

Sheffield Adopts Re-formatted Zoning By-laws

In December 2006, Sheffield adopted a completely re-formatted and re-codified Zoning By-law. Changes were made to bring the By-laws into compliance with state and federal law and recent case law; remove internal by-law conflicts or inconsistencies and make the By-law easier to read, understand and use. This is the first comprehensive revision since the By-laws were originally adopted in 1994 and is a result of a 22 month effort. Funds for this effort were provided by the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs through a Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grant.

BRPC Contact: *Tom Matuszko*

Welcome to New BRPC Staff

Two new planners have joined the BRPC staff in the past several weeks. James "Jamie" Francomano is a new Senior Planner focusing on Community and Economic Development. He is working as an Outsource Planner for Great Barrington two days a week. Jamie formerly worked for the Eastern Panhandle (West Virginia) Homebuilders Association on legislative affairs and as a project manager for a homebuilder in that region.



*Transportation Program Manager
Alison Church and
Senior Planner Jamie Francomano*

Alison Church is our new Transportation Program Manager. Alison most recently worked for Bennington Regional Commission as a Transportation Planner and has worked for several consulting engineering firms and for the Vermont Department of Transportation.

2007 Regional Transportation Plan Update

By March, the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) must act on the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) for Berkshire County. Updated every four years, the RTP is designed to ensure that transportation projects:

- 1) are consistent with overall regional development policies
- 2) provide an effective intermodal transportation system, and
- 3) make wise use of available funds.

The RTP deals with both long and short-range transportation projects, and is required by federal law. The last series of public meetings held throughout the County during the update process, will be in January. BRPC staff will present an overview of the RTP, including recommendations, followed by discussion, questions & comments. Your input is welcome! Dates and locations are as follows, all meetings will be held at 7:00.

January 17- North Adams City Hall, Room 201: (snow date January 30)

January 22- Great Barrington Senior

Center Dining Hall (snow date January 29)

January 24- Pittsfield City Council Chambers (snow date February 1)

January 25 - Lee Town Hall Courtroom (snow date February 6)

BRPC Contact: *Michael Hoffmann*

Pandemic Flu Planning

Most of us get a cold or the flu at least once a year, typically in winter. Sometimes, however, a new strain of influenza virus emerges to which humans have no natural protection. If the new influenza virus is easily transmitted from person to person, it can result in serious disease affecting people worldwide. This is called an influenza pandemic. Influenza pandemics occurred in 1918, 1957 and 1968. The next influenza pandemic will occur when a new strain of influenza virus emerges that is easily transmitted from person to person. Local response to any emergency, including pandemic flu requires extensive planning, organization and coordination with local, regional, state

and federal officials. Boards of Health in Massachusetts have been actively planning for emergency situations for several years, working together to form coalitions, share resources, and develop emergency and continuity of operations plans. Local government can facilitate full integration of public health, local emergency managers, responders, and administration, as well as public and private sector stakeholders in order to achieve a comprehensive community response to a pandemic. In Berkshire County, pandemic flu, as well as other emergency response planning is occurring through the Berkshire County Boards of Health (BCBOHA) Association (www.bcboha.org.) With funds provided by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, BCBOHA is working with municipalities to conduct comprehensive planning activities. BRPC assists in these efforts by serving as the fiscal agent for BCHOHA.

BRPC Contact: *Tom Matuszko*

2007 Smart Growth Grant Awards

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs has announced the recipients of its 2007 Smart Growth Technical Assistance Grants. 50 communities, including six Berkshire towns, will receive funding to assist with a variety of land use planning and smart growth activities. Lanesborough received a grant for the review of its current zoning. Otis will be working on updates to its village center bylaw. BRPC will be assisting Becket and Williamstown with the creation of new zoning by-laws for open space and environmental resource protection, and will be helping Great Barrington with bylaws for open space and mixed use in the downtown area as well. The BRPC also received a grant to work with the town of Lenox to create traditional neighborhood development districts.

BRPC contact: *Tom Matuszko*





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The Berkshire's Sense of Place

Author Wendell Berry said, "If you don't know where you are, you don't know who you are." Though we may often take them for granted, places can help to define us, and this is certainly true of the Berkshires. Everyone is familiar with Mt. Greylock, the highest point in Massachusetts, but there are some unique facts about the Mountain that not everyone knows.

- Mt. Greylock was heavily mined and forested during the 1800's, causing fires and landslides. In order to preserve its resources, a conservation group purchased 400 acres in 1885. This land was sold to the State in 1898, and Mt. Greylock became Massachusetts' first state park. The park now covers more than 12,000 acres.
- The Thunderbolt Ski Trail was the site of the 1935-36 Eastern US Amateur Ski Association Championships
- The summit is a different climate from the base, and its habitat supports more than 40 rare plants and animals
- The road to the summit is one of the state's 8 scenic byways. A \$21 million project to improve safety on the byway, rehabilitate historic features, and improve overlooks and vistas will begin in Spring 2007, and will be the largest capital improvement project in state park history.

What contributes to your Berkshire Sense of Place? If you have an outstanding person, location, event, or cultural item which you would like featured in *Common Ground*, please contact Sarah Izatt

Upcoming Grant Opportunities

The Massachusetts Historical Commission (MHC) has announced Round 13 of their MA Preservation Projects Fund grants. Grants are available to support the preser-

vation of sites listed in the State Register of Historic places, and non-profit organizations and municipalities are eligible to apply. Grants are due on Feb. 21. For more information, please visit www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc, or contact MHC at 617-727-8470

The Federal Highway Administration has announced the 2007 round of National Scenic Byway Grants. Applications are due to the Massachusetts Executive Office of Transportation by Feb. 12, 2007. Berkshire County hosts 3 scenic byways: Mohawk Trail, Jacob's Ladder Trail, and Mt. Greylock.

Clearinghouse Reviews

Berkshire Gateway EENF (Lee)
Donnybrook Country Club Golf Course
ENF (Lanesborough)

Pittsfield Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District Project

BRPC has begun work on a Smart Growth Zoning Overlay District project for the City of Pittsfield. The Smart Growth

Mark Your Calendar!

January 3	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC
January 9	MassGIS Planning Workshop	8:45 a.m.	BRPC
January 18	Transportation Advisory Committee Meeting	5:30 p.m.	BRPC
January 18	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC
February 7	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 p.m.	BRPC

Zoning Overlay District, which is also called a "40R District" established under a new state law, is designed to increase the availability of affordable housing, encourage mixed land uses, and promote a variety of transportation choices. In Pittsfield, this proposed district would be located in the downtown area. The City will receive payments from the state for establishing the district and for each additional dwelling unit built in response to the new zoning. BRPC will be assisting the City by performing data collection and analysis on the existing housing within the district along with calculating the potential future housing and its impact on the City's infrastructure.

BRPC Contact: *Mark Maloy*