directly. If you serve on a committee, board or commission in your municipality or provide support and assistance to one please act.