



APPROVED Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Executive Committee Minutes Thursday, January 8, 2026

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 4:04pm. He stated that BRPC was recording the meeting and said that if anyone else wanted to record it, they needed to inform him. Brittany Polito from iBerkshires also recorded the meeting.

II. Roll Call: Caitlin Davis, Office Administrator, read the roll call:

Members Present:

Malcolm Fick, Chair, Great Barrington Alternate
Buck Donovan, Vice Chair, Lee Delegate
Sheila Irvin, Berkshire Brownfields Committee Chair, Pittsfield Delegate
Mark Smith, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Lenox Delegate
Kyle Hanlon, At-Large, North Adams Delegate (Left the meeting about 4:15)
Christine Rasmussen, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Stockbridge Alternate
Sam Haupt, Treasurer, Peru Delegate-Did not attend
Douglas McNally, Commission Development Chair, Windsor Delegate
Mary McGurn, At-Large, Egremont Delegate

Others Present:

Al Blake, Becket, Delegate
Peter Traub, Cheshire, Delegate
Brittany Polito, iBerkshires

Staff Present:

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director
Laura Brennan, Assistant Director
Marianne Sniezek, Office Manager
Caitlin Davis, Office Administrator

III. Vote to Approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of December 4, 2025, Minutes

Doug McNally motioned to approve the December 4, 2025 meeting minutes. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

Sam Haupt abstained. Kyle Hanlon did not vote.

IV. Financial Reports and Discussion

A. Vote to Approve the November 25, 2025 – December 29, 2025, Expenditures Report

Mary McGurn motioned to approve the November 25, 2025 – December 29, 2025, expenditures report. Buck Donovan seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

Kyle Hanlon did not vote.

B. Report on the Accounts Receivable December 2025

Sam asked if including bills due 30+ days was necessary. For example, the burning permits were recently sent out. The executive committee agreed to leave only over 60-90 days' invoices in the report. BRPC is changing how we are dating invoices, for the end of the month, for an easier close out. This process eliminates manual entries to close out the whole month and keeps things consistent. This process has been formalized internally.

Buck asked about the Peckham Materials invoice. Tom responded that it was part of the Group Purchasing program. Tom reported that BRPC received Pittsfield and Adams payments. The delay with the Sunoco payment was due to BRPC's W9 not running through their approval process. That payment is on its way. The payment for Baystate is also on its way, as a second invoice was recently submitted by communication with BRPC's finance staff. The Clarksburg invoices may have been delayed with the change in administration. Tom reported that CDBG related invoices will be done more frequently and the BRPC will formalize the process to collect payment with those over 60 days.

C. Report on the Line of Credit – December 2025

The Line of credit remains available.

D. Financial Procedures Update and Discussion

Marianne explained the memorandum that was sent to the Finance

Committee and stated that most of the changes were related to security, including the E-treasury system. Expense reports would now be paid out through payroll direct deposit instead of individual checks. It would be less check signing for Tom. These payments will not be taxed. The TD Bank branch BRPC used will be closing and a check scanner was bought to use beginning at the end of January.

BRPC's Financial Procedures were updated related to Sage Intacct.

There were no recommendations or findings with the audit. The finance committee will review the audit at their next meeting this month. Christine gave credit to Marianne on the work done on these processes and upgrades.

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

Included in the meeting materials were Christine Rasmussen's legislative report. Mary McGurn thanked Christine for the effort she put into the report. Christine mentioned how concerned she was about where Massachusetts stood on the state budget and potential cuts. There were issues with how much money we were going to have to work with, including some ballot questions that could cut the income tax. There was also concern about the population growth we have had over the last few years and monitoring it at a state level.

Doug McNally made a comment about the lowering of the state taxes and how the public was not made aware the last time this happened. It would put a lot of individuals at risk. Malcolm Fick asked what role BRPC could play in this? Christine suggested that BRPC's role could be educational.

Mary McGurn replied to Doug's comment regarding fully informing people of the repercussions. For the zoning issues going on in Egremont, Mary has written a custom GPT chatbot for zoning, called Zoning 101, based on Egremont. They will run a beta test, with an embedded link on the planning board's website for Egremont residents. Members of the committee were also interested in being a tester and were sent the link.

Al Blake suggested that BRPC should provide assistance to do battery storage and renewable energy bylaws.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Ratify the Submission of a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) 2.0 Regional Planning Grant Program for the Mount Greylock Region*

The Executive Committee was requested to ratify the submission of a grant application to the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness

(MVP) 2.0 Regional Planning Grant Program and authorize the Executive Director to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. BRPC's Environmental and Energy team applied for a grant in partnership with the municipalities of North Adams, Williamstown, Adams, and Lanesborough to support regional climate change planning under the MVP 2.0 program. If awarded, BRPC would administer the grant and provide planning services on behalf of these communities fulfilling the state certification to remain eligible for MVP action grant funding. The grant amount was made on a formula basis and would be determined by the number of communities participating in the program. There is no match required. Primary staff contact for this grant submission is Principal Planner Courteny Morehouse, cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org.

Mary McGurn moved to approve submission of a Grant Application to the Massachusetts Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) 2.0 Regional Planning Grant Program for the Mount Greylock Region. Sam Haupt seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

B. Vote to Ratify the Submission of a Grant Application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment Funding*

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment Funding and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. We have exhausted all the funding from the previously awarded assessment grant and currently have no funds available for site assessments. Several potential sites have been identified that could benefit from environmental site assessments. The maximum grant award is \$500,000. There is no required match. Staff lead is Energy and Environmental Program Manager Melissa Provencher, mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org.

Doug McNally moved to approve Grant Application to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency for Brownfields Assessment Funding. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

C. Vote to Ratify the Submission of a Grant Application to the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO)'s Reimagining Health and Public Safety Overdose Initiatives (RHAPSODI) 2026 Funding Opportunity*

The Executive Committee was requested to ratify the submission of a grant application to the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO)'s Reimagining Health and Public Safety Overdose Initiatives (RHAPSODI) 2026 funding opportunity and authorize the Executive Director to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. The initial grant period is 7 months, with a total funding amount of \$120,000. The proposed project will enhance support for family members, close friends and others in the social networks of incarcerated or recently released community members with a history of opioid and/or stimulant use, with a goal of bolstering the person's re-entry by bolstering those around them. There is no match required. Subcontractors are anticipated to include the Berkshire County Sheriff's Office and its affiliated 2nd Street Second Chances program, Brandeis University, Solasta Strategies and Kate Hocker Design. BRPC contact is Senior Planner Andy Ottoson, aottoson@berkshireplanning.org.

Mark Smith moved to approve the Grant Application to the National Association of County & City Health Officials (NACCHO)'s Reimagining Health and Public Safety Overdose Initiatives (RHAPSODI) 2026 Funding Opportunity. Mary McGurn seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

D. Vote to Approve the BRPC Assistant Director, Laura Brennan, to be an Authorized Signatory for BRPC until the New Executive Director Starts Working*

While several Executive Committee members are authorized to sign checks on behalf of BRPC, currently only the Executive Director and the Commission Chair are authorized signatories for the Commission on documents such as contracts. For overall agency efficiency, in the possible instance where there may be a gap between the time Tom retired and the new Executive Director actually started working, it would be beneficial to have a second authorized signatory approved.

Mark Smith moved to approve Laura Brennan, to be an Authorized Signatory for BRPC until the New Executive Director Starts. Doug McNally seconded the motion.

Malcolm commented that this was a good policy to have in place before Tom retired, so anything signature required would not fall only to Malcolm.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

E. Vote to Ratify the Execution of a Contract with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council Related to the MassGIS Roadmap for Municipal Land Use and Zoning Grant*

The Executive Committee was requested to ratify the execution of a contract with the Metropolitan Area Planning Commission (MAPC) related to the MassGIS Municipal Land Use and Zoning grant. Through this grant, BRPC would collaborate with municipalities in Berkshire County to understand how land use classifications in the assessors' database are assigned and utilized. Additionally, BRPC will collaborate with municipalities to clarify the procedures for updating zoning maps. BRPC will receive \$8,550. No match is required. Staff lead on this project will be GIS, Data & IT Manager Mark Maloy, mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org, x29.

Mary McGurn motioned to approve Execution of a Contract with the Metropolitan Area Planning Council Related to the MassGIS Roadmap for Municipal Land Use and Zoning Grant. Mark Smith seconded the motion.

Christine Rasmussen asked for clarification on what the result would be of the maps. Tom provided more information on how this will classify the land as more consistent on maps. Assessors currently use different codes, and this will review the codes to see where there are issues. There would be a process on this and how to standardize these codes.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

F. Vote to Approve the Execution of a Contract with the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission Related to the MassGIS Addressing Grant*

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to execute a contract with the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) related to the MassGIS Addressing grant program. Through this grant, BRPC would work with municipalities to document the process for adding new addresses. Additionally, BRPC will review existing municipal resources to identify addresses that are currently missing from the State e911 system. BRPC will receive \$32,700, with no match required. Staff lead on this project will be GIS, Data & IT Manager Mark Maloy, mmaloy@berkshireplanning.org, x29.

Doug McNally motioned to approve the Execution of a Contract with the Merrimac Valley Planning Commission Related to the MassGIS Addressing Grant. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion.

Malcolm Fick asked for clarification on the grant and the time frame for this project. Tom explained that this is about adding new addresses that are not currently in the state e911 system, so that all towns are appropriately assigned. BRPC's GIS, Data and IT manager Mark Maloy, spends 20-30% of his time on internal staff issues, 20-30% on broad data such as Berkshires Benchmarks and another percentage of time on various projects which would include this project.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally.

VII. Committee Updates, Reports and Discussion

A. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee did not meet in December 2025. The next meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2026.

B. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee meets as needed and did not need to meet in December 2025.

C. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee received a memo on December 23, 2025, that highlighted the work BRPC has been doing with TD Bank on changes, as well as other work. The next meeting would be scheduled when the FY25 audit is completed.

Sam Haupt reported the Finance Committee met and recommended a 2.5% increase for the assessment amounts for FY27.

D. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee did not meet in December 2025.

E. Berkshire Brownfield Committee

The Berkshire Brownfield Committee meet as needed and did not meet in December 2025.

F. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPO)

The December MPO meeting was canceled. The MPO typically meets virtually on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 4:00 pm.

G. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee

The CEDS Committee meets quarterly and did not meet in December 2025. The next meeting (virtual) is scheduled for 1:00 pm on January 21, 2026.

Laura Brennan shared this link for submittal of priority projects, potential inclusion in the 2026 Annual Report: <https://berkshireplanning.org/call-for-submissions-new-ceds-priority-projects/>. Malcolm asked what type of projects this would include. Laura gave examples such as the Berkshire Innovation Center, William Stanley Business Park, and several of the colleges looking for workforce development opportunities. Projects being listed help secure funding

H. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee meets as needed, primarily to advise the TIP development process and did not meet in December 2025 as the next TIP process has not started yet.

VIII. Executive Director's Report and Discussion

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 11/25/25 – 12/29/25

- Lanesborough - Opioid Settlement - \$44,234.41
- Executive Office of Economic Development - Berkshire Funding Focus - \$50,000
- Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs - Great Barrington Open Space & Recreation Plan - \$37,500
- Berkshire AHEC - Mental Health First Aid - \$1,218.50
- Hinsdale-Florida Housing Rehabilitation Program - \$200,000
- South County Housing Rehabilitation Program - \$213,500
- Executive Office of Administration and Finance - Technical Assistance for Regional Planning Agencies - \$142,816.21
- MAPC - Land Use and Zoning Data Improvement Project - \$8,550

Grants and Contracts not received

BRPC did not receive the award from the U.S. Department of Transportation for the FY25 FHWA- SS4A -Safe Streets and Roads for All to develop comprehensive safety action plans. The applications received significantly exceeded the funds available.

There is a debrief scheduled regarding the grants we did not receive.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

The BTI Board approved the following:

- Authorized BTI to submit two grant applications to the Mill Town Foundation. The first was \$15,000 for continued support of Berkshire Benchmarks. The second was \$5,000 for marketing for Berkshires Outside. Both grants would run for the 2026 calendar year.
- Ratified the Submission of a Grant Application to the Brooks and Joan Fortune Family Foundation to support ArtWeek Berkshires 2026 in

the amount of \$5,000 to support a digital retargeting campaign promoting the ArtWeek Berkshires festival in 2026. No match is required.

- Approval of the Director and Officer Annual Statement of Conflict-of-Interest form for Sam Haupt.
- Approval of Draft FY 2026 BTI Officers and Directors, adding Sam Haupt as Treasurer.
- Approval of BTI Check Register 07.01.2025 to 11.30.2025.
- Approval of BTI FY26 Draft Budget.

C. Staff Updates

- Promotions:
 - Lydia Shulman – Public Health Services Program Manager
 - Jaymie Zapata – Public Health Planning Program Manager
- Open Positions:
 - Public Health Trainer

The current Public Health department was too large for adequate management, so it made sense to split it into two program areas with two managers.

D. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update

The Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities, (EOHLC) released the Seasonal Communities Advisory Council's Annual Report, which was included in the meeting material. Regulations have still not been finalized but are expected in January.

Mary McGurn found the additional items the Advisory Committee proposed positive and thanked the committee for the work.

Tom is working on securing a save the date for a public informational meeting with the EOHLC in South County. He also stated he is soliciting questions for this session. Mary also wanted to learn if the recently passed cottage cluster zoning amendments in Egremont would be acceptable to meet the Seasonal Communities requirements.

E. Passenger Rail

- West-East Rail – No update.
- Berkshire Flyer – No update.
- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – . A consultant has been selected.

More information on these items can be found at [Compass Rail | Mass.gov](https://www.mass.gov/compass-rail) .

F. Electronic Records Retention

BRPC had applied to the Secretary of State Office to transition from paper records to digital records to comply with the Public Records Law. With the recent transition to SharePoint and OneDrive software for file storage and the use of Microsoft Purview for emails all files and emails are protected from

permanent deletion by users. Microsoft Purview can be configured to label files and folders for retention for a set number of years, based on the files' classification according to the Massachusetts Municipal Retention Schedule. Once that time period is reached, files may be deleted by the designated Records Liaison Office, who I am designating to be Mark Maloy, the BRPC GIS, Data and IT Manager. This should be an efficiency measure as we will not have to retain paper copies.

This process would need to be approved by the state, which could take time.

G. Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Siting and Permitting Regulations

The Department of Energy Resources (DOER) had announced that the draft regulations 225 CMR 29.00: Small Clean Energy Infrastructure Facility Siting and Permitting, <https://malegislation.gov/Bills/194/H4827>, are before the Joint Committee of Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy (TUE Committee) for finalization. Some changes from the previous draft included:

- A clarification that the local consolidated permitting process is an optional process that municipalities are required to offer in addition to their traditional permitting process, and it is the applicant's decision which process to choose.
- Municipalities will have the option of offering the consolidated local permit starting July 1, 2026, but all municipalities must offer it as a permitting pathway starting October 1, 2026.
- The Local Government Representative has been changed from the Municipal Clerk to the Chief Administrative Officer of the Local Government, or their designee.
- Municipalities do not need to change their bylaws to comply with and implement the consolidated local permitting process under 225 CMR 29.00.

Revised guideline documents for public comment will be circulated in the new year.

H. Battery Energy Storage Systems: Frequently Asked Questions on Fire Safety and Public Health

The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, working with the Department of Environmental Protection, Department of Energy Resources and the Department of Fire Services, developed responses to frequently asked questions about battery energy storage systems (BESS).

The FAQ is intended to help state and local officials and community members answer common questions about BESS. Specifically, this FAQ addresses some commonly asked questions about grid connected lithium-ion BESS, with a particular focus on questions pertaining to fire safety, environmental impacts, and public health.

A pdf sheet of the FAQs is included in the meeting material and is available at <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/battery-energy-storage-systems-frequently-asked-questions-on-fire-safety-and-public-health>

Doug McNally mentioned this is an important topic because there is a concern of batteries being mishandled leading to fires, especially in rural areas. This could strengthen the grid and reduce the impact of weather-related outages in the area.

Sheila made a comment about best practices in terms of where we would put the batteries and how we would control them.

I. Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Proposed Acquisition of an Interest of Land

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) was considering the acquisition of an interest in approximately 795 acres of land, in the Town of Becket. The property was formerly a private fishing club and is currently wooded open space featuring a 130-acre reservoir. The proposed use for the property will be protected open space adjacent to DCR's October Mountain State Forest. Included in the meeting material is a locus map marked "Exhibit A" which shows the property in which DCR is interested.

Al Blake, Becket Delegate, mentioned the major obstacle was losing tax revenue in private property. DCR is possibly looking into some remedies for this, but it had not been confirmed.

J. BRPC Public Health Program Update

Starting January 1, 2026, due to the upcoming retirement of the current Public Health Program Manager Laura Kittross, BRPC will be splitting the current Public Health Program into two programs: the Public Health Planning Program and the Public Health Services Program. Starting January 1, 2026, Lydia Shulman will be the Public Health Services Program Manager and Jaymie Zapata will be the Public Health Planning Program Manager. Laura Kittross will remain on staff until her retirement as a Public Health Program Manager Advisor and work with Lydia and Jaymie towards a smooth transition.

IX. Old Business and Discussion

A. Update and Discussion about the Executive Director Search Process

The BRPC Executive Director Search Committee met twice since the last Executive Committee meeting on December 16th and December 22nd. The Committee approved the evaluation criteria to be used to evaluate and rate

the applicants. The Committee will begin immediately evaluating applicants and determine which applicants will have initial interviews after January 9th.

Buck Donovan, Chair of the search committee, gave an update on the search process. We received several applications and there is a guideline in place to rate candidates.

Mark Smith asked if the meetings would remain open to the public. The first part of the next meeting would be open, then it would go into executive session which would not be open. Tom was hoping to start selecting candidates to do initial interviews. The initial round of interviews would be done in executive session to maintain confidentiality. The first part of the next search committee meeting would be to discuss the various questions that we would want to ask at the various interviews. That part would be done in open session.

The next search committee meeting would be held on January 14th, 2026.

X. New Business

A. Discussion about Topics for the January 15 Commission Meeting

Potential topics for January 2026, Commission Meeting included:

- Vote to approve the FY27 assessment
- Presentation on MILUS – Tom reported he has secured a speaker
- Overview of the BRPC Public Health Program Areas
- Presentation on the Sites Strategy and Build-out projects
- Roundtable Discussion on Municipal Items

Members commented that this list could be pared down so the meeting could be limited to 1.5 hours.

The presentation on the Sites Strategy and Build-out projects could be moved to the March Commission meeting.

XI. Adjournment

Mary McGurn made a motion to adjourn. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion.

The motion passed without discussion with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn, and Doug McNally. Kyle Hanlon did not vote.

The meeting adjourned at 5:12pm.

Additional Meeting Material:

- 2025.12.04 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- 2025.11.25 – 2025.12.29 Expenditures Report

- 2025.12 Accounts Receivable Report
- 2025.12 Line of Credit Report
- 2025.12.23 Finance Committee Memorandum
- 2026.01.02 Executive Director Memorandum
- 2025 Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Annual Report
- Battery Energy Storage Systems: Frequently Asked Questions on Fire Safety and Public Health
- November 2025 – Technical Assistance Memorandum