



BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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REGIONAL ISSUES COMMITTEE –Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 23, 2024, 3:30 p.m.

via Zoom

Committee Members Present

Andrew Groff, Williamstown (non-Commission member)
Kent Lew, Washington (non-Commission member)
Christine Rasmussen, Alternate from Stockbridge, RIC Chair
Eleanor Tillinghast, Mount Washington (non-Commission member)

Committee Members Not Present

Kyle Hanlon, Delegate from North Adams
Malcom Fick, BRPC Chair, ex-officio; Alternate from Great Barrington
Sheila Irvin, Delegate from Pittsfield

BPRC Staff Present

CJ Hoss, Community Planning and Development Program Manager
Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director

I. Call to Order

Christine R. called the meeting to order at 3:38 p.m. Roll call was taken and the meeting was recorded.

II. Approval of May 22, 2024 and August 28, 2024 Minutes

Kent L. stated he had a few non-substantive changes to be made for May 22, 2024. Kent L. made a motion to accept the May 22, 2024, subject to the aforementioned edits. Christine R. seconded the motion. The motion to accept passed 3-0 with one abstention (Eleanor T.).

Kent L. made a motion to accept the August 28, 2024 minutes. Eleanor T. seconded the motion. The motion to accept passed 4-0.

III. Update on Energy Siting Legislation

Christine R. and Eleanor T. provided an update of the progression of the clean energy siting legislation currently in the form of bill S.2967, which has not been voted on yet by the Senate. Christine R. commended staff for the letter sent to the delegation. CJ H. added that the letter was not meant to be exhaustive, but focus on the most important pieces in order to keep the communication brief. Tom M. mentioned that Representative John Barrett reached out to discuss the letter. Discussion ensued regarding getting traction to raise further awareness of the legislation, including outreach to legislators and members of the press.

IV. Updates on other pending legislation this session

CJ H. highlighted components of the Economic Bond Bill which the committee should be aware of as it approaches a potential approval. Overall, staff did not flag anything specific and wanted to bring awareness that the bill is moving forward in the near term.

CJ H. provided an overview of accessory dwelling units as a result of the approval of the Affordable Homes Act. Christine R. referenced the potential use of the Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) as a potential option to help finance the construction of ADUs. Discussion ensued. CJ H. and Tom M. discussed the HMLP program and raising awareness of the program locally.

Tom M. discussed that the Affordable Homes Act included the Seasonal Communities designation. Tom has been appointed as BRPC's representative to the working group that is focused on the roll out of the program.

V. Discussion of future legislative priorities and

VI. Identification of any future discussion topics

CJ H. referenced the Rural Policy Advisory Commission's priorities that were circulated to the group. A topic for the next meeting could be focusing on those priorities and the agency's priorities for the next legislative term. Christine R. said that budget priorities should be circulated to the delegation as we approach budgeting for the next fiscal year.

Christine R. also referenced the upcoming election includes a new representative for the 3rd Berkshire District and having a discussion with that person regarding regional priorities. Kent L. offered an invite should be made to the entire delegation. Tom M. stated there has been greater success in getting attendance from the delegation when the ask is made around a specific topic area. Christine R. and Tom M. both discussed setting some priorities before making an invitation.

Tom M. mentioned that another item that requires some immediate action is related to virtual meeting components that expire at the end of March 2025.

VII. Next Committee Meeting Date

The Committee agreed on a tentative next meeting date of Wednesday, November 20, 2024 at 3:30 p.m.

VIII. Adjournment

Christine R. made a motion to adjourn. Eleanor T. seconded to the motion. The motion passed 4-0. The meeting adjourned at 4.46 p.m.