BRPC
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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

Approved Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Executive Committee Minutes
Thursday, June 5, 2025

This was a virtual meeting as allowed by An Act relative to extending certain COVID-19 measures adopted during the state of emergency extending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c.30A sec.20 until June 30, 2027.

I. Call to Order & Open Meeting Law Statement

Chair Malcolm Fick called the meeting to order at 4:00. He stated that BRPC was recording the meeting and said if anyone else wanted to record it, they needed to inform him. iBerkshires stated they were recording the meeting.

II. Roll Call:

Office Manager Marianne Sniezek read the roll call:

Members Present:
Malcolm Fick, Chair, Great Barrington Alternate
Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate
Douglas 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, CEDS Committee Chair, North Adams Delegate - late
Sam Haupt, Peru Delegate

Members not Present:
John Duval, Vice Chair, Adams Alternate
Buck Donovan, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair, Lee Delegate

Others Present:
Mary McGurn, Delegate Egremont, Mark Smith, Delegate Lenox

Staff Present:
Tom Matuszko, Executive Director; Laura Brennan, Assistant Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager

III. Vote to Approve May 1, 2025 Minutes

Doug McNally motioned to approve the May 1, 2025 meeting minutes. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Christine Rasmussen, and Sam Haupt.

Abstained:

Roger Bolton, Kyle Hanlon

IV. Financial Reports

A. Vote to Approve the April 17 – May 29, 2025 Expenditures Report

Doug McNally motioned to approve the April 17 – May 29, 2025 expenditures report. Sam Haupt seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

B. Report on the Accounts Receivable – May 2025

Tom reported we are in good shape with the aged receivables.

C. Report on the Line of Credit – May 2025

The Line of Credit has not been used.

D. Report on Federally Funded Contracts

Tom reported there have been no changes in our contracts.
At the state level the Commonwealth has not signed certain agreements including Federal highways due to terms related to cooperation with DHS and ICE and has joined a lawsuit with twenty other states stating that these provisions are illegal. BRPC will monitor the situation and the impact on our federal contracts.

BRPC is looking at the State and other funding sources such as foundation funds instead of federal contracts. Karen Pelto, under our Berkshire Funding Focus program, is assisting with these grant applications including three One Stop grants.

E. Update on the EPA Limited Scope Review Results

About a year ago the EPA initiated a Limited Scope Review. This was presented to us as an informal audit. EPA reviewed the administration and financial management of three of our projects. After an extensive period without any contact, Tom reported that EPA did not find any weaknesses. The EPA report was included in the meeting material.

V. Open Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternate Delegates not to be further discussed at this meeting by the Executive Committee.

None

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Community Planning Grants Program for a Buildout Analysis of Berkshire County

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Community

Planning Grants Program for a Buildout Analysis of Berkshire County, creating a parcel-level assessment throughout Berkshire County. This assessment will include proximity to public water and sewer, current zoning, access to broadband, and potential brownfields concerns, and will identify viable areas for housing and commercial development or redevelopment. This will result in an online interactive mapping tool available to local officials, developers, and other stakeholders. Grant funds in the approximate amount of $150,000 will support BRPC staff time for research and outreach to property owners and communities. There is no match required. BRPC contact is Laura Brennan, lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org.

Doug McNally moved to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) Community Planning Grants Program for a Buildout Analysis of Berkshire County, creating a parcel-level assessment throughout Berkshire County. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

B. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Office of Grants and Research FFY26 State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements Grant Program for the establishment of the Berkshire County High Injury Network Dashboard

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Office of Grants and Research FFY26 State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements Grant Program for the establishment of Berkshire County High Injury Network Dashboard. This project would establish a next-generation High-Injury Network (HIN) for Berkshire County's roads. The HIN is an analysis of the intersections and corridors that have experienced the highest numbers of fatalities and serious injuries over a given time. BRPC would partner with Citan to utilize their CRASH software model to build an updated HIN as a part of the region's Vision Zero traffic safety effort. Grant funds of $40,000 were requested. Matching funds of $10,000 will be requested through the Federal Funds Infrastructure Office. BRPC contact is Nick Russo, nrusso@berkshireplanning.org.

Roger Bolton moved to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security Office of Grants and Research FFY26 State Traffic Safety Information System Improvements Grant Program for the establishment of Berkshire County High Injury Network Dashboard. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from

Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

C. Vote to Approve Revisions to BRPC's Telework Policy to Extend it for Another Year

The Executive Committee was requested to approve a revision to BRPC's Telework Policy to extend it for another year. This policy, which was adopted in response to the COVID19 pandemic requires onsite employees to work in the office at least two days per week. Employees may telework the other days.

Doug McNally moved to approve a revision to BRPC's Telework Policy to extend it for another year. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

D. Vote to Approve the Submission of Comments to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on the Single Environmental Impact Report for Mount Williams Reservoir Dam and Notch Reservoir Dam Improvements

The Executive Committee was requested to approve the submission of comments to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on the Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for Mount Williams Reservoir Dam and Notch Reservoir Dam Improvements. The Environmental Review Committee (ERC) discussed these comments at their meeting on May 22, 2025. The ERC agreed with the staff comments contained in the ERC report (included with the meeting material) that the SEIR adequately addressed the items contained in the Secretary's Certificate and our comments previously submitted on the Expanded Environmental Notification Form (EENF). We do recommend that EJ communities be engaged throughout the project.

Roger provided details of the comments from 2024 and the positive feedback received from the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs.

Roger Bolton moved to authorize the submission of comments to the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs on the Single Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) for Mount Williams Reservoir Dam and Notch Reservoir Dam Improvements. Doug McNally seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

E. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Regional Energy

Planning Assistance Program to Provide Energy Planning Assistance to Under-Resourced Berkshire County Municipalities

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Regional Energy Planning Assistance Program. The project would provide assistance to eleven municipalities with items such as Green Communities designation, annual reporting, and preparation of grant applications. The amount requested was $137,000. No match is required. The BRPC contact is Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert, sfernandez-aubert@berkshireplanning.org

Doug commented that the work for smaller communities to obtain a green community's designation is important because it allows the smaller communities to receive funding. Doug also suggested community representatives share their idea.

Doug McNally moved to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources Regional Energy Planning Assistance Program. Roger Bolton seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

VII. Committee Report and Discussion

A. Comprehensive Economic Development z(CEDS) Committee

The Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee met on May 7, 2025. The main topic of discussion was the 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS – Year 2 Performance Progress Report. There was a review of the additional economic data, a summary of accomplishments and a SWOT (strength, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) review. The CEDS committee recommended it be approved for submission to EDA at the Commission meeting, which it was. Draft unapproved meeting minutes were in the meeting material.

B. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on May 20, 2025. The 2026 – 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Unified Planning Work Program were discussed and recommendations made to the MPO. There was a Presentation on the Micro-transit Feasibility Study and Implementation Plan. Draft unapproved minutes were in the meeting's materials packet.

C. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Committee met on May 22, 2025. The main agenda item was discussion of the Single Environmental Impact Report for Mount

Williams Reservoir Dam and Notch Reservoir Dam Improvement Projects in Noth Adams. Draft meeting minutes were not yet available.

D. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO)

The MPO met on May 27, 2025. The main agenda items were the approval of an amendment (5th Amendment) to the 2025-2029 TIP, approval of an administrative adjustment to the 2025 – 2029 Transportation Improvement Program, approval of the 2026 – 2030 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), discussion on the 2026 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and authorization for a 21-day comment period. Draft unapproved minutes were in the meeting's materials packet.

Malcolm reported the approval of the amendments for both highways and public transit. Doug discussed the financial challenges faced by the Regional Transit Authority (RTA) and the need for state action.

E. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on May 28, 2025. The main agenda items were the introduction to Battery Energy Storage in reference to eventual siting requirements and guidelines and the continuation of discussion regarding legislative priorities. Draft minutes were not yet available.

Christine reported the new subject for the committee is battery storage. Christine mentioned the disapproval of a town bylaw on battery storage by the Massachusetts Attorney General and legal action. Christine shared information with Tom on firefighters' response to battery situations and the upcoming session on commercial battery storage. The federal budget cuts affecting solar and wind development and their potential impact on the region are also a concern.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

<u>New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 4/25/25 – 5/29/25.</u>

- Housatonic Valley Association - Berkshire Clean Cold Connected Partnership – Additional $19,553
- BTI - National Endowment for the Arts - Cultural Plan - Additional $6,650
- National Environmental Health Association - US Food and Drug Administration FDA - Retail Flexible Funding Model - $236,700
- New England Forestry Foundation - Woodlands Partnership National Heritage Area Designation Feasibility Study - $12,000
- Clarksburg - Comprehensive Plan and Open Space & Recreation Plan - $55,000
- Williamstown - Subdivision Regulations and Zoning Bylaw Improvements - $70,000
- Berkshire Public Health Alliance – Inspection Services FY26:

- Dalton - $3,000
- Lanesborough - $36,713
- Windsor - $9,482
- Clarksburg - $8,500

Grants and Contracts not received.

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD's) Fiscal Year 2024 Pathways to Removing Obstacles to Housing (PRO Housing) - $468,515.
- Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) s.319 - Crane Memorial Center Stormwater Mitigation - $59,970
- Water Quality Management Planning Grant Program 604B – Cheshire Reservoir (phosphorus study) - $163,300

Federal contracts canceled

- National Endowment for the Arts -Development of a Community-Led Cultural Plan in Pittsfield (contract termination date was the same as the contract end date)

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

- There was no activity in May.

C. Staff Updates

- New Employees:
  - Sasha Clapp – PH Training Specialist
  - Connor Daley – Youth Prevention Intern
  - Andrew Simons – Community Planning & Outdoor Rec Intern
  - Michael Wisker – Outdoor Rec Intern
  - Emery McHugh – Outdoor Rec Intern
- Resignation
  - Samantha Kittle – Emergency Preparedness Planner

D. Rural Policy Advisory Committee (RPAC) Update

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in May 2025.

E. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update

The Seasonal Communities Advisory Council met on May 16, 2025, in Provincetown. Council members have been meeting in three working groups to provide guidance on the forthcoming regulations. These working groups met three times prior to the May Advisory Council meeting where the groups reported their recommendations (Presentation: Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Meeting (May 16, 2025)). EOHLC intends to prepare and publish draft regulations in late July / early August. The next Advisory Council meeting is tentatively scheduled for September. Material about Seasonal Communities can be found at Seasonal Communities | Mass.gov.

Tom reported the meeting where recommendations from various working groups focusing on helping shape the regulations to be released. The

groups focused on community designation and other benefits like a regional housing trust. The two main requirements in the law are approving undersized lots and allowing tiny homes by right, with the option to opt in.

Tom reported he questioned how we get other communities designated. What criteria are needed to allow communities like Great Barrington or Lenox to be designated? Both towns have the infrastructure to create affordable housing. The housing crisis on the Cape and Islands to provide housing for its workers is a greater need than Berkshire County. We want to ensure that Berkshire County does not get into the same crisis to provide housing for our workers.

The regulations are expected by late summer.
The regulations must be reviewed once released to understand the designation requirements and the process once a town accepts the designation. Also, can a town withdrawal or can a town lose its' benefit if a town does not meet the requirements.

F. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail –Improvements to the track in the Pittsfield area, which were initially listed in MassDOT's FY25 Capital Improvement Plan, are now listed in the FY26 Plan. These improvements are needed to minimize conflicting use of passenger and freight rail.
- Berkshire Flyer –This weekend service is scheduled to start June 20, 2025, and continue through September7, 2025.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail –Staff from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments, the Montachusett Regional Planning Commission and BRPC continue to develop a proposal for conducting an analysis of the economic benefits from this passenger rail service.

G. Berkshire State of Work Summit

The Berkshire Community College, (BCC) is convening the Berkshire State of Work Summit – From Hiring to Thriving: A New Era of Workplace Culture. This will be held on Wednesday June 18, 2025, at Berkshire Community College from 8:00 am to 4:00 pm. This summit will address pressing workforce challenges and opportunities from attracting the right talent to creating an environment where employees can truly thrive. BRPC is a co-host. Information is at Berkshire State of Work Summit | Berkshire Community College. Registration is at Register Here.

H. Massachusetts Healthy Aging Report

The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative released their 2025 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Report on May 1, 2025. The report is designed to help residents, agencies, providers, and governments understand the older adults who live in their cities and towns – their ages, living arrangements, health status, strengths, and vulnerabilities. The

report can be found at Access the 2025 Massachusetts Healthy Aging Report

IX. Old Business and Discussion

A. Discussion about the BRPC Annual Meeting

We have reserved the Proprietors Lodge in Pittsfield for Thursday evening October 16,2025 as the date for our annual meeting. We are trying to arrange a speaker. Please reserve that date. BRPC is working with the Massachusetts administration on securing a speaker.

X. New Business

A. Discussion about the Sale of Our Office Building

We were informed abruptly that our office building was sold. We do not believe it will result in any immediate changes. Our current building manager will remain. Our rent payments will go to a new place. Tom explained that our leases are locked until FY2026. We have a 5-year option to renew our leases for both half of the second floor we currently lease.

B. Discussion about Topics for the July 17, 2025 Commission Meeting

Potential topics for the July 17, 2025 Commission Meeting include:

- Election of Officers
- Vote to Ratify Appointment of Representatives to Related Groups Not Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission
- Presentation on Renewable Energy Siting Regulations
- Roundtable Discussion of Municipal Items
- Presentation on the Auditors Report about PILOT Payments
- Presentation on the State's Housing Plan
- Other ideas

All agreed the Roundtable Discussion of Municipal Items was a good to share ideas and concerns.

C. Discussion and Vote to Establish the FY26 Meeting Schedule

A proposed meeting schedule is contained in the meeting material. We should set the meeting schedule for the upcoming fiscal year.

Doug McNally moved to approve the FY26 Meeting Schedule. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt.

Abstained: Roger Bolton

The Executive Committee thanked Roger, and all will miss him.

XI. Adjournment

Doug McNally made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick,

Sheila Irvin, Doug McNally, Roger Bolton, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, and Sam Haupt. The meeting adjourned at 5:03 pm.

Documents and Exhibits Used:

- 2025.05.01 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- 2025.04.17 to 2025.05.29 Expenditures Report
- 2025.05 Accounts Receivables Report
- 2025.05 Line of Credit Report
- 2025.05.30 Executive Director Memorandum
- EPA Limited Scope Review 11.1.2022 to 7.31.2024 Results
- BRPC Telework Policy Until 6/30/2025 Approved on 06/06/2024
- BRPC Environmental Review Report 5.21.2025 Mount Williams Reservoir Dam and Notch Reservoir Dam (North Adams)
- 2025.05.07 Commission Development Committee Meeting Minutes - Unapproved DRAFT
- 2025.05.20 Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- 2025.05.27 Metropolitan Planning Organization Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- Resumes: Sasha Clapp, Connor Daley, Andrew Simons, Michael Wisker, Emery McHugh
- Schedule of Meetings FY2026 Commission & Executive Committee Meetings
- April 2025 – Technical Assistance Memorandum
- Draft comment letter to MEPA on the North Adams dams improvements