



**APPROVED Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Executive Committee Minutes
Thursday, August 7, 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 4:07. He stated that BRPC was recording the meeting and said that if anyone else wanted to record it, they needed to inform him.

II. Roll Call: Office Manager Marianne Sniezek read the roll call:

Members Present:

Malcolm Fick, Chair, Great Barrington Alternate
Buck Donovan, Vice Chair, Lee Delegate
John Duval, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair, Adams Alternate
Douglas McNally, Commission Development Chair, Windsor Delegate
Christine Rasmussen, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Stockbridge Alternate

Members not Present:

Mark Smith, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Lenox Delegate
Sheila Irvin, Clerk, Pittsfield Delegate
Kyle Hanlon, At-Large, North Adams Delegate
Sam Haupt, At-Large, Peru Delegate

Others Present:

Laura Mensi, Delegate Monterey; Sarah Gardner, Williamstown Alternate, Brittany Polito, iBerkshires

Staff Present:

Laura Brennan, Assistant Director; Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager

Staff not Present:

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director

III. Vote to Approve July 1, 2025 Minutes

Doug McNally motioned to approve the July 1, 2025, meeting minutes. Buck Donovan seconded the motion. Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally all voted affirmatively.

IV. Financial Reports

A. Vote to Approve the June 26, 2025 – July 25, 2025 Expenditures Report

Doug McNally motioned to approve the June 26, 2025 – July 25, 2025 expenditures report. Buck Donovan seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

B. Report on the Accounts Receivable – July 2025

Laura reported we are in good shape with the aged receivables, noting a recent payment of \$14,005.27. Marianne reported that Courtney is following up on Clarksburg's aged receivables. There are no concerns about payments on the aged receivables list.

C. Report on the Line of Credit – July 2025

The Line of Credit has not been used.

D. Report on Federally Funded Contracts

Laura reported that BRPC continues to work on several federal contracts in FY2026 from FY2025, without any recent issues or interruptions. BRPC has begun conversations with Federal Highway regarding the RAISE/BUILD grant program for the engineering and design of the Adventure to Ashuwillticook Trail project.

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

Sarah Gardner, newly appointed Williamstown Alternate, stated she joined to listen in. Malcolm welcomed Sarah back to the Commission.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the Fallon Health 2025 Community Impact Grant

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Fallon Health 2025 Community Impact Grant and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant would supplement the SPARK Youth Substance Use Prevention and Mental Health Promotion Coalition's implementation of the Active Minds program in the Pittsfield Public Schools, which will establish a sustainable peer-to-peer youth mental health support system. This one-year grant allows for funding of \$14,783. There is no match required. There would be subcontractors. BRPC contacts are Andy Ottoson, aottoson@berkshireplanning.org, and Noé González Ortiz, ngonzalezortiz@berkshireplanning.org.

Buck Donovan moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Fallon Health 2025 Community Impact Grant and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Christine Rasmussen seconded the

motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

B. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application (after the fact) from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (out of UMass Lowell) to Microplastics Reduction in Berkshire County

The Executive Committee was requested (after the fact) to authorize the Executive Director to accept a grant application from the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (out of UMass Lowell) and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant will allow for education around plastics use to the public, research and education to food establishments, especially those that do take out, about alternatives to plastics, and to develop a municipal toolkit for reduction of plastics. FY 26 funding is \$15,000. There is no match. There are not expected to be subcontractors. BRPC lead is Jaymie Zapata, zapata@berkshireplanning.org.

Marianne reported this is the second year for this program.

Christine Rasmussen moved to authorize the Executive Director, after the fact, to submit a grant application to the Toxics Use Reduction Institute (out of UMass Lowell). Buck Donovan seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

C. Vote to Approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI)

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant will allow for education and technical assistance to local Affordable Housing Trusts, Planning Boards, and Town Administrators on housing development initiatives. Funding is expected to be up to \$500,000 over the course of a three-year grant period. There are not expected to be subcontractors. BRPC lead is Brett Roberts, b roberts@berkshireplanning.org.

Laura explained that the grant application being directed to HUD in the paragraph in the packet was incorrect. The grant application was submitted to the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI), as stated in the heading of the memo item.

Buck Donovan moved to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the Rural Community Development Initiative (RCDI) and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. Doug McNally seconded the motion. The motion

passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

D. Vote to Approve the Submission (after the fact) of a Grant Application to MIIA Wellness Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application (after the fact) to the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Wellness Grant "A Great Place to Work" program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. This MIIA provides an opportunity to establish and sustain an excellent work environment. BRPC was awarded the full \$5,000 allotment. The funds will be used to continue providing healthy snacks for the office. The staff lead on this application is Marianne Sniezek, msniezek@berkshireplanning.org.

Doug McNally moved to authorize the Executive Director (after the fact) to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Wellness Grant "A Great Place to Work" program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

E. Vote to adopt the following personnel benefits as formal policies (materials were included in the meeting packet):

- **Jury Duty Policy**
- **Military Leave Policy**
- **Veterans Leave Policy**

Laura explained that we are in the process of combining our policies and procedures into an employee handbook. We have several employment benefits that were never codified as official policies. The three proposed policies would then be included in an upcoming handbook.

Doug McNally moved to adopt the three personnel benefits as formal policies. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

VII. Committee Report and Discussion

A. Comprehensive Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee did not meet in July 2025.

B. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee did not meet in July 2025.

C. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee did not meet in July 2025.

D. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee did not meet in July 2025.

Christine Rasmussen reported on legislation updates that seemed important, including a new environmental bond bill and the energy affordability bill. Christine mentioned a legal case involving the town of Petersham and the importance of understanding broker fees in legislation.

Doug mentioned the change in the Chapter 90 formula is a significant win for rural areas in the transportation budget.

E. Berkshire Brownfield Committee

The Berkshire Brownfield Committee did not meet in July 2025.

F. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Committee

The MPO Committee did not meet in July 2025.

G. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee

The CEDS Committee did not meet in July 2025.

H. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee did not meet in July 2025.

VIII. Executive Director's Report

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 6/24/2025 – 7/25/25

- Lanesborough – Stormwater Management - \$16,650
- Milltown - Outdoor Recreation 2025 - \$2,450
- Cheshire – Stormwater Management - \$7,500
- Executive Office of Housing & Living Communities - Sustainable Berkshires Regional Comprehensive Plan Update - \$150,000
- Lanesborough - Open Space and Recreation Plan - \$30,000
- Great Barrington – Procurement Services - \$2,550
- Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs - Priority Redevelopment Sites Strategy for Berkshire County - \$37,500
- Berkshire United Way – FY26 Support - \$5,000

Grants and Contracts not received.

- Justice Community Overdose Innovation Network (JCOIN) for a Rapid Innovation Grant (J-RIG). This was a very competitive grant. BRPC was encouraged to apply in the future.
- On Behalf of MARPA (Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies) the Northern Middlesex Council of Governments (NMCOG) submitted a joint application in response to an RFQ from the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs regarding consulting services to develop the Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy (MILUS).

This proposal involved all RPAs in the Commonwealth, to varying degrees. MARPA was not selected by EOEEA as the consultant for MILUS.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

- The BTI Board approved increasing the limit on Berkshire's Tomorrow debit card from \$5,000 to \$10,000. This increase was needed for BTI's Microsoft online service invoice, which has increased.
- The BTI Board approved that BTI's president should sign the consulting agreement for the FY26 subcontractor for Consulting Services for Federal Fund Accountability and Transparency Act Subaward Reporting System (FSRS) and sub-award grant compliance.

C. Staff Updates

Resignation

- Monasia Ceasar – Public Health Inspector Trainer
Laura reported that this position will be posted soon.

D. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is holding three virtual listening sessions in June and July. Established by the Affordable Homes Act in August 2024, the Seasonal Communities Designation is designed to provide a unique set of housing tools to communities with significant seasonal variation in housing and employment. You can read more about the designation by clicking [here](#).

In each session, EOHLC will provide a brief overview of the designation and the work EOHLC is doing to develop regulations structuring the tools it makes available to communities before opening for public feedback. Regulations are still in development, and as a result, these sessions will not provide definitive answers on questions about final regulations, but rather, will give residents the chance to shape how regulations answer these questions. Participants need to Register in advance using session-specific links below:

- July 9, 2025 @ 6PM – [Register Here](#)
- July 17 @ 11AM – [Register Here](#)

Questions? Contact: eohlcseasonalcommunities@mass.gov

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail – Nothing new to report since last month.
- Berkshire Flyer – Amtrak has issued an official notice indicating that Berkshire Flyer train service will be replaced by buses between Albany and Pittsfield for the duration of its seasonal service.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – No new information is available on the grant funding announcement for the Corridor ID program. MassDOT Office of Transportation is working with FRCOG to prepare a contract to

fund the procurement of a consultant to conduct an Economic Impact Analysis.

MassDOT has launched the Local Early and Actionable Planning (LEAP) program to help municipal officials jump-start infrastructure projects, providing planning and early-stage design assistance to towns and cities across Massachusetts, with a particular focus on rural and economically disadvantaged communities. A press release was included in the meeting material packet.

Laura shared the link to the MassDOT LEAP Program
<https://www.mass.gov/news/massdot-launches-new-initiative-to-support-transportation-planning-in-rural-and-underserved-communities>

F. AGO Dover Amendment Guidance and EEC Notice of Change to the Dover Amendment, M.G.L. c.40A, § 3

The Attorney General's Office has released a comprehensive guidance document to assist communities in understanding the exemptions provided to religious and educational uses through MGL Chapter 40A, Section 3, also known as the "Dover Amendment." Additionally, communities should be aware of a change made to Section 3 in July of 2024 as part of the approval of the FY2025 state budget. Section 3 was amended to include explicit language providing zoning protections to family childcare homes and large family childcare homes. The language officially reads: "Family child care home and large family child care home as defined in section 1A of chapter 15D shall be an allowable use and no city or town shall prohibit or regulate such use in its zoning ordinances or by-laws.". A summary was included in the meeting material packet.

G. MA Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse Final Report and upcoming Mass Save Reforms Webinar

- The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) has released the [Massachusetts Building Decarbonization Clearinghouse Final Report](https://www.mass.gov/doc/ma-building-decarbonization-clearinghouse-final-report), which details EEA's initiative to assess current and future building energy programs and explore options to create more equitable and streamlined services.
- An upcoming webinar on August 27th from 10 to 11 am will explain proposed changes to Mass Save in the Healey-Driscoll Administration's Energy Affordability, Independence, and Innovation Act filed in May 2025. Registration is available here:
https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VLRIsa31Q_qdW_XimPTGTw#/registration

H. MARPA & DLS Conference

Registration is open for the 2025 MARPA and DLS Conference on Tuesday, October 7th. The event will be held in Worcester at the College of the Holy

Cross from 9 am to 12:30 pm. Registration at: www.mapc.org/event/2025-marpa-and-dls-conference/

IX. Old Business and Discussion

A. Discussion about the BRPC Annual Meeting

We continue to work towards securing a speaker for the Annual Meeting. As a reminder, we have reserved the Proprietors Lodge in Pittsfield for Thursday evening October 16, 2025, as the date for our annual meeting. Please save that date.

Laura pointed out that there will not be a Commission meeting prior to the Annual meeting.

B. Discussion about the Kusik Award

The Kusik Award was instituted to recognize projects, groups, or individuals who have made outstanding contributions to planning in Berkshire County. Nominations will be due by August 25th, with the Executive Committee making its decision at the September 4th meeting, and the award will be presented on October 16th. A nomination form is included in the meeting material and is available on the BRPC website:

berkshireplanning.org/about/kusik-award/

Laura reported that we have already received a couple of nominations.

X. New Business

A. Discussion about Topics for the September 18, 2025 Commission Meeting

Potential topics for the September 18, 2025, Commission Meeting include:

- Presentation from EOHLCL ADU Coordinator re: new ADU law and regs. Claire Morehouse will:
 - Share updated ADU resources, including pre-recorded webinars, model zoning, MLU look-up tool, and other technical assistance materials
 - Highlight key FAQs and best practices
 - Provide an overview of our office's current efforts and upcoming ADU-related initiatives—including stakeholder outreach, data collection, design competition, and more
- Address any additional Q&A from RPA and municipal staff on the new law and regulations
- Roundtable Discussion of Municipal Items

Laura reported that we have tentatively booked Claire Morehouse from EOHLCL to talk about ADUs.

We might want to promote the ADU presentation to the planning board members. We should have a targeted letter explaining what the meeting is

and its importance. The letter will be signed by Malcolm. We might be able to do a recording of the ADU portion of the meeting to share after the fact, with Claire Morehouse's permission.

The conversation was positive to continue the round table discussion.

XI. Adjournment

Doug McNally made a motion to adjourn. Buck Donovan seconded the motion. The motion passed with affirmative votes from Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, John Duval, Christine Rasmussen, and Doug McNally.

The meeting adjourned at 4:40 pm.

Documents and Exhibits Used:

- 2025.07.01 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- 2025.06.25 – 2025.07.25 Expenditures Report
- 2025.07 Accounts Receivable Report
- 2025.07 Line of Credit Report
- 2025.07.31 Executive Director Memorandum
- Kusik Award Nomination Form 2025
- June 2025 – Technical Assistance Memorandum
- Proposed Jury Duty, Military Leave, and Veterans Leave Policies
- MassDOT LEAP Program press release
- EEC Notice of Change