

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

Not Present:

Kyle Hanlon, At-Large, North Adams Delegate

Others Present:

Breanna Steele, iBerkshires
Patsy Chavez

Staff Present:

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

III. Vote to Approve the minutes of the Executive Committee meeting of April 2, 2026

Doug McNally motioned to approve the April 2, 2026 meeting minutes. 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.

IV. Financial Reports and Discussion

A. Vote to Approve the March 27 – April 28, 2026, Expenditures Report

Doug McNally moved to approve the 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.

B. Report on the Accounts Receivable April 2026

Malcolm Fick mentioned that the report was fairly healthy this month and as of 5/7/26, several over 90-day payments were received from North Adams. Laura commented that nothing was in jeopardy and the overall accounts receivable total was high because we recently billed for Q3 of the fiscal year.

C. Report on the Line of Credit – April 2026

Line of credit is still at zero.

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

There were no comments from Delegates or Alternate Delegates.

VI. Items Requiring Action

A. Vote to Ratify the Submission of an application to the Massachusetts FFIO's Municipal and Tribal Technical Assistance (MTTA) program for funding to administer a Transportation Security Index survey in connection with the Adventure to Ashuwillticook Trail project

The Executive Committee was requested to ratify the submission of a \$64,700 request to FFIO's MTTA program. In the awarded but not yet under contract Adventure to Ashuwillticook (A2A) RAISE/BUILD grant application, community perspective was framed as an integral aspect of project design. Accordingly, the University of Michigan's Transportation Security Index (TSI) was proposed as a means of gathering data to inform design, including access points, and can provide information to other regional transportation initiatives as well. In addition to achieving the data collection objectives of the A2A project, this 2.5-year immersive, applied research experience will provide Williams College students with hands-on experience in applied community-based participatory research in a real-world setting. In-kind match will be provided by Williams College in the form of student and faculty involvement in the public outreach process. Staff leads on this project will be Clete Kus, ckus@berkshireplanning.org and Nicholas Russo, nrusso@berkshireplanning.org.

Mary McGurn moved to Ratify the Submission of an application to the Massachusetts FFIO's Municipal and Tribal Technical Assistance (MTTA) program for funding to administer a Transportation Security Index survey in connection with the Adventure to Ashuwillticook Trail project. 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.

B. Vote to Approve the Submission of an Application to MIIA Wellness Program

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) Wellness Grant program and approve any resulting contracts and agreements. MIIA provides an opportunity to establish and sustain an excellent work environment. The application amount will be \$5,000. The staff lead on this application is Krystal Bartley, kbartley@berkshireplanning.org.

Mark Smith moved to approve the Submission of an Application to the MIIA Wellness Program. 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, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Sam Haupt, Mary McGurn and Doug McNally.

C. Vote to Approve the Submission of an Application to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) FY25 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use, Site-Based Program (COSSUP)

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) FY25 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use, Site-Based Program (COSSUP) and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This three-year grant opportunity offers up to \$1,300,000 to increase field engagement to those at risk of overdose and other substance-related harms, expand related communications campaigns, and increase coordination among the local justice system, medical providers, and behavioral health agencies. There is no match required. There would be subcontractors/subrecipients. BRPC staff lead is Andy Ottoson, aottoson@berkshireplanning.org.

Doug McNally moved to Approve the Submission of an Application to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) FY25 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Use, Site-Based Program (COSSUP). Sam Haupt seconded the motion.

Laura clarified this was a program and a set of funders that had been involved with BRPC in the past and would continue to work with us. This is a large part of how the public health planning team deploys its substance use activities around Berkshire County.

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 Confirm BRPC Staff Salary Ranges for FY27, including the addition of an on-site Grant Specialist category

The Executive Committee was requested to confirm BRPC Staff salary ranges for FY 27 based on the salary adjustments approved at the previous meeting. Within these proposed salary ranges a new category has been added for an on-site Grant Specialist position, in anticipation of filling the role that supports Berkshire Funding Focus.

Before the vote, Malcolm Fick asked if we had passed everything except the Grant Specialist position. Laura confirmed that it was already what had been approved in terms of pay increase. It would add a row for a position that was filled as off-site in the past that we anticipated needing to be on-site in the future.

Sheila Irvin moved to confirm BRPC Staff Salary Ranges for FY27, including the addition of an on-site Grant Specialist category. Mark Smith 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.

VII. Committee Updates, Reports and Discussion

A. Commission Development Committee

The Commission Development Committee did not meet in April 2026. At the March meeting of the Nominating Subcommittee, a proposed slate of FY27 officers was approved.

Laura mentioned the proposed election schedule. Doug McNally shared the proposed slate of Buck Donovan becoming the chair, Malcolm Fick as the vice chair and the other two incumbents remaining the same.

B. Environmental Review Committee

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

C. Finance Committee

The Finance Committee meets as needed and met April 29, 2026. The main agenda items were review and recommendation of the BRPC 2027 Budget. The recommended budget is included in the meeting packet.

Sam Haupt gave thanks to Marianne for a great job with the highlights and summary of the budget.

D. Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee met on April 22, 2026. The main agenda items were Renewable Energy Regulations, Seasonal Communities, the Economic Development Bond Bill, and the State budget. Draft minutes are not yet available.

Christine Rasmussen gave highlights of the legislative report that included the House and Senate budgets, both at \$63.3 million for FY27. The Senate Ways and Means Committee would increase spending by 3%, which would avoid new taxes and fees. They proposed \$138 billion in unrestricted local aid. There was a section of projections of revenue and expenditures, which included key zoning and housing reform specifics. The budget proposal contained a provision that would reform variances to mandate zoning boards and would require permit streamlining. The District Local Technical Assistance Funds were budgeted for \$3 million, but Paul Mark was hoping to amend this. Debates on the budget would begin May 19th with a deadline of July 1st.

Mary McGurn commented that she admired the electronic messaging, in regard to public notices, special permit notices, etc. She thought this would be beneficial to the communities. Mary also mentioned at a recent planning board meeting, that they were going to review cluster housing bylaws. Other committee members mentioned that they would also be reviewing those bylaws.

E. Berkshire Brownfield Committee

The Berkshire Brownfield Committee meet as needed and did not meet in April 2026. Laura mentioned the next meeting would likely be before the end of the fiscal year.

F. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPO)

The MPO typically meets virtually on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 4:00 pm. The MPO met on April 28th. The 2027-2031 TIP is out for public comment through May 19th. Draft minutes were not yet available.

G. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee

The CEDS Committee typically meet every two months and did not meet in April. The next meeting was May 6, 2026.

The CEDS Committee endorsed the draft FY26 report. Release of data regarding the unemployment rate was very slow at the town level. CEDS added two priority projects this year and two had been completed and taken off the list.

H. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)

The Transportation Advisory Committee meets as needed, primarily to advise on the TIP development process and met on April 21, 2026, to receive an update on Skyline Trail scenic byway efforts and recommend to the MPO to release the draft TIP for public review and comment.

VIII. Executive Director's Report and Discussion

A. Report on New Contracts/Agreements

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 3/27/26 – 4/28/26

- Boards of Health Association – Administration Services – Additional \$5,000
- Massachusetts Department of Transportation – Transportation Planning - \$894,606.51
- Berkshires Outside Support – Mill Town – \$2,450
- Clarksburg - Digital Equity Implementation – Additional \$4,000
- Berkshire Benchmarks - Mill Town Support - \$9,800
- National Fish & Wildlife Foundation - Francis Avenue Stormwater - \$266,730.06
- Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs - North County Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness 2.0 - \$325,000
- Franklin Regional Council of Government - Crisis & Emergency Risk Communication - \$28,500
- Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection - Municipal MS4 Technical Assistance - \$63,225
- U.S. Department of Agriculture - Housing Preservation Grant - \$53,419

Grants and Contracts not received

We are not aware of not receiving any grants or contracts.

Laura commented that this was a healthy list since we hadn't hit the end of the fiscal year yet, when many grant applications are submitted.

B. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update

The BTI Board approved the following:

- Authorized BTI to submit a sponsorship request to Berkshire Health Systems for Bike Month activities in the amount of \$500 to purchase food, flyers, and other promotional materials. BRPC contact is Nick Russo, nrusso@berkshireplanning.org.
- Authorized BTI to submit a \$225,000 3-year grant (\$75,000 in 2026, \$75,000 in 2027, and \$75,000 in 2028) to Point32Health Foundation to support the organization's programming to improve conditions impacting older adults. BRPC contact is Andy Ottoson, aottoson@berkshireplanning.org.
- Approve Laura Brennan's BTI Director and Officers conflict of interest document. Changed the BTI board of Directors and Officers by removing Tom Matuszko and adding Laura Brennan, effective May 1, 2026. Changes to the bank signers: remove Tom Matuszko and add Laura Brennan; cancel the BTI Debit card in Tom Matuszko's name and issue a new debit card in Laura Brennan's name.

Grants and Contracts not received

- The Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation to support Age Friendly Berkshires - \$18,000

C. Staff Updates

- Open Positions:
 - Inspector

- Associate Planner (with grant funds provided by the Barr Foundation to hire a RAY fellow)

The inspector position would be under the Public Health Services program area. The Associate planner position would be housed within BRPC as a two-year position, focused on environmental topics. There were 6 candidates that were going to be interviewed in the first round with BRPC.

D. Office Space

There will be disruption to our offices for the next several weeks as we convert open space to an enclosed office to accommodate the Public Health Services Program Manager. Also, we will be having to deal with major construction and accompanying noise, by major Eversource construction on Fenn Street, including right in front of our door.

As part of due diligence before renewing our current lease at 1 Fenn Street for the next five years, we have issued an informal Request for Information seeking current available space and associated rates in and around Pittsfield. Responses to this RFI were due on May 1, 2026. Laura recently did a few site visits to potential office spaces, but pricing and configurations did not likely warrant moving to an RFP. Renewal will likely be with our current office space.

E. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update

The Seasonal Communities Advisory Council did not meet in April 2026. The regional planning agency staff from Nantucket, Martha's Vineyard, Cape Cod, and BRPC continue to work on draft model bylaws for Tiny Homes and Undersized Lots that would comply with the regulations, which are almost ready for distribution. Those draft bylaws are under review by EOHLC's legal teams before they can be used. More information is at [Seasonal Communities | Mass.gov](#).

F. Rural Policy Advisory Commission

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission did not meet in April, but there are still plans for outreach related to the next version of the Rural Policy Plan. Former Executive Director Thomas Matuszko has submitted his resignation letter to Governor Healy and requested that incoming Executive Director Laura Brennan be appointed to replace him on this Commission.

With input from Laura, we will continue to review the draft Rural Policy Plan update.

G. Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy (MILUS)

BRPC staff members continue to participate in working groups related to the Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy, including Economic, Energy, and Conservation. In several instances, concerns have been raised regarding the potential impacts of MILUS criteria or metrics for state-level decision making on rural communities. We are working closely with fellow RPAs containing rural communities to advocate for fair treatment and avoid detrimental effects. The

public outreach process portion of the MILUS initiative has been delayed, and the final deadlines extended.

Laura and the team were working on a draft MILUS survey, but it was placed on a long-term hold due to feedback from RPA staff.

Doug McNally made a comment about green space issues and how forested areas that were conservation areas were not considered valuable. If the state was going to insist on trying to keep the forests, the pilot formula was going to need to change.

H. Passenger Rail

West-East Rail – Laura was not aware of any updates this month.

- Berkshire Flyer –We anticipate through verbal discussion that the Berkshire Flyer will run from the last week of June through Labor Day in 2026. There has still been no formal announcement from Amtrak.

- Northern Tier Passenger Rail – The economic benefits study continues, with the most recent meeting having been on Monday, May 4th

More information on these items can be found at [Compass Rail | Mass.gov](#).

I. 5th Thursday Networking & Educational Event

On Thursday, April 30th, from 4:00 – 6:30 pm BRPC hosted an in-person 5th Thursday networking and learning event with guest presenter Rick Collins, Director of the Siting and Permitting Division of DOER at the Venue at Skyline in Lanesborough. Mr. Collins reviewed recent energy siting and permitting regulations and what they mean for municipalities. Attendees were encouraged to submit questions in advance.

The event generated a good turnout with good questions asked. Mary McGurn commented that it was a refreshing, open and informative discussion. There was an understanding of small rural towns. Doug McNally also commented that he felt like Rick Collins had small towns best interests in mind. Laura shared a link of Rick's presentation: [Rick Collins presentation](#).

J. MA Commercial PACE Program 3.0

MassDevelopment and DER are working to improve the Commercial PACE program. A public comment period on proposed revisions ended April 29th. BRPC staff have met with MassDevelopment representatives to learn more about the program improvements and subsequently connected several communities with MassDevelopment to explore local adoption of PACE. More information is available from Laura Brennan at lbrennan@berkshireplanning.org.

Several communities in the Berkshires have already adopted this. BRPC was working with Mass Development to plan a webinar sometime in June for communities to learn more about it.

K. BRPC Assisted Community Development Block Grant Applications

BRPC Community Development Staff prepared four FY26 CDBG applications for covering the towns of Sheffield, Becket, Clarksburg, New Ashford, and West Stockbridge. These applications represent a total of \$4 million worth of CDBG funds for Berkshire County.

L. New Report on the Health of Western and Central Massachusetts

The Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts release a new report, The Health of Western & Central Massachusetts: Key Findings from the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessments. This report covers the health of people living in five counties in Western and Central Massachusetts: Berkshire, Franklin, Hampden, Hampshire, and Worcester counties ("the region") and can be accessed at [The Health of Western & Central Massachusetts: Key Findings from the 2025 Community Health Needs Assessments](#).

M. Technical Assistance Report

The March technical assistance report is included with the meeting material.

IX. Old Business and Discussion

A. Topics for the May 21, 2026 Commission Meeting

Anticipated topics for the May 2026 Commission Meeting include:

- Adoption of the FY 27 Budget
- Report of the Nominating Committee
- Authorization to submit the CEDS Annual Report
- Authorization for the Chair to vote to approve the FFY 2027 Unified Planning Work Program at the MPO meeting.
- Authorization for the Chair to vote to approve the FFY 2027 - 2031 Transportation Program at the MPO meeting
- Approve BRPC's Appointment to the Rural Policy Advisory Commission
- Approve BRPC's Appointment to the Seasonal Communities
- Presentation about the BRPC Transportation Planning Program
- Roundtable Discussion of Municipal Items

B. Ballot Initiatives

During the meeting, Laura shared insights from an exchange with our legal counsel regarding what we can and cannot do regarding information distribution related to ballot initiatives, referencing [State Ethics Commission Advisory 11-1, Section 3](#).

Laura highlighted the following questions and information:

Should BRPC share ballot information? Information may be shared with our members, meaning Delegates and Alternates, who then may opt to share with their own networks.

Are there specific questions that would be pertinent to or affect BRPC's work? It is too soon to know which questions will be included, but dissemination of information (which should present both sides of any issue) should be focused on those questions which are directly applicable and germane to BRPC's work.

Mary McGurn asked if rent capping would be one of the ballot questions, which Laura couldn't answer due to it being hard to gauge what the final questions would be after court challenges to several potential questions.

X. New Business and Discussion

A. Proposed FY27 election schedule

A proposed schedule for elections of BRPC officers for FY27 is included in the meeting packet for your consideration. The proposed slate would be taken to the Commission meeting on May 21st, with a vote to occur at the first meeting after July 1:

Buck Donovan, Chair
Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair
Sam Haupt, Treasurer
Sheila Irvin, Clerk

B. Proposed FY27 meeting schedule

A draft schedule of FY27 full commission and executive committee meetings is included in the meeting packet for committee members' review. The schedule would be shared with the Commission on May 21. There would be a commission meeting in mid-July with the hope of keeping the meetings virtual, as they have seemed to be working, especially with guest presenters.

XI. Adjournment

Doug McNally made a motion to adjourn. Sheila Irvin seconded the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Malcolm Fick, Buck Donovan, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Mary McGurn and Doug McNally. The meeting adjourned at 5:20pm.