

2007 Zoning Updates

BRPC recognizes those communities that have taken initiatives to complete zoning and other planning-related updates and revisions during 2007. Updating bylaws is a long and involved process, and a round of applause is deserved for those involved.

Zoning Amendments and Updates

Becket, Otis & Sheffield

- Comprehensive recodification of zoning bylaws

Hinsdale

- Adult Entertainment Overlay District

Lee

- New sign bylaw

Otis

- Common Driveway Bylaw

Pittsfield

- Flexible Development Ordinance

Sheffield

- Common Driveway Bylaw
- Changes to Special Permit requirements and granting authorities

General Bylaws/Other Planning Items

Dalton

- Stormwater Management and Erosion Control Bylaw

Lenox

- Approval of Community Preservation Act

Pittsfield

- Demolition Delay Ordinance for historic structures

Williamstown

- Creation of a Redevelopment District for Cable Mills

West Stockbridge

- Wetlands Protection Bylaw

BRPC is able to provide some help to communities seeking to amend subdivision or zoning bylaws.

BRPC Contacts: *Joellyn Warren & Sarah Izatt*

Possible Changes to 40B

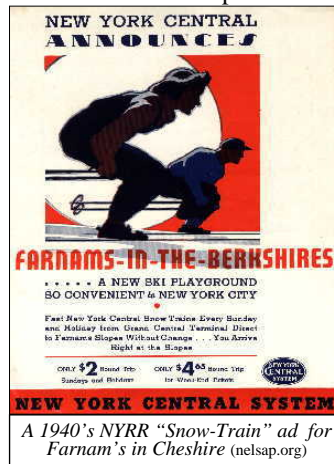
The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has submitted draft regulations to amend Chapter 40B, the state's "affordable housing law." According to the Citizen Housing and Planning Association (CHAPA), the new regulation incorporates and codifies many policies and practices that have evolved over the years as the result of court rulings, Housing Appeals Committee decisions and DHCD guidelines. Changes to current practices are also made. Please check the DHCD or CHAPA websites for up to date information.

The Berkshires' Closed Ski Areas

The Berkshires are well-known for their outdoor recreation opportunities. Even though going outside can be the furthest thing from many people's minds in winter, outdoor sports don't cease with the first snowfall - skiing is an important part of the region's history, economy, and culture.

There are 13 alpine ski areas in Massachusetts; five of these are in the Berkshires. But the County also contains about 25 "lost" ski areas. These closed areas range from the very small- a single rope tow on Abbey Hill in Great Barrington in the 1940's, to the very large- Brodie's 1250' vertical drop in New Ashford.

Visitors came from miles around to ski the Berkshires. From the 1930's through the 1950's, the Berkshires' skiing heyday, a "snow train" offered direct rail service from New York City to Pittsfield. Within walking distance of the train drop-off in Cheshire was Farnam's in the Berkshires, a 4-tow 225 acre slope. Farnam's closed in the mid-1950's. Many private schools and resorts, including Berkshire School, Eastover, Cranwell, and Williams College also had ski slopes. Areas created by the Civilian Conservation Corps were found in Beartown and Mt. Greylock State Forests. Today, abandoned rope tows, trails and lodge fireplaces can still be found from Sheffield to Clarksburg.



Broadband Availability Survey

In an effort to develop better information about where and what kind of broadband telecommunications are available across western Mass, Berkshire Connect has a simple survey available for download or online response, available at www.bconnect.org. BRPC encourages every individual and business to complete the survey. If you have both an office and a residence, fill one out for each to document areas of need of service. Survey responses are due March 1.

Lt. Governor Murray Visits BRPC

Lieutenant Governor Murray braved the season's first snow storm and made it to the Berkshires for a breakfast hosted by the BRPC on December 14. Twenty-eight local officials from 11 cities and towns made it through the wintry mess and had an engaged dialogue with the Lieutenant Governor. He delivered a message that the budget picture for 2008 is not promising. The biggest surprise of the administrations first year was the amount of deferred maintenance, not just in transportation, but at state colleges and universities and all other state facilities. Issues raised by local officials included further changes needed to the legislation allowing cities and towns to join the State Group Insurance Commission, transportation funding, programs that do not recognize the small scale of Berkshire communities, rising energy costs, and regional school district problems.

State Representatives Guyer, Pignatelli, and Speranzo also participated in the discussions.

The Lieutenant Governor then visited with the BRPC Executive Committee, senior staff and Senator Downing. He was very interested in shared service programs, such as the Berkshire Conservation Agent and Outsource Planner programs offered by BRPC. He was also briefed on U.S. Census preparations, and issues with downtown buildings and economic development sites. His willingness to spend focused time with the Commission and listen so attentively was very much appreciated.

Clearinghouse Review Committee

The Clearinghouse Review Committee is one of BRPC's six standing committees. Its primary role is to draft comments to the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs and to the host community's boards for projects which have been submitted to the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA) Office for review. The Committee's comments are then given final approval by the Executive Committee or full Commission prior to submittal.

The Committee meets on an as-needed basis that fluctuates depending on what is submitted for MEPA review.

The Committee currently has five members and could use at least one or two more. The Chair is James Mullen of New Marlborough and the Vice Chair is Eleanor Tillinghast of Mount Washington.

Lee Area Traffic Study

BRPC conducted the first in a series of Public Meetings for the Lee Area Traffic Study in November. Staff presented existing conditions analysis findings and received public input on improving the traffic congestion in downtown Lee. The most prominent issues raised at the well-attended meeting were:

Meeting Recaps

The BRPC held its 41st annual dinner meeting on November 15 at the Pittsfield Country Club. The Commission welcomed guest speaker Bernard Cohen, Secretary of the Executive Office of Transportation and Public Works. Mr. Cohen discussed the state of transportation funding in the Commonwealth, and presented the

Dalton Priority Development Site

In November, Dalton became the 2nd municipality in Berkshire County (Pittsfield being the other) and one of 27 statewide to have an area designated as a priority development site under the provisions of MGL 43d. 43d was signed into law in August 2006 as a tool for communities to implement targeted economic development. This provision provides for a transparent and efficient municipal permitting process by guaranteeing that local permitting decisions on priority development sites are made within 180 days, thereby increasing the visibility and marketability of these sites. Dalton's designated area is the industrially zoned land adjacent to and including Crane and Co's Ashuelot Park (including the former Beloit manufacturing site.) Dalton has been working for several years to advance this area as an industrial park. Dalton also received a grant for technical assistance to implement appropriate procedures to expedite permit decisions and perform studies to get the site ready for development. BRPC assisted the town in preparing the application and can assist other towns wishing to pursue designation.

BRPC Contact: *Tom Matuszko*

Meetings and Events

January 9	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
January 17	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 p.m.	BRPC
January 31	"5th Thursday" Dinner	6:00 p.m.	Cork 'n Hearth, Lee
February 6	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
February 7	Transportation Advisory Comm.	5:00 p.m.	BRPC
February 12	MPO Meeting	4:00 p.m.	BRPC

In the case of inclement weather, please call to confirm if a meeting will still be held

- The need to mitigate truck traffic, and
- Large volumes of traffic experienced in Lee.

The main conclusions from the existing and 2030 No-build condition analysis performed by the BRPC staff are:

- Very high traffic volumes for two lane roadways
- Large volume of truck traffic
- Three intersections (Center St & Main St, Main St & Park St, Park St & Housatonic St) are already failing and will get worse in 2030. High St & Park St intersection will experience some delay in 2030.
- Accident rate is lower than the Berkshire County Average.
- Traffic flow east and north through Lee is the primary movement

The next step in the study will be to identify and analyze potential alternatives. A public meeting will be held in April 2008 to discuss the alternatives.

Visit www.berkshireplanning.org for updates.

administration's plans for increasing revenue and cutting costs.

The 2007 Charles Kusik award, an annual award recognizing those who have made outstanding contributions to land use planning in Berkshire County, was presented to Don Schmidt. Don is Director of DHCD's Smart Growth Zoning program.

The next full Commission meeting will be held Thursday, January 17 at BRPC. All Commission meetings are open to the public.

Land use attorney Don Dubendorf wowed a crowd of more than 60 with a lively presentation on exempt uses at the November 29th Thursday Dinner at Zucchini's. Planning and ZBA members, building inspectors, and staff from 19 Berkshire towns attended the event. Visit www.berkshireplanning.org/meetings for detailed meeting agendas.

Clearinghouse Reviews

Dalton Avenue Site Remediation (Pittsfield)
Camp Hi-Rock Driveway (Mt. Washington)
Pittsfield Plaza Renovation (Pittsfield)

Smart Growth News

The 5th Annual Smart Growth Conference was held in Worcester, December 7. The agenda was expanded this year to include "smart energy." Sessions were held on a multitude of topics, including alternative energy sources and their economic benefits, and innovative ways to reduce truck idling. Discussions were also held about recent initiatives to encourage smart, sustainable growth, and tools available to help municipalities do so. To view an encyclopedia of model bylaws and case studies online, visit: <http://www.mass.gov/envir/sgtk.htm>

