



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

APPROVED Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Executive Committee Minutes Thursday, March 5, 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 4:01pm. He stated that BRPC was recording the meeting and said that if anyone else wanted to record it, they needed to inform him. Breanne Steele from iBerkshires 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-joined 4:05pm
Christine Rasmussen, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Stockbridge Alternate
Sam Haupt, Treasurer, Peru Delegate
Douglas McNally, Commission Development Chair, Windsor Delegate
Mary McGurn, At-Large, Egremont Delegate

Others Present:

Al Blake, Delegate, Becket
Breanne Steele, iBerkshires

Staff Present:

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

III. Vote to Approve the Minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of February 5, 2026

Doug McNally motioned to approve the February 5, 2026 meeting minutes. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion.

Sheila Irvin commented that a correction needed to be made under the Seasonal Communities paragraph. The correction was that it should have stated 'residences on wheels,' not 'residents.'

With that correction, the motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Kyle Hanlon, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Doug McNally, and Mary McGurn.

IV. Financial Reports and Discussion

A. Vote to Approve the January 29, 2026 – February 25, 2026, Expenditures Report

Doug McNally motioned to approve the **January 29, 2026 – February 25, 2026**, expenditures report. Sam Haupt seconded the motion.

Tom highlighted one payment BRPC made for the Into Light exhibit through the opioid prevention group, being held in North Adams at Hotel Downstreet later this month.

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

B. Report on the Accounts Receivable February 2026

There was one over 90 days payment received. Nothing was in jeopardy, just receiving payments had been slow. Admin staff have been using Sage Intact software to help with Program Managers manage their invoices.

C. Report on the Line of Credit – February 2026

New formatting happened this month with the new banking software from e-treasury, so the reports look slightly different.

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

Al Blake from Becket asked about when DLTA grants would be coming out. Tom mentioned that an email was sent out this week regarding the grants.

Al also commented that it was difficult to keep up with state legislation and regulations, that he wanted to hire a part time town planner or knew if anyone had a shared town planner. Tom mentioned that some towns did share planners and Mark Smith also added that there was a list serve about this. Al asked if there were any funding opportunities regarding this, but Tom confirmed there were not any currently, but maybe after the budget was in place.

Another comment from Al Blake was concerning a DLTA request he had put in for seasonal communities and energy storage system. This request was in a current holding pattern waiting for the model-by-law related to the energy storage systems. Al was informed the best contact at BRPC for this would be CJ Hoss.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Approve Changes to BRPC Salary and Merit Adjustments Policy

The Executive Committee was requested to approve changes to BRPC's Salary and Performance Review Policy. Proposed changes include making the date to review the cost of living increase earlier in the year to align with Executive Committee approvals, provide more flexibility with how the cost of living increase is applied, and specify that a salary increase from a promotion may not exceed the top of the range for the position the person is being promoted into.

Doug McNally moved to approve changes to BRPC's Salary and Performance Review Policy. Mary McGurn seconded the motion.

Tom clarified that the adjustments reflected the cost of living index and what types of yearly increases those should be. Last year the organization looked at the lowest staff member's salary and what their cost of living increase would be and then applied a lump sum payment to everyone else above that. That seemed the most progressive and flexible way to do that.

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

B. Vote to Approve the Submission of Four Grant Applications to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit the following grant applications to the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program for the FY27/FY28 Grant Cycle and sign any resulting contracts or agreements. The budgets are still being finalized. Except as noted there is no BRPC match requirement. The BRPC staff lead is Principal Planner, Courtney Morehouse, cmorehouse@berkshireplanning.org.

- Clarksburg Bank Stabilization Project – to address aggressive bank erosion where the former Briggsville Dam was removed, mitigating property loss for residents in the Carson Ave. area of Clarksburg. This project is in partnership with the Town of Clarksburg. There is no match requirement for small, rural towns.
- Ghost Dams Inventory Mapping – to address numerous unmapped non-jurisdictional dams throughout the county, many of which are unmaintained and no longer serve a purpose. These “ghost dams” can often be an unknown safety hazard and are a barrier to fish and wildlife. In collaboration with Berkshire Clean Cold Connected Partnership, BRPC will work with conservation partners and small towns to map ghost dams throughout the county and identify private and public dam owners interested in removal. This would impact all municipalities with a focus on rural towns. There is no match requirement for small, rural towns.
- Housatonic Road Stream Crossing Management Plans – in partnership with Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT), Greenagers, Housatonic Valley Association and Mass Audubon to complete a fully mapped and assessed inventory of culverts in the Towns of Lee, Cheshire, Hinsdale, Dalton and possibly Lanesborough. Partners will work with Towns to identify priority culvert replacements based on culvert condition, environmental priority, and climate risk. There is no match requirement for small, rural towns.
- Berkshire Climate Career Lab – BRPC will partner with Ethos Pathways – a climate readiness coach - to create a High School career program to prepare students interested in climate careers, explore opportunities, and build skills. This grant is in concert with a previously awarded MassCEC grant for energy career building in the clean energy field. A 10% match is required. In-kind match will be provided through employer partners for their time working with students. BRPC will commit in-kind match through the Barr foundation funded hours of a Ray Fellow – Associate Planner.

Sam Haupt moved to approve the Submission of Four Grant Applications to the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Grant Program. 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, Kyle Hanlon, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Doug McNally, and Mary McGurn.

C. Vote to Approve the Submission of Two Grant Applications to the MassCEC’s EmPower Implementation Grant Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit two grant applications to the MassCEC EmPower Implementation Grant Program and to sign any resulting contracts and agreements. There is no BRPC match requirement. Primary staff contact for these grant applications is Sherdyl Fernandez-Aubert [Sfernandez-](#)

aubert@berkshireplanning.org

- Housing Energy Efficiency Rehabilitation - \$150,000 grant to create a more cohesive pipeline for residents within the CDBG housing rehab program to receive funding and support through the MassSave Program and BCAC. BRPC will provide technical assistance to coordinate with BCAC and enable projects to move from housing rehab to energy efficiency.
- Air Quality Monitoring - \$150,000 grant to fund the extension of BRPC's current EPA Air Quality monitoring grant. This grant will ensure that the work done to purchase and install indoor and outdoor air quality sensors will provide valuable data for Berkshire County. The final goal will be to produce a usable Air Quality data set, something that has been missing in the Berkshires.

Doug McNally moved to approve the Submission of Two Grant Applications to MassCEC's EmPower Implementation Grant Program. Mark Smith seconded the motion.

Tom commented that the air quality monitoring project was hoping for an extension through the summer.

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

D. Vote to Approve Funding from The Nature Conservancy for Culvert Development Work in Berkshire County

Approval was requested for the Executive Director to accept \$25,000 funding from The Nature Conservancy to support culvert replacement project development within Berkshire County. This funding will be used during the period of February 2026 to February 2027 to support municipalities with grant applications, culvert assessment and prioritization and supporting municipalities in sourcing funding for construction and project management. The grant award is \$25,000. Staff lead is Alison Dixon adixon@berkshireplanning.org.

Christine Rasmussen motioned to approve \$25,000 funding from The Nature Conservancy to support the culvert project development project within Berkshire County. Doug McNally seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

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

VII. Committee Updates, Reports and Discussion

A. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee met on February 5, 2026. The major agenda items were recommendations on BRPC Bylaw amendments, discussion of the potential April 30th fifth Thursday event, and the formation of a nominating committee for the FY 27 slate of BRPC officers. Draft, unapproved minutes were included in the meeting material. The next meeting of the Commission Development Committee and Nominating Committee is March 5, 2026.

B. Environmental Review Committee

The Environmental Review Committee meets as needed and did not need to meet in February 2026.

C. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meets as needed and did not need to meet in February 2026.

D. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on February 18, 2026. The main agenda items were welcoming new members to the committee, a review of possible topics of discussion for the year, including renewable energy regulations, Seasonal Communities designation, and the state budget process. Draft unapproved minutes were not yet available.

Christine gave Tom a thank you for covering for her at the meeting in her absence.

E. Berkshire Brownfield Committee

The Berkshire Brownfield Committee meets as needed and did not meet in February 2026.

F. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPO)

The MPO met on February 24th, 2026. The main agenda items were various TIP amendments to current TIPs, discussion of the criteria, process, and schedule for the current TIP, a presentation about safety performance standards, a presentation about BRTA's proposed route modifications, and presentation about the Ashuwillticook south feasibility study. Draft unapproved minutes were not yet available.

Doug McNally commented that the BRTA has only five employees and that the service to operate the buses is contracted out. The vendor has a bus driver shortage with only twenty-six bus drivers, which is less than three quarters of the contracted staff needed.

G. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDs) Committee

The CEDS Committee typically meets every two months and did not meet in February 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for March 18, 2026.

H. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee met on February 17th, 2026. The main agenda items were a review of the TIP evaluation criteria, process, and schedule and Ashuwillticook south feasibility study. Draft unapproved minutes are not yet available.

Sam Haupt commented that for the TIP, there were a few substantial projects that were happening in this fiscal year, East Street in Pittsfield and Division Road in Dalton.

VIII. Executive Director's Report and Discussion

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 1/29/26 – 2/25/26

- Williamstown - Subdivision & Housing – Additional \$30,000
- Great Barrington - Brownfields Assessment - \$53,340
- FRCOG - Western MA Regional Municipal Assistance for Farmland Protection Planning & Action - \$86,625.89
- Florida - ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan - \$20,000
- Clarksburg - ADA Implementation - \$5,000
- Berkshire Health Systems - Into Light - \$15,000

Grants and Contracts not received

- MOSAIC RIZE Municipal Matching Grant Program - North County Transportation related to Opioids. \$197,000
- MOSAIC RIZE Municipal Matching Grant Program to enhance youth-led substance use prevention and mental health promotion in collaboration with the City of Pittsfield. \$40,000
- The Berkshire grant was awarded the other three grants were not awarded from Franklin Regional Council of Governments related to Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication(CERC) plans for Franklin, Hampden, and Hampshire Counties.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

Adelson & Company PC has completed the BTI tax return.

Grants and Contracts not received

- Fiegenbaum Foundation for Berkshire Funding Focus. \$85,083
- Health New England Where Health Matters Grant - Community EMS (CEMS) model to deliver preventive, high-value/low-risk field services for older adults in southern Berkshire County. \$50,000

C. Staff Updates

- Open Positions:
 - Public Health Trainer
 - Associate Planner (with grant funds provided by the Barr Foundation to hire a RAY fellow) For the RAY fellow, Tom clarified that this was related to funding for a two year program who would be working in the environmental program
- Employee changes:
 - Laura Kittross- Part-time Public Health Program Manager Advisor
 - Wylie Goodman- Promoted to Principal Planner
- Employee recognition:
 - Clete Kus- 15 year anniversary-Congratulations to Clete!

D. Health and Dental Increases FY2027

We have received the increases from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) for FY2027:

- Blue Care Elect Preferred (PPO) 12.62% Copay \$20 was \$15
- Network Blue New England (HMO) 12.82% Copay \$20
- Dental Blue Freedom with Ortho 3.05%

E. Office Lease

To exercise our lease option to extend our leases for an additional 5-year term, we must inform the landlord 180 days before November 30, 2026 or no later than May 23rd.

Malcolm Fick asked if BRPC wanted to exercise an option for an additional 5 years. Tom mentioned that the new executive director could make that decision. Tom asked would it make sense to upgrade the current office and look at the telework model to determine if we are using the full capacity of our office.

F. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update

The Seasonal Communities Advisory Council met on February 10, 2026. Final Regulations, which are anticipated to go into effect on February 27, 2026 were discussed. Criteria were explained for additional communities to become designated and an expression of interest presented. Rockport had expressed interest and was subsequently deemed eligible. Going forward, Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) is considering establishing two subcommittees, an implementation sub-committee and a policy sub-committee. More information is at [Seasonal Communities | Mass.gov](#).

G. Passenger Rail

- [West-East Rail](#) – Several infrastructure improvements continue to advance in Springfield and points east. MassDOT anticipates two new trips on the inland route, Boston via Springfield south through Hartford to begin in 2030. The design efforts for a new Palmer Station are complete. The Boston to Albany route achieved a major milestone with the initiation of a Service Development Plan in January, with VHB under contract to prepare that plan.
- [Berkshire Flyer](#) – While there has been no formal announcement from Amtrak, MassDOT believes the Berkshire Flyer service will run this summer, tentatively from the weekend before Juneteenth until the weekend after Labor Day on a schedule like the one proposed for 2025. Corridor improvements of adding an estimated 14,000 ft of double track siding in Richmond, adding a Pittsfield yard turnout, and designing a second platform for the Pittsfield station continue.
- [Northern Tier Passenger Rail](#) – The economic benefits study continues. MassDOT has prepared material to submit a request for an initial application to the Federal Rail Administration Corridor ID Program, which has recently changed its structure.

More information on these items can be found at [Compass Rail | Mass.gov](#). Tom stated he was pleased with the work MassDOT has done on these.

H. Proposed Agricultural Preservation Restriction in Cheshire

Following the lead of the Cheshire Select Board, Tom approved a request to reduce the 120-day notice period to no less than 60 days on the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources proposed acquisition of an Agricultural Preservation Restriction on the 79.8 acres Gwozdz property in Cheshire. A copy of a map showing the property was included in the meeting material.

I. BASICS – Bridges and Safety Infrastructure for Community Success Act (H.R. 7437)

Much of the funding for transportation infrastructure originates at the federal level and is passed down to the state via multi-year laws. The current version making its way through the House is called BASICS. A summary of the proposed legislation was included in the meeting material. More information is at [Support the BASICS Act \(H.R. 7437\)](#).

J. Zoning Amendment Date Calculator

As town meeting season approaches, many towns may be trying to push new zoning bylaws or amendments over the finish line in time to be voted on. The Frankling Regional Council of Governments created a spreadsheet calculator to figure out the latest possible public hearing date and advertising deadlines. It can be found at [Zoning Bylaw Timeline Calculator-February-2026.xlsx](#). Many thanks to Mariah Kurtz, FROCG Senior Livability Planner

K. Municipal and Tribal Technical Assistance Grant Program

The Massachusetts Federal Funds & Infrastructure Office (FFIO) is offering the Municipal and Tribal Technical Assistance Grant Program (MTTA). This is a competitive grant program designed for the Commonwealth’s municipalities and tribes, as well as regional organizations whose membership is exclusively composed of municipal governments, community development corporations and other development authorities or agencies to help eliminate barriers that hold communities back from greater federal funding opportunities at the planning and demonstration phase of project development and provide, where possible, immediate dollars to localities for advancing overall project completion. Information at [FFIO Technical Assistance Guidance | Mass.gov](#)

L. BRTA Proposed Route Realignment Comments

Included in the meeting material were the Executive Director’s comments on the proposed BRTA route alignment.

Christine Rasmussen commented that the memo for the route alignment was very well done considering transportation is such a huge issue in the Berkshires, in particular the southern Berkshires. The credit for the memo went to Anuja Koirala, BRPC’s Principal Planner for Transportation, who wrote the memo.

M. Technical Assistance Report

The January technical assistance report was included with the meeting material.

IX. Old Business and Discussion

A. North Andover Amicus Brief regarding the Supreme Judicial Court Case Regarding MA Road Discontinuance Law

BRPC received a letter of gratitude regarding our support for North Andover's case in the Supreme Judicial Court related to county road discontinuance law. A copy of that letter was in the meeting material.

Malcolm Fick asked Tom to briefly explain what this was regarding. Tom stated that the short answer was that the plaintiffs lost. The full impact was that some of the discontinuances were not discontinuous ones for all uses.

B. Update and Discussion about the Executive Director Search Process

The BRPC Executive Director Search Committee met twice since the last Executive Committee meeting on February 7th and February 11th. The Committee conducted the second set of initial interviews and selected candidates for second round, in-person interviews to be held in open session. The Committee voted to invite two candidates for second round interviews. A third candidate was also invited but they subsequently withdrew. Second round interviews are scheduled for 9:45 am Saturday morning March 7, 2026. This will be a hybrid meeting with the candidates and Committee members in person in the BRPC second floor conference room at 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield, MA. Delegates and Alternates are encouraged to attend either in-person or remotely. However, only Search Committee members will be allowed to engage with the candidates. Discussion about the candidates will occur at the Full Commission meeting where the next Executive Director will be selected, tentatively scheduled for March 19, 2026. Material about the candidates is included in the meeting material. Buck Donovan, search committee chair, reiterated that only the search committee members would ask the candidates questions and comments.

X. New Business

A. Proposed Amendments to BRPC Bylaws

Over the last year staff have been compiling a list of possible bylaw amendments, mostly to clarify committee members, appointments, and terms. Brief explanations of the amendments were included in the track changes version of the Bylaws in the meeting material. For easier reading, a second version was in the meeting material that shows the Bylaws with the changes made. With BRPC's upcoming yearly delegate, alternate and officer appointments, and elections, we would like to bring these amendments forward to the Commission at the March meeting. The Commission Development has approved these amendments.

Tom gave a brief outline of the proposed amendments to the bylaws. The brief outline was to clarify who did the appointments, what were the terms, aligning with general election, having a process in place for when someone retired and finding replacements. This was a proposal to simplify the process and a semantic cleanup, for the commission, who would need to vote on these.

Doug McNally made a motion to recommend to the full commission that

they approve the amendments to the bylaws. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

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

B. Discussion of Topics for the March 19, 2026 Commission Meeting

Potential topics for the March 2026 Commission Meeting include:

- Vote to Hire the Incoming Executive Director
- Vote to Establish a Negotiating Subcommittee of the Executive Committee to Develop the Salary and Other Hiring Items for the Incoming Executive Director- this would be done after the March 19th Commission meeting
- Vote to Authorize the Executive Committee to Finalize and Offer Terms of Employment for the Incoming Executive Director
- Vote on Bylaw Amendments
- Presentation about the BRPC Community Planning and Development Program
- Roundtable Discussion of Municipal Items

XI. XI. Adjournment*

Kyle Hanlon made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion.

The motion passed without discussion from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Doug McNally, and Mary McGurn.

The meeting adjourned at 5:05pm.

• Documents and Exhibits Used:

- 2026.02.25 Executive Committee Meeting Minutes – Unapproved DRAFT
- 2026.01.29 – 2026.02.25 Expenditures Report
- 2026.02 Accounts Receivable Report
- 2026.02 Line of Credit Report
- 2026.02.01 Executive Director Memorandum
- Salary and Performance Reviews Policy proposed amendments 03.05.26
- Commission Development Committee Minutes from February 5, 2026 – unapproved DRAFT
- Map – Proposed Agricultural Preservation Restriction - Cheshire
- BASICS Summary
- BRTA Proposed Route Realignment Comment Letter
- Letter Regarding SJC Case -13721 (496 Mass. 450, 2025)
- BRPC Bylaws Proposed Fourteenth Revision - 2026 redline w-notes
- Proposed Fourteenth Edition - BRPC Bylaws - clean
- January 2025 – Technical Assistance Memorandum