



APPROVED FULL COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

July 16, 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. A. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 7pm.

Chair Malcolm Fick stated that, in accordance with the provisions of the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law: *Meetings of the BRPC Commission Committee are recorded.*

Others may record meetings after informing the Chair that they wish to do so, as long as the method of recording does not interfere with the conduct of the meeting.

PCTV also recorded the meeting.

B. Roll Call

The following Commission members were present:

Jay Meczywor, Adams Alternate
Al Blake, Becket Delegate
Natasha Loeffler, Becket Alternate
Peter Traub, Cheshire Delegate
Eric Anderson, Dalton Alternate
Mary McGurn, Egremont Delegate
Malcolm Fick, Great Barrington Alternate
Mark Hawthorne, Lanesborough Alternate
Buck Donovan, Lee Delegate- joined at 7:15pm
Mark Smith, Lenox Delegate
Laura Mensi, Monterey Delegate
Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield Delegate
Christine Rasmussen, Stockbridge Alternate
Carol Hardy, Fanta-Tyringham Delegate
Christopher Tonini, West Stockbridge Delegate
Kathleen Keresey, West Stockbridge Alternate
Erik Reardon, Williamstown Delegate
Doug McNally, Windsor Delegate

Towns with no Delegate or Alternate present: Alford, Clarksburg, Florida, Hancock, Hinsdale, Mt Washington, New Ashford, New Marlborough, North Adams, Otis, Peru, Richmond, Sandisfield, Savoy, Sheffield, Washington

Staff Present:

Laura Brennan, Caitlin Davis

Others Present:

James Garzan, Jon Jalbert, Senator Paul Mark, PCTV, Sally Tate

C. Vote to Approve Minutes of the May 21, 2026 Commission Meeting

Doug McNally moved to approve the May 21, 2026 draft meeting minutes. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved the motion: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

Mark Smith and Christopher Tonini abstained. Buck Donovan joined the meeting after the vote and did not vote.

II. Welcome to Newly Appointed Delegates or Alternates

Newly elected Delegates or appointed Alternates are invited to introduce themselves.

Natasha Loeffler, new alternate from Becket, attended the meeting and briefly introduced herself, her background and her passion for the Berkshires.

III. Comments from BRPC Delegates and Alternate Delegates

BRPC Delegates & Alternates were offered the opportunity to comment on any item not on the agenda. Discussion or action were referred to a future meeting and not discussed at this meeting.

There were no comments from Delegates or Alternates.

IV. Comments from the Public

Members of the public were offered the opportunity to comment regarding topics on the agenda or other matters they wish to bring to the Commission's attention. Comments are directed to the Commission. Commenters stated their names and the city or town they are from. Any discussion or action was referred to a future meeting and not discussed at this meeting.

There were no comments from the public.

V. Guest Speaker – Senator Paul Mark

Senator Paul Mark gave a brief update on the signed budget, at \$63.4B. The budget was in good shape with the inflation rate normal. \$15B of the budget was reliant on the federal government. A few highlights included an increase for public and higher education and transportation, an energy bill to lower costs, \$250k to establish a task force for responses to mental health-related incidents, and that the reduction in sales tax ballot question was ruled out.

Senator Paul Mark also mentioned there were 18 copies left of the Declaration of Independence that were printed for the 250th Commission of the Revolution. These were printed for each MA town to own a copy and available to Berkshire towns who were interested.

Doug McNally thanked Senator Mark for a positive recent visit to Windsor. He encouraged other towns to schedule visits as residents would be interested.

Christine Rasmussen thanked the Senator for joining the meeting and commented on trying to get as much regional equity and outreach to smaller communities as possible. Some committees didn't have members who lived in rural areas and developing policies and recommendations would balance out those groups. Senator Mark mentioned he and Laura both serve on the Rural Policy Committee.

Erik Reardon passed along his thanks for work on the bond bill item related to the Housatonic River. He commented that river restoration projects took a very long time compared to other states and were very expensive. Senator Mark commented that with the GreenWorks bill, the governor created a revolving loan fund for \$75 million to help with this kind of issue.

Al Blake asked about the PILOT programs for non-profits and with so many located in the Berkshires, they weren't receiving their fair share. Is this something that would come up that could be incentivized in the new legislation? Senator Mark commented that it was about striking the right balance.

VI. Presentation & Discussion of Executive Committee Actions

Executive Committee actions taken on the Commission's behalf during the June 4, 2026, and July 2, 2026, meetings are presented for information and discussion.

There was no discussion on the Executive Committee Actions for June or July.

VII. Vote to Approve Revised FY27 Budget

A memo describing proposed changes, as well as a proposed revision to the FY27 Budget was included in the meeting packet.

Before the vote, Laura indicated that while there was a vote on the FY27 budget at the May Commission meeting, there were enough substantial changes made that she would like re-approval.

Doug McNally moved to approve the revised FY27 Budget. Mark Smith seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved it: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

VIII. Vote to Elect BRPC Officers for FY27

The Massachusetts Regional Planning Law required BRPC Officers to be elected annually. The officers for FY27 needed to be elected. The following slate of officers were proposed for FY 2027:

Chair: Buck Donovan, Lee Delegate

*Vice Chair: Malcolm Fick, Great Barrington Alternate
Clerk: Sheila Irvin, Pittsfield Delegate
Treasurer: Sam Haupt, Peru Delegate*

No nominations were taken from the floor. Malcolm Fick recommended voting on the proposed slate listed.

Doug McNally moved to approve the proposed slate of BRPC officers for FY27. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved it: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

After the vote, Christine Rasmussen gave thanks to Malcolm Fick for a great job as chair and all his accomplishments for the region. Laura Mensi also commented that this was a great slate of officers. Buck Donovan took over the remainder of the meeting as the newly appointed chair.

IX. Vote to Approve At-Large Members of the Executive Committee, Appointed by the Commission Chair

The BRPC Bylaws stipulated that At-Large members of the Executive Committee were appointed solely by the Commission Chair, subject to the approval of the Commission. The Bylaws permit appointments of up to three At-Large members. The Commission Chair appoints the following At-Large Executive Committee members for FY27:

*Mary McGurn, Egremont
Kyle Hanlon, North Adams*

Doug McNally moved to approve the At-Large Members of the Executive Committee. Laura Mensi seconded the motion.

There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved it: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

X. Vote to Ratify the Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs (if applicable) of Standing and Special Committees of the Commission

The BRPC Bylaws required the Commission to ratify the appointment of BRPC Special and Standing Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs. The Commission Chair appointed the following Committee Chairs and Vice Chairs for FY27:

Standing Committees (chairs and vice chairs shall be delegates or alternates):

-Commission Development Committee Chair - Doug McNally (Windsor)

- Environmental Review Committee Chair - Mark Smith (Lenox)
- Regional Issues Committee Chair - Christine Rasmussen, (Stockbridge)

Special Committees:

- Berkshire Brownfields Committee Chair - Sheila Irvin (Pittsfield)
- Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Chair - Christopher Rembold (Great Barrington)
- Berkshire Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee Vice Chair – Marya Kozik (North Adams)

Mary McGurn moved to Ratify the Appointment of Chairs and Vice Chairs (if applicable) of Standing and Special Committees of the Commission. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved it: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

XI. Vote to Appoint Representatives to Groups Not Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission

The BRPC Bylaws permitted the Commission to appoint delegates or alternates, BRPC employees, or other persons at any time to committees or commissions not under the jurisdiction of the Commission. These included:

- Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee: Doug McNally, BRPC Delegate (Windsor)
- Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts: Sarah Gardner, Alternate (Williamstown)
- Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization: Buck Donovan, BRPC Chair &

Alternate (Lee); Alternate: Sam Haupt, BRPC Delegate (Peru)

Malcolm Fick moved to Appoint Representatives to Groups Not Under the Jurisdiction of the Commission. Eric Anderson seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

A roll call vote approved it: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

XII. Overview of the FY27 BRPC Commissioner's Handbook

The FY27 Commissioner's Handbook has been distributed to each Delegate and Alternate and is included in the meeting materials.

The handbook overview included:

- Page 5- overview of roles and responsibilities
- Joining standing and special committees
- 60th anniversary of BRPC
- Resources page-subscribing to e-newsletter

- Page 10- BRPC Program areas-one small correction with Public Health; now split in two program areas, planning and services
- Compliance requirements- Open Meeting Law acknowledgement and completion of Conflict of Interest documentation on file

XIII. Discussion of the Executive Director's Report

Please refer to the Executive Director's memorandum.

Laura gave a brief overview of the Executive Director's memo. The next PILOT listening session would be July 24th and a [link to pre-register for the session](#).

The Kusik Award nominations were open and would be presented at the Annual Meeting with a tentative date of October 15th.

XIV. Open Discussion about Items of Interest in Cities or Towns

As time allows, Delegates and Alternates are encouraged to discuss key items of interest in their city or town, such as town meeting updates, development proposals, changes in municipal leadership, proposed development projects, etc.

Buck Donovan mentioned in Lee there was a public hearing about putting a Marriott Hotel where the Pilgrim Inn was, as well as a renewable energy study to be done by October 1st. They had a lot of help now that they had a full time town planner.

The topic of cluster housing and affordable housing was brought up as a potential topic for the next Annual Meeting. Erik Reardon asked Mary McGurn how Egremont overcame the ongoing cluster housing issues. There were bylaws passed and site plan reviews, as well as design guidelines for towns with no real public infrastructure.

Al Blake asked how BRPC would be able to assist small towns that didn't have the capacity to hire a full time planner based off her recent meeting with MMA (Berkshires Municipal Managers Association). Laura mentioned BRPC would provide staffing assistance and towns would hire BRPC to shepherd through any application processes and provide technical assistance. The applicant fee would be reimbursed.

XV. Adjournment

Doug McNally moved to adjourn the meeting. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote from: Jay Meczywor, Al Blake, Peter Traub, Eric Anderson, Mary McGurn, Malcolm Fick, Mark Hawthorne, Buck Donovan, Mark Smith, Laura Mensi, Sheila Irvin, Christine Rasmussen, Carol Hardy-Fanta, Chris Tonini, Erik Reardon and Doug McNally.

The meeting adjourned at 8:30pm.