

**APPROVED** Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
Executive Committee Minutes  
**Thursday, September 3, 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 Buck Donovan called the meeting to order at 4:02pm. 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:

Buck Donovan, Chair, Lee Delegate  
Malcolm Fick, Vice Chair, Great Barrington Alternate  
Sheila Irvin, Clerk & Berkshire Brownfields Committee Chair, Pittsfield Delegate  
Mark Smith, Environmental Review Committee Chair, Lenox Alternate  
Christine Rasmussen, Regional Issues Committee Chair, Stockbridge Alternate  
Kyle Hanlon, At-Large, North Adams Delegate (joined at 4:06pm)  
Doug McNally, Commission Development Chair, Windsor Delegate  
Mary McGurn, At-Large, Egremont Delegate

Not Present:

Sam Haupt, Treasurer, Peru Delegate

Others Present:

James Garzon, Great Barrington citizen  
Breanna Steele, iBerkshires.com

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 August 6, 2026 Minutes**

Doug McNally moved to approve the August 6, 2026 meeting minutes. Mary McGurn seconded the motion.

Mark Smith asked that his title of delegate be changed to Alternate, as that change had been made over the summer. The correction was noted.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Buck Donovan, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Mary McGurn and Doug McNally. Kyle Hanlon joined the meeting after the vote and did not vote.

### **IV. Financial Reports and Discussion**

#### **a. Vote to Approve the July 30, 2026 – August 26, 2026, Expenditures Report**

Doug McNally moved to approve the **July 30, 2026 – August 26,,2026**, expenditures report. Mary McGurn seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes from: Buck Donovan, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Mary McGurn and Doug McNally. Kyle Hanlon joined the meeting after the vote and did not vote.

#### **b. Report on the Accounts Receivable August 2026**

Becket was in the process of getting a warrant signed for the past due amount and payment should be approved for the following week.

#### **c. Report on the Line of Credit – August 2026**

The Line of credit remained at zero.

### **V. Open Comments from Berkshire Regional Planning Commission Delegates and Alternate Delegates**

Mary McGurn mentioned [Parcenomics](#), created by Patrick White, as a future Executive Committee topic. Parcenomics is primarily a municipal fiscal analysis tool that uses a town's parcel and municipal data to examine assessment fairness, tax compliance, available local option revenues, demographic patterns, and new growth. She was mainly interested in the connection between land use and a town's long-term fiscal capability, since planning boards make decisions about housing, zoning, adaptive reuse, economic development and community preservation. Mary will send information before the next executive meeting in October.

Doug McNally also mentioned the CDL driver shortage at BRTA. A possible solution that was being considered was taking some of the paratransit drivers

who drive the smaller buses and cover those routes using smaller buses for non-CDL drivers. This could free up some drivers and avoid cancellations.

## **VI. Items Requiring Action**

### **A. Vote to approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the USDA's Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Program**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the United States Department Agriculture's Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Program and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant would provide funding for home repair and rehabilitation construction through deferred payment, forgivable loans for up to 46 very low- and low-income homeowners in West Stockbridge, Sheffield, Becket, Clarksburg, and New Ashford (communities where we will have active CDBG Housing Rehabilitation programs, so funding can be paired). Per the Notice of Funding Opportunity for the HPG, award amounts will be based on the state's allocation and number of eligible applicants. Massachusetts' total allocation is \$32,972. Any funds awarded will leverage Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds in those towns. There is no match required. BRPC contact is Brett Roberts, [broberts@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:broberts@berkshireplanning.org).

Doug McNally moved to approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the USDA's Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) Program. Mary McGurn seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

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

### **B. Vote to approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the EPA's Brownfields Job Training Program**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the United States Environmental Protection Agency's Brownfields Job Training Program and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant would enable program graduates to obtain skills to secure full-time, sustainable employment in various aspects of hazardous substances, pollutants, contaminants, and petroleum products within the larger environmental field, including sustainable remediation, chemical safety, and site preparation for the revitalization of brownfields. Training programs prioritize unemployed and under-employed residents of communities impacted by a variety of waste facilities, blighted properties, and contaminated sites. Potential partners include MassHire Berkshires, Berkshire Community College, McCann Tech, Taconic High School, and the City of Pittsfield. A final proposed budget is TBD; award ceiling is \$300,000 with an expected 20 awards nationwide. Cost sharing and matching funds are not required nor permitted under this competition. BRPC contact is Melissa Provencher, [mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:mprovencher@berkshireplanning.org).

Mark Smith moved to approve the Submission of a Grant Application to the EPA's Brownfields Job Training Program. Doug McNally seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

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

**C. Vote to ratify the Submission (after the fact) of a Grant Application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Older Adults Home Modification Grant Program**

The Executive Committee was requested to authorize the Executive Director to submit a grant application to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development's Older Adults Home Modification Grant Program and sign any resulting contracts and agreements. This grant would provide funding for low-cost, high-impact home modifications for low-income seniors at least 62 years of old throughout Berkshire County. Per the Notice of Funding Opportunity, 32 awards will be made nation-wide. BRPC will apply for the minimum award amount of \$2 million. Any funds awarded will leverage Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Modification Loan Program (HMLP) funds throughout the county. There is no match required. BRPC contact is Brett Roberts, [broberts@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:broberts@berkshireplanning.org).

Malcolm Fick moved to ratify the Submission (after the fact) of a Grant Application to the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Older Adults Home Modification Grant Program. Christine Rasmussen seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

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

**D. Vote to ratify staff comments re: proposed amendments to MassDEP Waterways Regulations at 310 CMR 9.00**

The meeting packet included staff comments submitted prior to the August 20<sup>th</sup> deadline, drafted by Senior Planner – Environmental & Energy, Alison Dixon.

Doug McNally moved to approve the ratification of staff comments re: proposed amendments to MassDEP Waterways Regulations at 310 CMR 9.00. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion. There was no discussion on the motion.

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

## **VII. Committee Updates, Reports and Discussion**

### **a. Commission Development Committee (CDC)**

The Commission Development Committee meets as needed and did not meet in August 2026.

### **b. Environmental Review Committee (ERC)**

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

Mark Smith and Courteny Morehouse attended a remote site visit for a secondary public water supply in Lanesborough. The project didn't warrant an ERC meeting or comments.

### **c. Finance Committee**

The Finance Committee meets as needed and did not meet in August 2026.

### **d. Regional Issues Committee (RIC)**

The Regional Issues Committee meets as needed and did not meet in August 2026.

### **e. Berkshire Brownfield Committee**

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

### **f. Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Committee (MPO)**

The MPO typically meets virtually on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 4:00 pm. The MPO's August 25th meeting was cancelled. The next meeting is scheduled for September 22nd. Laura mentioned Clete had been conducting a regional caucus for alternates and delegates to be selected through those meetings.

### **g. Comprehensive Economic Development (CEDS) Committee**

The CEDS Committee typically meets four times per year and did not meet in August 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for October 14, 2026, at 1:00pm.

### **h. Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC)**

The Transportation Advisory Committee meets as needed primarily to advise on the TIP development process. The TAC did not meet in August 2026.

## **VIII. Executive Director's Report and Discussion**

### **a. Update re: OMB Proposed Rule – revisions to 2 CFR**

BRPC submitted comments prior to the July 13th deadline, which were among a total of over 500,000 comments provided to OMB. BRPC also provided these comments to Senators Markey and Warren as comments may pertain to their support for a Continuing Resolution which includes a substantial delay in implementation of any aspect of the proposed changes. The Senate's version of the CR did include this delay, but the House had not yet taken up debate. We have also been in contact with Congressman Neal's office regarding proposed legislation (H.R. 9370) to prohibit the finalization, implementation, or enforcement of the proposed rule.

### **b. Staff Updates**

- Resignation effective September 4th received from Sophie Carnes Jannen, Public Health Nurse Educator (part-time, offsite).

- Welcome back as of September 1st to Karen Peltó, Grants Specialist and lead staff for Berkshire Funding Focus initiative (part-time, offsite).
- Thank you to Jimmy Hall, AmeriCorps Member/Digital Skills instructor, whose term ends in mid-September.
- Thank you to Nicole Ogg, Project Specialist, whose role will end on September 30th (part-time, offsite).

Several positions are posted on BRPC's employment page and other locations.

**c. Report on New Contracts/Agreements**

New Grants and Contracts received/initiated from 7/29/26 – 8/26/26

- Adams - GIS Services - \$11,000
- Dalton - Opioid Settlement - \$13,399.39
- Northern Middlesex Council of Governments - Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy – Additional \$4,558.41
- Lee - Housing Production Plan - \$28,000
- Richmond - Bridge Procurement - \$1,835
- CEDAC - Home Modification Loan Program - \$87,418.90

Grants and Contracts not received:

EOEEA Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP):

- o Berkshire Climate Career Lab – \$302,100
- o Clarksburg Bank Erosion - \$178,310

MA Department of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) Planning Assistance Grant Program for the following projects:

- o Town of Cheshire Master Plan Update - \$40,000
- o Town of Sandisfield Comprehensive Plan - \$50,000
- o Town of Stockbridge Open Space and Recreation Plan - \$40,000
- o Town of Washington Comprehensive Town Plan and Zoning Updates - \$50,000

Laura gave a brief update on the Eco One Stop. Only about 25% of the RPA's were able to be awarded.

**d. Berkshires Tomorrow Inc. (BTI) Update**

The BTI Board approved the following:

- There was no new activity in August for BTI.

*Grants and Contracts not received*

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

**e. Seasonal Communities Advisory Council Update**

The Seasonal Communities Advisory Council did not meet in August 2026. The next meeting is scheduled for fall of 2026. More information is at [Seasonal Communities | Mass.gov](#).

**f. Rural Policy Advisory Commission**

The Rural Policy Advisory Commission meets every two months. During August, members were invited to provide final proofreading and edits to chapters of the proposed 2026 Rural Policy Plan. There are tentative plans for RPAC members to present the new RPP to members of the administration in October, and to legislators in January when they return to formal session.

**g. Massachusetts Integrated Land Use Strategy (MILUS)**

Each RPA will be meeting with the state team and its consultant in early September (BRPC's meeting is scheduled for September 2nd). Engagement sessions with municipal officials are being shifted from October to November (Suitability Phase) and from November to December (Priority Phase). These later sessions will be held in conjunction with neighboring RPAs; in our case, FRCOG and PVPC.

**h. Passenger Rail**

- West-East Rail – we are not aware of any updates this month.
  - Berkshire Flyer – Total ridership is aligned with the summer of 2023, with an anticipated 1,000 trips for the season. A couple of items of note provided by John Weston at MassDOT:
    - Pittsfield based riders (southbound to NYC on Friday and northbound from NYC on Sunday) are about 1/3 of the ridership. That trip was not possible in previous years.
    - Trips from the other direction (northbound from NYC on Friday) are selling more quickly than in past summers, likely because of the earlier time slot (11AM departure vs. 3PM departure from NYC) and the growth in demand in New York.
  - Northern Tier Passenger Rail – The economic benefits study continues.

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

**i. Technical Assistance Report**

The technical assistance report for July is included in the packet, indicating assistance provided to the Towns of Cheshire, Hancock, Lanesborough, the City of North Adams, as well as the PVPC and Williams College.

**IX. Old Business and Discussion**

**a. Annual Meeting October 15 at Country Club of Pittsfield**

Tickets are \$35/person and are [available online](#). BRPC staff are in the process of securing a guest speaker and identifying the Kusik Award honoree for 2026. Please encourage municipal officials (elected and appointed) from your community to attend. Any municipality requiring an invoice rather than processing ticket purchases online may contact Caitlin Davis at x10 or via email: [officeadministrator@berkshireplanning.org](mailto:officeadministrator@berkshireplanning.org).

**b. MARPA and DLS Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference on October 5**

Registration is open for the 2026 Statewide Municipal Partnerships Conference, designed for municipal officials and staff, and co-hosted by MARPA, DLS, and MAPC at the College of the Holy Cross, Hogan Campus Center, in Worcester, MA. Registration fee is \$20. [Registration is now available online through MAPC](#). Laura mentioned that this was a good networking opportunity with secretary level state representatives.

**c. Potential Topics for the September 17, 2026 Commission Meeting**

- Presentation from Mary McGurn, Egremont's Cottage Cluster Zoning
- Presentation from Courteny Morehouse, BRPC Principal Planner – Environmental and Energy re: Berkshire County Plan(ning) Search Tool
- Report and Discussion – Executive Director's Memo
- Discussion of Items of Interest

**X. New Business and Discussion**

There was no new business or discussion.

**XI. Adjournment**

Doug McNally made a motion to adjourn. Malcolm Fick seconded the motion.

The motion passed with affirmative votes with no discussion from: Buck Donovan, Malcolm Fick, Sheila Irvin, Mark Smith, Christine Rasmussen, Kyle Hanlon, Mary McGurn and Doug McNally.

The meeting adjourned at 4:47pm.