

COMMON GROUND

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A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

BERKSHIRE COMMUNITIES BENEFIT FROM MUNICIPAL EECBG GRANTS

BRPC has been working with several Berkshire County communities that recently received EECBG (Energy Efficiency Community Block) grants funded by the Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources (DOER) and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). These construction projects have been completed or are currently underway on municipal buildings in all eight towns receiving grant administration assistance from BRPC.

The Towns of Adams, Becket, Lee, and New Marlborough have completed a wide variety of energy efficiency measures. Adams has completed a \$55,125 project to construct a 7kW Solar PV installation on the roof of the municipal Waste Water Treatment Plant (see picture on the bottom of page 3); Becket has completed a \$150,000 boiler replacement and building envelop (insulation) improvements project on Fire Station #2 and Ambulance Garage on Jacob's Well Road (Route 8); the Town of Lee recently finished building envelop improvements projects on the Central Fire Station on Main Street and the South Lee Fire Station and Post Office building on Route 102 in Lee, combining the \$62,000 EECBG grant with Town funds for the \$108,000 project; and the Town of New Marlborough has completed a nearly \$65,000 project to provide additional insulation, air sealing and window replacements in its Town Hall, originally built in 1909.

Meanwhile, the Towns of Sheffield, Stockbridge, Washington and Windsor have each been completing diverse energy efficiency projects of their own. Sheffield is just wrapping up a small project, valued at \$21,200 that is expected to have a big impact on the Town's energy bill. The project includes attic flat insulation in the Town Hall and interior storm windows for the Police Station. The Town of Stockbridge is closing out a \$66,479 boiler replacement project, converting the heating system in 2 buildings at the waste water treatment plant from fuel oil to natural gas. The Town of Washington has used part its \$106,120 EECBG grant for thermal efficiency projects at the Town Hall, including a more energy efficient boiler, and at the Highway Garage, including energy efficient garage doors; building envelope improvements are still to be completed. And finally, the Town of Windsor was awarded \$137,500 for building envelop improvements to both its Town Offices and Town Hall, and that project is currently mid-way to completion.

In all, these eight Berkshire communities received close to \$663,000 in grant funds through the EECBG program. Jobs reporting data and energy savings will be calculated in each Town's final report to DOER, but in all cases, these projects are expected to affect significant reduction in energy consumption in municipal buildings, and cost savings that will be reflected in operational budgets.

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NEW OPEN MEETING LAW WEBSITE LAUNCHED

The Attorney General's Office has launched a new open meeting law website. The new site allows users to search recent decisions by title or by keyword. Check it out today at: <http://www.oml.ago.state.ma.us/>

2011 ASHUWILLTICOOK TRAIL COUNT VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

At the quarterly meeting in September for the Berkshire Bike Path Council volunteers from the July 2011 Ashuwillticook trail counts were recognized by BRPC staff. Fourteen individuals volunteered their time on a Saturday or a Tuesday to help count users of the trail. John Yuill was recognized as the Volunteer of the Year for going above and beyond as he sat for almost an entire Saturday counting users at the Berkshire Mall. BRPC would again like to thank these individuals for their contributions to bike and pedestrian planning in the region. In addition to the volunteers in the photo (right), a special thanks goes out to the following individuals for volunteering their time: Jennifer Darby, Lauren Alpert, Shirley Yuill, Michelle Bazinet, Kathi Clatterbaugh, and Mark Clatterbaugh.



*Photo from the 2011 Volunteer Recognition at the BBPC quarterly meeting
Volunteers listed from left to right: Bob Lamarre, John Yuill, Marge Cohan, Ann Krawet, Marie Raftery,
Keith Bond, Peter Traub, Phil Cohen and Paul Gloger*

STAFF CONTACT: Sara Lafayette at slafayette@berkshireplanning.org or ext. 19.

BRPC DEVELOPS GREAT BARRINGTON'S TRANSPORTATION PLAN

BRPC completed the groundwork for Great Barrington's Master Plan transportation element in September. BRPC staff met with Town representatives over a couple of months to produce the first component of the report that coincides with BRPC's Regional Sustainability Plan. Great Barrington's Planning Board organized a subcommittee to identify transportation issues within the Town including parking, future commuter rail stations, and walkability. BRPC took the subcommittee's information and comments, the Town's Capital Improvement Program, and data on existing conditions to craft the element that includes a technical analysis of existing gaps and future improvements. The Town is reviewing the Transportation Plan and incorporate the vision map and recommendations into their comprehensive Master Plan.

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REMINDER: CHANGE IN OFFICE SCHEDULE

The BRPC offices continue to undergo renovations. The staff will continue a four day work week through the end of November with the office being closed on Fridays. We appreciate your patience and understanding as we look to improve our work space!

BRPC RATES PAVEMENT COUNTY-WIDE

BRPC staff completed an assessment of pavement surface conditions on the Region's 722 miles of Federal-aid eligible roads. Staff drove the roads and assigned a 1 (worst) to 10 (best) value. The most cost effective road repairs should occur before a road deteriorates from routine maintenance (PASER 10-8) to capital preventative maintenance (PASER 7-5) or from capital preventative maintenance (PASER 7-5) to structural improvements (PASER 4-1). BRPC estimates that the region needs \$136.3M to improve the entire paved system to an 8+ PASER rating. MassDOT maintains the roads that handle a majority of inter- and intra-regional traffic. Berkshire communities maintain roads that generally service lower levels of traffic and access more remote areas of Berkshire County, but are in a significantly more deteriorated condition. Local communities are responsible for nearly 87% (\$64.9M) of the estimated cost to improve the Federal Aid road network. Future pavement analysis will produce pavement deterioration curves based on the Berkshires' unique climate, project future life-cycle costs from up-to-date road improvement prices, and evaluate investment scenarios for the region's limited road repair dollars (approximately \$12.5M annually). Pavement management is one component of the MPO's comprehensive transportation planning process. Air quality, public transportation, congestion mitigation, crash reduction, non-motorized modes, environmental justice, freight movements, and impacts to the natural and built environment are other important considerations the MPO considers when establishing funding priorities.

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OPEN SPACE TRANSPORTATION ENERGY

LOCAL FOOD RECREATION

EDUCATION ECONOMY

HISTORIC HOUSING

SERVICES INFRASTRUCTURE LAND USE



Share your vision for Berkshire County

Help Build a Regional Sustainability
Plan for the Berkshires

Natural Resources, Open Space and Recreation Vision Workshop

Choose the date and location that works best for you!

North Central Berkshire Tues., Nov. 29, 6:30 pm	South Central Berkshire Wed., Dec. 14, 6:30 pm
Adams Community Center 20 East St., Adams	Lenox Town Hall 6 Walker St., Lenox

Visit www.sustainableberkshires.org/events for more details

WESTERN MASSACHUSETTS TOWNS FORM THE WIREDWEST COOPERATIVE

On August 13, 2011, twenty-two towns officially formed a municipal cooperative to build and operate a state-of-the-art telecommunications network for residents and businesses. The Berkshire County towns of Egremont, Great Barrington, Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Peru, Sandisfield, Washington and West Stockbridge were among the founding member towns. With its incorporation complete, WiredWest will focus on developing a business plan to operate and build a robust fiber to the home network to address the longstanding issue of the lack of broadband access in Western Massachusetts.

STAFF CONTACT: Brian Domina at bdomina@berkshireplanning.org or ext. 14



Photo from the October Historic Preservation Forums

SUSTAINABLE BERKSHIRES: HISTORIC PRESERVATION FORUMS

As part of the regional planning effort, Sustainable Berkshires open forums were held on October 4th and 5th to discuss the current state and future directions for historic preservation in Berkshire County. Thirteen communities were represented by members of their local historical commissions, historical societies, and their residents. Regional groups, Housatonic Heritage and the Berkshire Historical Society, also participated. Christopher Skelly, Director of Local Programs for the Massachusetts Historical Commission presented background about historic resources in the county and tools and techniques for future preservation efforts. Michele Barker, Area Circuit Rider for Preservation Massachusetts was on hand to introduce herself as a technical assistance resource for Berkshire communities. The attendees had the opportunity to work in groups to discuss the major opportunities and challenges related to historic preservation in Berkshire County. Please look for meeting materials and other ways to get involved at www.sustainableberkshires.org.

STAFF CONTACT: Mackenzie Greer at mgreer@berkshireplanning.org or x32

BEST WISHES TO DANIEL SEXTON

Planner Dan Sexton has left us to pursue a master's degree in planning from SUNY at Albany. When he relocated to the northeast from Alaska, he had planned on going to grad school and had hoped he would be able to continue to work for us part-time while pursuing his masters full-time, but reality set in pretty quickly when he started school this fall. Over the past year, while with BRPC, Dan took primary responsibility for development of our Comprehensive Development Strategy which was approved by the Commission in June and submitted to the U.S. Economic Development Administration for approval. We wish Dan all the best in pursuing his masters in planning!



Photo of the new solar panels in Adams, MA from the EECBG grant



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UPCOMING EVENTS

PUBLIC MEETING ON OUTDOOR RECREATION NEEDS

Wednesday November 16, 2011, 6:30 pm, Pittsfield City Hall. The Commonwealth is holding a public meeting to gather local input on outdoor recreation needs for the county and across the state. The Berkshires were under-represented in the survey conducted for previous efforts, so we encourage residents attend and speak out on behalf of the region.

UPCOMING CITIZEN PLANNER TRAINING COLLABORATIVE LAND USE TRAINING AT BRPC

On Thursday December 1, 2011 at 7:00 p.m. Paul Bobrowski, Esq. will be discussing Special Permits and Variances at the BRPC Offices (1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield—3rd Floor Conference Room). To attend these sessions you must register and remit payment to CPTC. Visit <http://www.umass.edu/masscptc/> for more information.

GRANT ANNOUNCEMENTS

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION FY2012 SURVEY & PLANNING GRANTS

The Survey and Planning Grant program supports efforts to identify and plan for the protection of the significant historic buildings, structures, archaeological sites and landscapes of the Commonwealth. Eligible applicants include all local historical commissions, local historic district commissions, municipal A 50% match is required. Pre-applications are due November 21, 2011. Additional information, guidelines and the pre-application form are available at: <http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc/mhchpp/Surveyandplanning.htm>

HOUSATONIC HERITAGE ANNOUNCES ITS GRANTS PROGRAM

These grants support trail projects that provide residents and visitors with expanded opportunities for outdoor enjoyment, an enhanced heritage experience through walking, bicycling or hiking, and/or a more complete understanding and enjoyment of the area's history, cultural heritage, or natural resources. Maximum grant amount is \$5,000. Application deadline is Nov. 15th. Guidelines available at: <http://www.housatonicheritage.org>. To apply, email history@housatonicheritage.org to set up a pre-application appointment.

WATER QUALITY MANAGEMENT PLANNING PROGRAM GRANTS

It is expected that in January 2012 the Mass. Dept. of Environmental Protection will again be seeking project proposals from regional planning commissions and municipalities that will identify water quality problems and provide preliminary designs for BMPs to address these problems. Do your homework now to be prepared for the grant announcement.

CALENDAR

All meetings held in BRPC office unless otherwise noted.
Please check the BRPC website to confirm.

NOVEMBER

- 2 **MA Broadband Institute Regional Meeting**, 6:00 p.m. / Berkshire Southern Community Center in Great Barrington
- 4 **Renovations**, Offices Closed
- 10 **Executive Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 11 **Renovations/Veteran's Day**, Offices Closed
- 15 **TAC Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 17 **Regional Issues Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- BRPC Full Commission Meeting**, 7:00 p.m.
- 18 **Renovations**, Offices Closed
- 24 **Thanksgiving Holiday**, Offices Closed
- 25 **Renovations**, Offices Closed
- 29 **MPO Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- North Central Berkshire Open Space & Recreation Workshop**, 6:30 p.m. / Adams Community Center (20 East Street, Adams)

DECEMBER

- 1 **BRPC Executive Committee Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- CPTC Training**, 7:00 p.m.
- 7 **Berkshire Bike Path Council Quarterly Meeting**, 6:00 p.m.
- Housatonic River Clean-up Citizen Coordinating Council Meeting**, 5:30 p.m. / Location TBD
- 14 **South Central Berkshire Open Space & Recreation Workshop**, 6:30 p.m. / Lenox Town Hall (6 Walker Street, Lenox)
- 20 **TAC Meeting**, 4:00 p.m.
- 23 **Half Holiday**, Offices Closed in the Afternoon
- 26 **Christmas Holiday**, Offices Closed

CLEARINGHOUSE REVIEWS

None at this time.