

## Energy Planning

The BRPC Regional Issues Committee has determined that its work this year will focus on developing a regional energy plan. At an initial FY08 meeting in September, the Committee discussed the 1982 Berkshire County Energy Plan (many of the recommendations appear to still be very germane), the draft Pioneer Valley Renewable Energy Plan, and a report prepared by an intern with the Williams College Center for Environmental Studies on local energy planning in the region. Staff will seek funding from the Massachusetts Technology Collaborative for development of a regional energy plan. It is anticipated that the plan will be developed in close coordination and cooperation with various groups in the region who are also working on this issue, such as the Center for Ecological Technology and the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce.

BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

## Census Update

In 2006, the US Census Bureau began releasing demographic data on an annual basis from the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS is a replacement for estimates provided from the Decennial Census sample data. Currently, ACS information is only available for Berkshire County, but Community, Tract and Block Group information will become available over the next few years. BRPC will release new information through the newsletter. Information from the Census Bureau and the ACS can be found online at:

[www.factfinder.census.gov](http://www.factfinder.census.gov)

### 2006 Berkshire County ACS Estimates:

Total Population  
(US Census Bureau Estimate) -131,117  
Total Housing Units -67,750  
Labor Force -70,473  
Group Quarters Population - 5,491  
Median Household Income - \$47,562  
BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

## Permitting Timelines

As part of the statewide expedited permitting project, BRPC created flowcharts that show the required steps and timeframes leading up to the issuance of several types of permits. Charts created include special permits, residential subdivisions, and wetlands related permits. The charts can be found at:

[www.berkshireplanning.org/7/expedited\\_permitting](http://www.berkshireplanning.org/7/expedited_permitting)

## Bike Planning Update

The TAC has spoken; Berkshire County wants bike paths!

At its October 4<sup>th</sup> meeting, the entire Transportation Advisory Committee voiced in its advisory capacity, approval to extend the Ashuwillticook Trail northerly from its existing Hoosac Street terminus to Lime Street in Adams, a distance of 1.2 miles.

Most of the TAC also wants a southerly extension of the Trail to Merrill Road in Pittsfield; although a few members indicated preference to a bike path in Lenox, hopefully to pique South County interest in seeing the dream realized of a bike path that extends from the VT border to the CT border.



Status of other bike alternatives: (cost is approximately \$1 million per mile of path):

### Lenox

*Route 20 to Lenox High School*- 1.5 miles  
Design ready  
Mostly Town right-of-way (ROW) adjacent to roads

*Woods Pond Pedestrian Bridge to Lenox High School*- 1.2 miles

Design ready, Town ROW adjacent to roads.  
*Housatonic St. to New Lenox Rd*- 4 miles  
Feasibility Study/Planning needed.

Use of abandoned rail; ROW needed

### Pittsfield

*Ashuwillticook to Merrill Road*- 2 miles  
Feasibility Study/Planning needed, ROW (including rail bed) needed

*Merrill Road to Elm/William St.*- 2.5 miles  
Feasibility Study/Planning needed  
ROW needed; some individual concerns

### Adams

*Ashuwillticook to Lime Street*- 1.2 miles  
Design Ready  
Mostly DCR (rail bed) & Town ROW

BRPC staff is also looking at an extension of the Ashuwillticook from Adams to North Adams, and a feasibility study for a bike path linking North Adams and Williamstown.

BRPC Contact: *Christine Neumann*

## BRPC Welcomes Lenox Town Planner

The BRPC's "outsource planner" program allows municipalities to have access to planning staff without having to hire a planner. BRPC staff members are currently loaned to Adams, Great Barrington, and Pittsfield. Lenox was one of the first communities to take advantage of the outsource program. Senior Planner Joellyn Warren served as part-time planner in Lenox for several years, but Lenox decided this summer to hire its own full-time planner. Mary Albertson received her Masters of Urban Planning from the University of Washington. Prior to coming to Lenox she worked in the transportation industry for a shortline railroad, and was Planning Director for the City of Leominster. She also served as a planner in Holden and in Westfield.

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### Tip of the Month!

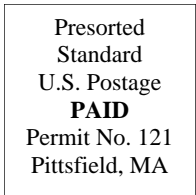
### Changes to "Chapter" Programs

The legislature recently approved significant changes to the Chapter 61, 61A and 61B legislation. The Chapter programs, which provide tax benefits to property owners who maintain their land for forestry, farmland or recreational use, also provide municipalities with a right of first refusal to the property if the land is sold or converted to another use. The modifications affect time periods, taxes, purchase and sale agreements, and include other significant changes. They are important for property owners, assessors, and municipal boards to be aware of. Please contact *Tom Matuszko* with questions about the changes.

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## BRPC Welcomes New Staff

BRPC welcomed new transportation planner Christine Neumann in September. Christine's experience includes an internship with the Capital District Transportation Committee in Albany. Christine will bring enthusiasm to all elements of Transportation Planning at BRPC. Her roles will include involvement in MPO and TAC meetings, bicycle and pedestrian planning, traffic data collection and presentation, and participation in various studies, including the Lee Area Traffic Study and Route 2 corridor access management.



### 2007-2008 Berkshire MPO Representatives

Each year, two of the four subregions of towns in the Berkshires appoint an MPO Representative and Alternate to the Berkshire MPO for the coming two years. The MPO is responsible for decisions regarding federal transportation funding, transportation planning work, and approval of the Regional Transportation Plan and special studies for the entire region. This year, Selectboard representatives in the six towns in the North-Central Berkshire and eight towns in the Southwest Berkshire subregions were invited to caucus in order to appoint their Representative and Alternate. In addition, a caucus was also held to fill a one-year Alternate vacancy for the North Berkshire subregion.

The Representatives and Alternates from the four subregions are:

**North Berkshire**  
Ed MacDonald (Adams) - Representative  
Neil Oleson (Florida) – Alternate

**North-Central Berkshire**  
Tom Szczepaniak (Dalton) – Representative  
Gae Elfенbein (Lanesborough) – Alternate

**Southeast Berkshire**  
Clayton Chaffee (Otis) – Representative  
Bill Cavanaugh (Becket) – Alternate

**Southwest Berkshire**  
Jim Lovejoy (Mount Washington) – Representative  
Julie Hannum (Sheffield) - Alternate

The other MPO members are the Mayors of both North Adams and Pittsfield, the Chairs of the BRTA and BRPC, the Commissioner of MassHighway, and the Secretary of Transportation and Public Works.  
BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

### New BRPC Bylaws

A substantial overhaul of the BRPC Bylaws were approved unanimously at the September 20<sup>th</sup> BRPC meeting. The old bylaws were last amended in 1997. The revisions do not substantially change the basics of how BRPC operates but do clarify a number of procedures and are much more sensitive to the local election calendar, which affects the appointment of delegates and alternates and

### Commission Meeting News

Fourteen communities, nearly half of Berkshire County, were represented at the September 20 Commission meeting. Prior to the meeting, new delegates and alternates attended an orientation session to learn about the function of the BRPC, and its many roles and responsibilities. Attendees were introduced to Jason Ostrander, Congressman Olver’s Economic Development Specialist,

#### Meetings and Events

November 7	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
November 7	CPTC “Webinar” - Roles and Responsibilities Of Planning and Zoning Appeals Boards	7:00 p.m.	Online!
November 8	TAC Meeting	5:00 p.m.	BRPC
November 14	MPO Meeting	4:30 p.m.	BRPC
November 15	BRPC Annual Dinner Meeting	6:30 p.m.	Berkshire Hills CC
November 19	CPTC Workshop, “Open Space Residential Design and Conservation”	7:00 p.m.	BRPC
November 29	“5th Thursday” Dinner	6:00 p.m.	Zucchini’s
December 5	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
December 7	Smart Growth Conference		DCU Center, Worcester

the eligibility of people to serve as officers on the Commission. Commission Development Committee Chair Rene Wood deserves accolades for her hard work on seeing this through.  
BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

#### Training Opportunity Reminder

BRPC will be hosting a CPTC workshop on Open Space Residential Design and Conservation on November 19 at 7 p.m. There will also be an online “webinar” with Assistant Attorney General Bob Ritchie on November 7. Visit [www.umass.edu/masscptc](http://www.umass.edu/masscptc) for more information.  
BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

and were briefed on changes to the state’s Chapter 61 programs. Staff also presented research conducted under the Expedited Permitting legislation.

#### Annual Dinner Meeting

Bernard Cohen, Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation, is the special guest speaker for BRPC’s Annual Dinner Meeting. The meeting will be held Thursday, November 15<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 p.m. at Berkshire Hills Country Club. Secretary Cohen will speak on “The Road Ahead for Massachusetts Transportation Policy”. Dinner registration forms are available at [www.berkshireplanning.org/meetings](http://www.berkshireplanning.org/meetings) and must be received no later than November 12<sup>th</sup>.

