

COMMON GROUND

A NEWSLETTER FOR COMMUNITY PLANNING IN THE BERKSHIRE REGION

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BRPC LAUNCHES GREEN COMMUNITIES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

BRPC has been selected by the state Department of Energy Resources (DOER) to provide technical assistance to Berkshire communities interested in becoming a Green Community. As defined by DOER, a Green Community is one that meets the following five criteria:

1. As-of-right siting for renewables (generation, manufacturing or R&D)
2. Expedited application/permitting process
3. Establish energy baseline and a program to reduce use by 20% in 5 years
4. Policy to purchase fuel-efficient vehicles
5. Adopt the Stretch Code, an appendix to the state building code

BRPC has partnered in this effort with the Center for Ecological Technology (CET) to bring their expertise in energy efficiency and the stretch code to the table. Together, the BRPC/CET team will assist 14 communities in the Berkshires who successfully applied for technical assistance through a competitive grant process this fall.

The technical assistance officially kicked-off at the October 29th 5th Thursday dinner with nearly 100 people in attendance. Jim Barry, Western Massachusetts Regional Coordinator for the Green Communities Program at the state, was on hand to introduce the benefits of being a green community and answer questions. BRPC staff provided an overview of the action planning process and gave a glimpse into details involved with achieving the first criteria—*as-of-right siting for renewables*.

These communities have each organized a Green Communities Task Force to represent them in subregional meetings during the three-month process of developing a Green Communities Action Plan for their community. This action plan will describe progress to date, detail steps needed to meet the five criteria, and detail roles, responsibilities and timing for implementing those steps.

BRPC HIRES NEW GRANT SPECIALIST

BRPC is pleased to announce the addition of a new Grant Specialist position to be capably filled by Ms. Ellen Downes. Ellen comes to us with a strong background in public administration and finance including a Masters degree in Public Administration and work experience in the non-profit, public, and private sectors including work for the Williamstown Visiting Nurse Association, Justice Resource Institute in Housatonic, and most recently for Schweitzer-Mauduit International, Inc. At BRPC, Ellen will assist with tracking and reporting for a variety of grant and contracts. Welcome Ellen!

GREEN COMMUNITIES



HAPPY THANKSGIVING

GREEN COMMUNITIES TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE (CONT.)

Over the next 6 months, BRPC will work with Green Communities Task Force members at a subregional level (illustrated in map, right).

Central: Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee and Becket
November—January

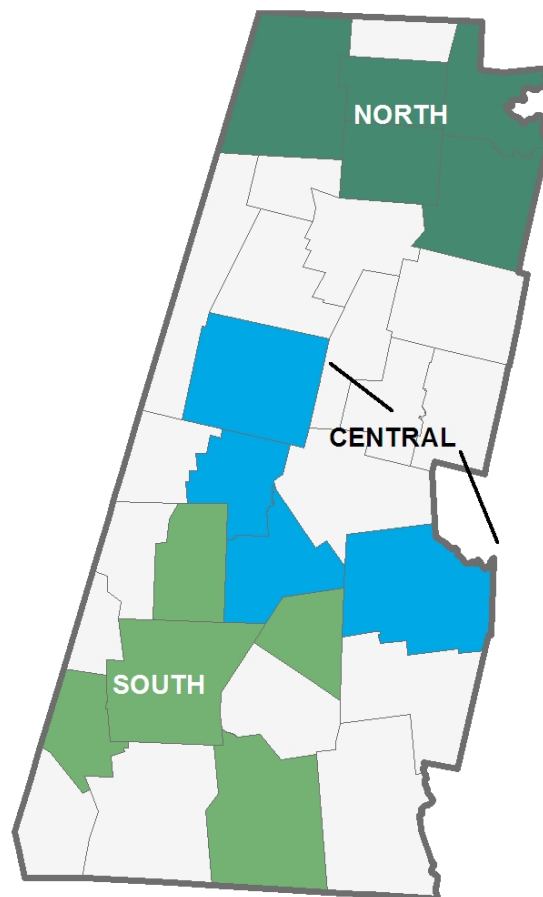
North: Adams, Florida, North Adams, Savoy, Williamstown
January—March

South: Egremont, Great Barrington, New Marlborough, Stockbridge, Tyringham
March—May

Benefits of achieving green community designation include cost savings from energy efficiency and renewables, green branding and marketing benefits, and eligibility to apply for green communities grants. This grant pool is anticipated to have \$10 million and will only be eligible to those municipalities with green community designation from the state.

Additional information programs and assistance offered through the Green Communities Program is available at www.mass.gov keyword “DOER.”

BRPC Contact: *Lauren Gaherty (x35) or Amy Kacala (x12)*



CHANGES TO OPEN MEETING LAW

Ethics Reform legislation signed into law this summer contains provisions that will affect not only state politicians, departments and employees, but also local elected officials and commission members. Changes affect not only the state's ethics laws; lobbying, bribery and campaign finance, but also include some significant revisions to the “Open Meeting Law.” BRPC will coordinate trainings this spring to help board members prepare for the changes. The majority of do not take effect until July 1, 2010, but local officials should be aware of what to expect: Some of the changes include:

- 48-hour meeting posting periods no longer include Saturdays
- Meeting notices must include a list of topics to be discussed – this means posting one meeting schedule listing dates and times for the entire year will no longer be permitted
- Email discussions are clearly included in the definition of deliberations, but not if they are limited to scheduling or distribution of agendas or other procedural matters
- Municipal employees must complete an online training program every two years
- Board members must sign a certificate stating they have been provided with copies of the law and relevant training materials. Once signed, this certificate will be used to determine if open meeting law violations are intentional
- Each city and town must designate a senior-level employee as a liaison to the ethics commission

Please visit the state ethics commission website www.mass.gov/ethics for more details about the amendments, and the timeline for their implementation.

BRPC Contact: *Sarah LaValley (x28)*

REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Starting early in calendar year 2010, BRPC will begin preparation of an update to the Berkshire Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The RTP provides a comprehensive overview of current transportation issues in the County and establishes a strategic blueprint for addressing both current problems and new challenges to come.

Every four years, an update to the RTP will examine:

- Existing and forecast traffic volumes and congestion
- Transit service
- Freight and goods movement
- Non-motorized travel modes
- Inventory and condition of our transportation infrastructure

A critical component of the RTP is an analysis of how well our financial resources match up with the diversity of transportation needs that face our region.

BRPC will be soliciting public input on regional transportation issues starting sometime next spring, in a series of forums to be held throughout the County. Watch this space for future updates on the RTP and notices for public meetings!

BRPC Contact: *Dave Daskal (x20)*

HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN

BRPC has been awarded a grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to update the 2005 Berkshire Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan. Over the coming two years, BRPC will be working with 19 communities to update the plan and make the communities eligible for Hazard Mitigation Grants. The communities that are participating are Adams, Becket, Dalton, Egremont, Great Barrington, Hancock, Lee, Lenox, Monterey, New Marlborough, Otis, Pittsfield, Richmond, Sandisfield, Sheffield, Stockbridge, Tyringham, Washington and Williamstown. The Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan describes the natural hazards that affect each of our communities and our region and lists mitigation activities that can be done to eliminate or minimize the impact of the hazards.

BRPC contact: *Mark Maloy (x29)*

H1N1 EMERGENCY RESPONSE

H1N1 flu, also known as "swine flu", is a respiratory disease caused by a type of flu virus. In an unprecedented action, the Center for Disease Control (CDC) has made free vaccine available, as well as providing a significant amount of funding for the actual implementation of the campaign. BRPC, serving as fiduciary agency, and Berkshire County Boards of Health Association (BCBOHA) represents the Berkshire County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition. The Berkshire County Public Health Emergency Preparedness Coalition has been authorized by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) to decide the use of and distribute the Public Health Emergency Response (PHER) funds.

A strong coalition of partners, including municipalities, hospitals, organizations (such as Visiting Nurse Associations), the Sheriff's Department and private companies have mobilized to prepare for vaccination clinics throughout the county. Manufacturing issues have delayed arrival of enough vaccine for large public clinics. Flu symptoms in healthy adults are predicted to be relatively mild. However, for high-risk populations, including those with impaired respiratory systems, pregnant women and youth, symptoms can be serious. The MDPH has prepared very good and current information at www.mass.gov/flu or <http://publichealth.blog.state.ma.us/h1n1-swine-flu/>.

Contact: Laura Kittross, BCBOHA, info@bcboha.org.

2010 DISTRICT LOCAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

BRPC is happy to announce it has received District Local Technical Assistance for 2010 that will enable it to offer award technical assistance to Berkshire Communities through a competitive application process. DLTA projects must promote regionalization/regional collaboration, one or more of the state's ten Sustainable Development Principles, or both. Formal solicitations will be sent to each community in November. Communities are encouraged to begin developing project ideas now as the application turn-around timeframe is fairly short.

BRPC Contact: *Amy Kacala (x12)*

PITTSFIELD AWARDED WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT GRANT

On October 21, 2009, as part of the Massachusetts Recovery Plan to secure the state's economic future, the Patrick-Murray Administration awarded \$750,266 in grants to 11 communities for projects to conduct watershed non-point source pollution assessment and planning work to address water quality impairments. These grants are funded under the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 and Section 604b of the U.S. Clean Water Act.

The City of Pittsfield has been awarded \$69,300 for water quality assessment of Windsor and Cady Brooks. This project will implement recommendations of the MassDEP Surface Water Assessment Program (SWAP) Report and will assess sources of sediment to Windsor and Cady Brooks. Significant sediment deposits and the re-suspension of these materials during storm events and/or high flows may be contributing to increased turbidity that is impacting Cleveland Reservoir - the City of Pittsfield's principal water supply. Appropriate management measures to prevent sediment from entering the reservoir will be identified.

For full announcements from state, please visit:

<http://www.mass.gov/dep/public/press/1009sixo.htm>

CPTC WORKSHOP

A CPTC workshop, "Introduction to Local Economic Development Planning" will be held on November 10th at BRPC. CPTC workshops are offered around the state on a variety of topics to help provide planning board and zoning boards of appeal with the background needed to make informed decisions. 'On-demand' trainings are also available. More information about CPTC can be found at www.umass.edu/masscptc/

BRPC Contact: *Sarah LaValley (x28)*

CALENDAR

NOVEMBER

10 **Brownfields Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office 11:00 am

CPTC Workshop: Intro to Local Economic Development Planning
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

19 **Commission Meeting**
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

DECEMBER

2 **Berkshire Conservation Commission Group**
BRPC Office 7:00 pm

3 **Executive Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office 4:00 pm

JANUARY

7 **Executive Committee Meeting**
BRPC Office 4:00 pm



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

