

Future Zoning is in Your Hands

The Lenox Planning Board has been on the road! Funded by a grant from the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, the Board has been hosting coffee house style meetings in each neighborhood to get people talking about how zoning shapes their community and what effects zoning has on neighborhood preservation. The Board held eight meetings, with over 10% of households attending.

The Board is committed to a comprehensive approach to land use planning based on real town values. The Board has determined that it must take action to make zoning compatible with residents' visions. The Board will not bring forth zoning amendments this spring in order to avoid future piece-meal updates. Instead, they will undertake a comprehensive zoning diagnostic this summer with the goal of presenting a completely revised zoning bylaw next fall. Amendments may include improved zoning definitions, new districts more in keeping with the existing built environment, inclusionary zoning to promote affordable housing, flexible development, restructuring the open space development bylaw to allow greater cluster, and clear guidelines for determining impacts to water, sewer, open space and other essential community functions.

BRPC Contact: *Joellyn Warren*

Conservation Agent Program

The Berkshire Conservation Agent Program (BCAP) celebrates 4 years of assistance to Conservation Commissions. BCAP provides Conservation Commissions professional technical assistance and training, through a "shared" Conservation Agent. Services include: review of notices of intent and resource area delineations, site inspections, grant writing, and training on a wide variety of topics. Commissions can gain access to timely and affordable help with technical and time-consuming issues. Since its inception, the Conservation Agent has provided assistance to 23 communities on more than 80 projects. If you would like to learn more about BCAP services, visit berkshireplanning.org/conservationagent or contact *Tom Matuszko*.

The Berkshire's Sense of Place

It is impossible to have a sense of place if a place is nameless. Naming of landmarks and features is often one of the first tasks completed when people settle an area. However, once place names are established, it is easy to forget their origins and meanings. Many Berkshire place names have an interesting background.

Some Berkshire places were named after people:

Lee-Charles Lee, 2nd in command to George Washington

Tyringham- the cousin of the governor

Williamstown- Colonel Ephraim Williams. Williams commanded Fort Massachusetts in North Adams, located in the current Price Chopper parking lot.

Some Berkshire places are derived from Mahican words:

Mahaiwe (the original name of Great Barrington)- "The place down-stream"

Housatonic- "Over the mountain"

Naumkeag- "Peaceful place"

Kampoosa- "Dangerous Place"

And some place names have a twist:

Molasses Hill in Lanesborough is named for the appearance of its mud during spring rains, and Florida was named after the country's newly acquired southern territory- perhaps to contrast with the bleak northern Berkshire winters.

Whatever their names, there are many places in the Berkshires which help to define the region.

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*

OSRD Bylaws in the Works

Great Barrington and Williamstown are drafting Open Space Residential Design ("OSRD") zoning bylaws to help Planning Boards and developers work together to reach common goals. When these proposed bylaws are presented to town meetings, the "pitch" will be that OSRD promotes new subdivisions that are attractive to homebuyers, but also conserve open space, without increasing the overall number of dwelling units being built. Lenox Dalton, and the City of Pittsfield already allow OSRD

(sometimes called something else). The key feature of OSRD is essentially a swap between public and private interests: the developer is allowed to create lots smaller than the minimum provided for by-right; and a tract of open space is protected in exchange. The "pros" outweigh the "cons" in every dimension. The developer saves money by building a shorter road, which in turn reduces the new impermeable surface area, which has an environmental benefit.

Great Barrington and Williamstown, as well as a number of other Berkshire towns, have existing "cluster" bylaws that are underperforming and likewise may want to consider OSRD. Incentives must be in place (improved permitting and certainty, small lots, reduced setbacks, reduced costs for roadways) for conventional subdivision developers to make the leap and partner with towns to conserve open space. For more information on the ongoing projects in Great Barrington and Williamstown, contact *Jamie Francomano* and *Nat Karns*, respectively.

Affordable Housing & Open Space: Partnerships for Success

Protecting conservation land and providing affordable housing are often among the most pressing priorities for communities in Massachusetts. CHAPA, Citizens' Housing and Planning Association, has prepared a workshop that provides examples of how communities have been successful in combining these two priorities. 13 example developments (many of them from Western Mass.) involving 682 acres, had 585 housing units, with approximately 1/3 affordable to those making 80% of the median income and another 1/3 affordable to those making 120% of the area median. About 2/3 of the land; 474 acres, was left as protected open space.

Techniques include Open Space Residential Development and the innovative use of Community Preservation Act (CPA) funds. BRPC will be coordinating 2 workshops in May, one each in south and north county, to present these examples. Look for dates and times in subsequent mailings or on the BRPC website. For further information, contact *Sarah Izatt*.

Stormwater Regulations Workshop

BRPC is sponsoring an informational workshop to present the upcoming regulatory changes to the Stormwater Management Policy. The Mass. DEP is revising how stormwater will be regulated, proposing to incorporate the Stormwater Management Standards into the existing Wetland Protection Act. Additional requirements to promote stormwater recharge, encourage low impact development (LID) techniques and remove illicit discharges are also being incorporated. Fred Civian of the DEP will discuss the new changes and what they mean for development projects and Conservation Commissioners.

A new section of the stormwater regulations will require that proponents whose development projects are subject to stormwater regulation consider environmentally sensitive design and LID techniques to manage stormwater. Proponents shall consider designs that reduce impervious surfaces (roads, driveways, and parking lots) and employ decentralized stormwater management systems that replace the typical system of closed pipes that direct all the drainage to one large detention basin. DEP is establishing "LID Site Design Credit" to encourage developers to incorporate LID in their developments. In exchange for LID techniques, DEP will allow developers to reduce reliance on traditional stormwater BMPs. Please contact *Lauren Gaherty* for more information.

Clearinghouse Reviews

Berkshire Gateway DEIR (Lee)

Farewell to Michael Hoffmann

Michael Hoffmann, Transportation Planner, has submitted his resignation, effective May 25th. While with us only a year, Michael has been a very important and productive member of the transportation team, being primary author and coordinator of the 2007 Regional Transportation Plan, coordinating the establishment of the

at the Massachusetts Attorney General's Office led a lively discussion about the creation and adoption of new bylaws, and provided board members with an arsenal of information and resources.

The next "5th Thursday" dinner will be held on May 31 at Asters. Guest Speaker Mark Bobrowski esq. author of the Handbook of Massachusetts Planning Law, will discuss the complicated relationships

Mark Your Calendar!

May 2	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 P.M.	BRPC
May 3	Transportation Advisory Committee	5:30 P.M.	BRPC
May 15	MPO Meeting	4:00 P.M.	BRPC
May 17	Full Commission Meeting	7:30 P.M.	BRPC
May 30	Regional Issues Committee Meeting	3:30 P.M.	BRPC
May 31	Stormwater Regulations Workshop	6:30 P.M.	BRPC
May 31	"5th Thursday" Dinner	6:00 P.M.	Asters, Pittsfield
June 6	Executive Committee Meeting	3:30 P.M.	BRPC



new Transportation Advisory Committee, and managing the regional traffic counting program. Michael also was developing corridor management studies for both Rte. 8 and the Mohawk Trail. For personal reasons, Michael and his family are returning to Portland, Oregon, and we wish them all the best. We are immediately commencing a search for a replacement.

"5th Thursday" Dinner Update

BRPC has revived the informational "5th Thursday" dinner series for planning and ZBA members. A record-breaking 75 attendees representing fifteen cities and towns mingled at Asters Steaks & Raw Bar on March 29. Special guest speaker Bob Ritchie, director of the Municipal Law Unit

between planning boards, ZBAs and Building Inspectors, and will provide an update on recent case law. Cost to attend is \$15 for planning & ZBA members and building inspectors, and \$35 for other guests.

BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

TIP Process Update

BRPC received 27 Project Information Forms (PIFs) for city and town highway projects, totaling \$86,949,254, and one PIF for a streetscape improvement project. Also received were PIFs for four bike path projects- three in Lenox and one in Pittsfield.

BRPC and MassHighway staff will evaluate the projects, and will work with the TAC and MPO to prioritize.