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Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Announces Promotions, Appointment of Assistant Director

Berkshire County, MA -- Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is pleased to announce the promotions of staff members Marie Brady, Seth Jenkins, and Jaymie Zapata to Senior Planners and the appointment of Laura Brennan as Assistant Director.

Laura Brennan

Laura Brennan has been named Assistant Director of Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Laura's new position will include her former responsibilities as Economic Development Program Manager at BRPC, in addition to supporting Executive Director Thomas Matuszko. Since joining BRPC in 2017, she has coordinated the Berkshire County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) process and secured Economic Development District status for Berkshire County. She oversees a Shared Economic Development Planning program through which several municipalities access part-time services. Her work at BRPC has also included developing an Outdoor Recreation Plan for Berkshire County (2020) along with subsequent implementation steps including an annual Outdoor Recreation Summit at Bousquet Mountain and partnering to create a comprehensive outdoor recreation website for the region (available late 2023). She also co-chairs the annual ArtWeek Berkshires festival, a multi-day celebration of creativity in the county.

Since relocating to the Berkshires in 2006, Laura has worked for Hancock Shaker Village, the former Berkshire Visitors Bureau, and 1Berkshire, and is a graduate of the Berkshire Leadership Program. She lives in Pittsfield with her husband and family.

Marie Brady

Marie Brady has been promoted to Senior Planner in Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Public Health Program. Marie holds a B.A. in psychology as well as an M.S. in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention. She is most passionate about substance use prevention, community health planning, and health equity and has experience with epidemiology and data. In her current role at BRPC, Marie manages two youth substance use prevention grants and develops weekly tickborne and foodborne illness dashboards and maintains a flu dashboard throughout flu season. She has worked on various health equity and emergency preparedness projects and helped develop the Community Health Improvement Plan.

In past roles, Marie developed marketing materials for a health and wellness clinic, oversaw directors of an adventure summer camp, oversaw a team of approximately 30 individuals providing COVID-19 contact tracing efforts in South Dakota, and worked closely with South Dakota tribal communities to share data and provide support during the pandemic. Marie is

most looking forward to expanding the Youth Advisory Boards to other schools and continuing to shape the health and wellness of the Pittsfield and greater Berkshire communities.

Seth Jenkins

Seth Jenkins has been promoted to Senior Planner in the Community Planning Program at Berkshire Regional Planning Commission. Seth joined BRPC in November of 2021 after working as a High School Educator at Hoosac Valley High School. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from the College of Wooster and a Master of Urban and Regional Planning from Ball State University. To date, Seth has worked with Adams, North Adams, Williamstown, Monterey, West Stockbridge, Lee, and Cheshire on a range of projects including Master and Open Space and Recreation Plans, zoning amendments/changes, community surveys, and as part of the District Local Technical Assistance Program. With BRPC's Public Health Program, he is helping local non-profits implement a federal grant creating a mobile Farmer's Market to serve underserved and low-access individuals in the county with local agricultural products.

Seth's interests have led him around the globe, from running the kitchen of a dude ranch in Colorado to teaching English in Prague. His wife, a Berkshire native, first brought him to the area to work at Jacob's Pillow for the summer in 1999, and they have lived in the area off and on over the past 20 years. Seth is excited to work with the great diversity of Berkshire communities to learn more about the culture and history of the area and to help communities become more sustainable.

Jaymie R. Zapata

Jaymie R. Zapata has been promoted to Senior Planner within Berkshire Regional Planning Commission's Public Health Department. In this role, Jaymie manages initiatives related to health improvement in the rural areas of the Berkshires, increasing Hepatitis C treatment, and the Gray to Green initiative, which is improving green space in Pittsfield's Morningside and Westside neighborhoods. Jaymie draws on nine years' worth of experience in Boston health care and research settings to inform her work in public health. Her areas of expertise include HIV care and research, LGBTQ+ populations, and issues related to aging and older adults. Advancing health equity for all populations is her passion.

Jaymie earned her bachelor's degree in religion at Smith College before pursuing joint master's degrees in social work and public health from Boston University. In 2022 she relocated to Western MA to accept this position at BRPC. She lives in the Pioneer Valley with her girlfriend, cat, and vegetable garden.

According to Thomas Matuszko, Executive Director of BRPC, "Our team has been strengthened in recent years by the addition of talented, dedicated, and innovative staff such as Marie, Seth, and Jaymie. We are proud to include them among the rising leadership of the Commission staff. Laura's strong skills and networking abilities will continue to advance BRPC in her new leadership role."

About BRPC

Berkshire Regional Planning Commission is the regional planning agency for Berkshire County, Massachusetts. BRPC assists the thirty-two Berkshire cities and towns in a diverse set of topics, including community and economic development, community planning, data and information services, emergency preparedness planning, environmental and energy planning, regional services, public health, and transportation planning.

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