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**CMRPC Brownfields Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, May 6, 2026, 1:30 pm

Meeting Details:

BAC Members Present:

Anna Kathryn Hodges (Main South CDC)	Jason Palitsch (495 Metrowest Partnership)
Julie Holstrom (Worcester Business Dev. Corp.)	Melissa Fales (Quaboag CDC)
Jeannie Hebert (Blackstone Valley CC)	Rachel Pressey (City of Worcester)
Katie Yoder (Town of Southbridge)	Vivian Poplawski (Town of Spencer)
Jeremy Olson (Town of Warren)	Todd Brodeur (Fletcher Tilton)
Kevin Daoust (MassDEP)	Abigale Szlajen (EPA)

CMRPC Staff & Consultants

Kerrie Salwa (CMRPC)	Joe Sziabowski (CMRPC)
Sarah DeStefano (Weston & Sampson)	Joe Spencer (Weston & Sampson)
Melissa Davis (Weston & Sampson)	

Meeting Materials

CMRPC BAC Meeting #1_05062026 Presentation	May 6, 2026, BAC Meeting Agenda
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1. Welcome & Member Introductions

Anna-Kathryn Hodges: Hi, everyone. My name is Anna-Kathryn. I work with the Main South CDC. I've been with them for about 3 years now. I work as a Resource Development Manager. I have a Master's in Community Development Planning.

Jason Palitsch: Good afternoon, everyone. Jason Palitsch. I am the Executive Director of the 495 Metrowest Partnership. We are a regional economic development organization serving 37 cities and towns along the 495 corridor, 7 of which are in the CMMPO region: Berlin, Grafton, Hopedale, Northborough, Shrewsbury, Upton, and Westborough. We are an organization that focuses on economic development and sustainable economic growth. We do this through traditional economic development work and also policy advocacy on behalf of our region. We're an alliance of businesses, municipal governments, higher ed, nonprofits, some chambers in our service area, and others. I myself am a proud Shrewsbury resident.

Julie Holstrom: Good afternoon, everybody. My name's Julie Holstrom. I am the Director of Projects for the Worcester Business Development Corporation. I've been with the organization for 17 years now and have done a decent amount of grant writing and project administration related to brownfields. Looking forward to participating with this group.

Melissa Fales: Hi everyone, I'm Melissa Fales, I'm the Executive Director of the Quaboag Valley CDC. We're located in Ware, MA, but we cover towns in three counties, about 20 towns altogether. I've been at the CDC for almost 11 years now. I don't have a ton of brownfields experience, but I'm looking forward to being a part of this committee. Thank you.

Jeannie Hebert: I'm President and CEO of the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce and also the Blackstone Valley Hub for Workforce Development. We're great connectors and conveners and cover the territory from Worcester to Providence. We work very hard for economic development and collaborate with everyone. I know there's a number of brownfields in our area, and I'm excited to learn more about what our committee can do. Hello, everyone.

Rachel Pressey: I am Rachel Pressy from the City of Worcester's Executive Office of Economic Development. I am looking forward to working with this committee on a regional level, since in our department, we work on a lot of the city's brownfields. I'm looking forward to working on that at a regional scale. Thank you, guys.

Katie Yoder: Town Planner and Conservation Agent for Town of Southbridge. I don't have much background in brownfields, but I'm excited to learn because we have a lot of brownfield projects in Southbridge.

Vivian Poplawski: Hi everyone, I'm Vivian Poplawski, I'm the town planner for Spencer, and I've been with the town for just about a year now. We have a few brownfields in Spencer, but I haven't had a chance to work on any projects with the brownfields, so I'm very excited to be on this committee.

Jeremy Olson: Hello everybody, Jeremy Olson, the Town of Warren. I'm the highway surveyor, and I run the DPW. I am also the chairman for our Community Development Advisory Committee. I've worked on a lot of different grant programs with CMRPC over the years. I have been in the industry for about 11 years now, construction background. I'm very excited to be involved with this and see where it takes us. Thank you.

Todd Brodeur: Good afternoon, everybody. Todd Brodeur from Fletcher Tilton. I am one of the co-managing partners at Fletcher Tilton, a 50-attorney law firm. Worcester being our main office. I am primarily commercial real estate focused, with a heavy focus on development projects within Central Massachusetts. This is something I've been doing for 22 years. I have worked with some of you on the call. I am excited to meet some of you. Thanks.

Kevin Daoust: Hi, thank you. Kevin Daoust, Mass DEP. I am the Section Chief of Site Management and Compliance Assistance and the Regional Brownfield Coordinator, working with Dave Foss statewide as

the statewide coordinator. I've been at DEP for 31 years, most of which was in emergency response. I have worked on brownfields since about 2012. DEP covers 77 cities and towns in the Central Region.

Abby Szlajen: Hi everyone, I'm Abby Szlajen. I'm from the Environmental Protection Agency, and I'm the Brownfields Project Manager for CMRPC. Nice to meet all of you.

Joe Spencer: I'm Joe Spencer. I am a licensed site professional and team leader at Weston and Sampson. We are very happy to be CMRPC's qualified environmental professional on this project. Very excited to get started.

Sarah DeStefano: Sarah DeStefano, Brownfields Practice Leader at Weston and Sampson. I've been at Weston and Sampson almost 15 years now, but prior to that, I worked at the State of Rhode Island in their Brownfields program for 10 years. I also worked at EPA for a couple years in their emergency response program, so I've been on a lot of the sides of the table when it comes to brownfields, assessment, cleanup, and redevelopment.

Very excited to be here. I grew up in Blackstone, Massachusetts. My family lived, worked, and played in this region. This one is very exciting for me, and hits really close to home and to the heart. So, happy to be here, and looking forward to working with all of you on this program.

Melissa Davis: Hi, everybody. I'm Melissa Davis. I am very excited to work in Central Mass. I grew up in Worcester County. I'm a senior PM with Weston and Sampson. My background includes over 25 years in the public, private, and consulting sectors. I'm looking forward to working with everyone.

Kerrie Salwa: Hello, everybody. Kerrie Sawa, I'm the Director of Economic Development at CMRPC. I want to take the opportunity to thank you all for being involved in this project. We're elated to start. We've got a great engineering firm that we're working with and we really appreciate all of your time.

Joe Sziabowski: Hi everyone, my name is Joe Sziabowski. I'm an associate planner with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission. I work on the economic development team with Kerrie. The economic development team at CMRPC is administering this EPA Brownfields grant. I've been at CMRVC for about two and a half years now. I don't have much background in brownfields, but like some of you, I'm looking forward to learning more and getting some of these assessment and cleanup reuse planning activities off the ground.

2. Presentation: Introduction to Brownfields and CMRPC EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition Grant.

[Slides 1-5]

Sarah DeStefano opened the inaugural BAC meeting for CMRPC's Brownfields Coalition. The meeting was framed as an open conversation and an orientation to the brownfields program, CMRPC's coalition goals, and the role of the Brownfields Advisory Committee.

[Slide 6]

Kerrie Salwa provided an overview of CMRPC as one of 13 regional planning agencies in Massachusetts, with Transportation and Community Planning divisions. CMRPC supports 40 communities in southern Worcester County across land use and transportation planning, housing, economic development, regional coordination, and public engagement.

[Slide 7]

Melissa Fales described Quaboag Valley CDC's work serving 20 towns in the Quaboag region and southern Worcester County, focusing on economic development and small business support, including flexible alternative lending for businesses that cannot access traditional bank financing.

Katie Yoder shared background on the Town of Southbridge (approx. 18,000 residents) and its industrial history, including eyewear and textile manufacturing.

[Slides 8-9]

Sarah DeStefano noted this is a coalition grant with CMRPC as the lead entity and Quaboag Valley CDC and the Town of Southbridge as partners. Weston & Sampson will support the coalition with consistent brownfields staffing and technical expertise across assessment, cleanup/reuse planning, and related services.

[Slide 10]

Joe Spencer reviewed EPA's definition of a brownfield: real property where expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminants. Examples discussed included former industrial/commercial sites (mills, manufacturing facilities, junkyards, construction yards) and other underutilized properties where contamination may be present or perceived. Eligibility emphasized that sites are underutilized at the time of assessment and have a desired end use different from current conditions.

[Slide 11]

A streamlined process overview was presented by Joe Spencer: site selection and prioritization; EPA eligibility determination; Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ranging from desktop review and site reconnaissance to invasive sampling of soil/groundwater/sediment/surface water and hazardous building materials surveys); and cleanup and reuse planning to evaluate remedial options and potential site uses. Community involvement occurs throughout, along with required program management and reporting.

[Slide 13]

Joe Spencer explained the benefits that brownfields programs can provide:

- Economic development: moving properties from blight to productive use (jobs, housing, open space).

- Community ownership: community input prioritized to shape cleanup and redevelopment planning.
- Leverage: assessments can support additional investment and subsequent funding sources.
- Public health/safety: cleanup reduces risk and improves community conditions.
- Landowner/purchaser benefits: services provided at no cost; Phase I can support pre-acquisition liability protection and reduce uncertainty/stigma tied to perceived contamination.
- Market impacts: assessed/cleaned properties can increase nearby market values and catalyze redevelopment.

[Slides 15-17]

Joe Spencer showed case studies of Brownfields properties, including a former silversmith property that was redeveloped into a public space, a boat launch, and public river walk and Polar Park in Worcester, MA.

[Slide 18]

Joe Spencer described the workplan tasks as generally starting with planning and community involvement (including site selection), followed by the site assessment process, then cleanup and reuse planning.

[Slide 19]

Joe Spencer summarized key eligibility points. Points noted included: sites cannot have planned or ongoing EPA removal actions; cannot be on the Superfund/National Priorities List; cannot be subject to certain court orders or federal corrective action programs (e.g., RCRA/CERCLA); and cannot be federal facilities. Petroleum sites may require state-specific determinations regarding responsible parties.

[Slide 20]

Joe Spencer: Site inventory will draw from existing resources (including an older CMRPC Brownfields Plan to be updated), properties that are underused/abandoned and historically industrial, tax-title or tax-title-eligible properties, and regulatory databases (including MassDEP resources). The group also discussed the importance of owners and developers coming forward with candidate sites.

[Slide 21]

Joe Spencer explained the Phase I ESA: After a site is determined to be eligible, the process typically begins with a desktop review plus site reconnaissance, using publicly available documents, regulatory databases, and municipal records to identify “recognized environmental conditions” (per ASTM) and inform prioritization and next steps.

[Slide 22]

Joe Spencer explained the Phase II ESA: May include sampling environmental media (e.g., soil/groundwater), drilling/test pits, hazardous building materials evaluations, and installing monitoring

wells. Work is performed under an EPA-reviewed Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) and is often iterative, building a dataset to support intended end use and, in some cases, MassDEP compliance.

[Slide 23]

Joe Spencer explained cleanup and reuse planning: Discussed as including evaluation/selection of remedial alternatives (including EPA's ABCA format), reuse/visioning plans, and development of an area-wide plan under this grant.

[Slide 24]

Joe Spencer summarized community involvement: Options discussed included presenting findings at public meetings, meeting residents at existing events, developing outreach materials and/or a website, and conducting surveys.

[Slide 25]

Abby Szlajen explained the EPA assessment coalition grant model: a lead eligible entity (CMRPC) partners with 2–4 non-lead eligible entities (QVDC and the Town of Southbridge) to conduct assessment work within each member's geographic boundaries. The coalition can request up to \$1.5M and must assess at least two hazardous substance and/or petroleum sites in each member area. The lead member administers the grant and is accountable to EPA; a memorandum of agreement (MOA) documenting the site selection process is required before expending/drawing down funds.

[Slide 26]

Joe Sziabowski summarized the EPA Assessment Coalition Grant awarded to CMRPC: total award of \$1,000,000 (approximately \$880,000 for contractual services), performance period running from mid-2025 through September 2029, and Weston & Sampson hired as the Qualified Environmental Professional (QEP) to conduct assessment work and cleanup/reuse planning.

Target areas identified for initial focus included: Town of Southbridge; Town of Spencer; Town of Warren; Webster community-designated place (CDP); and the City of Worcester. Site selection will initially focus on these target areas, while remaining eligible to conduct work across other communities in the CMRPC region.

[Slide 27]

Joe Spencer reviewed the program goals: Stated goals included leading with community outreach; selecting sites with BAC input; developing prioritization criteria and a standardized decision-making process; and completing assessments and cleanup/reuse planning to catalyze reuse and redevelopment.

[Slides 29-31]

Melissa Davis reported the team has held a project kickoff meeting, begun early prioritization/site selection, and is working through eligibility determinations. Next steps include Phase I and Phase II ESAs, hazardous building material assessments, and cleanup/reuse planning.

Melissa Davis gave a summary of current candidate sites:

- 30 Mill Street, Southbridge: Former fabrics/textile mill; some buildings demolished; Town has taken property in tax title; at least one RTN (unclassified) noted; issues discussed included chlorinated VOCs and arsenic in soil; eligibility form drafted; initial activity to be a Phase I ESA.
- 484 Main Street, Worcester (Denholm Building): Former department store (Sanborn map referenced); hazardous building materials considered likely due to age; fuel oil heating referenced; one RTN associated and considered closed under older MCP regulations, with adjoining RTNs noted; location described as a potential opportunity for multifamily housing.
- 21 & 35 Pearl Street, Webster: Historical textile mill/fabric uses; multiple parcels with a public road between; adjacent to a river and railroad tracks; at least two RTNs referenced as closed under older MCP regulations.

[Slides 32-34]

Joe Spencer outlined the BAC role as serving as a connection to the community; bringing forward potential sites; connecting with developers; coordinating with other municipal departments about available sites and stalled redevelopment efforts (including properties re-issued for RFP/RFI without responses); and supporting public outreach by advertising the program. Sarah DeStefano reiterated the team can help fill project gaps using assessment and cleanup/reuse funds and welcomed collaboration.

It was agreed that Roundtable Questions [Slide 34] will be distributed to members for written responses.

Some members depart at 2:30 PM scheduled meeting end.

Discussion over Roundtable Questions [Slide 34] ensued:

- Kevin Daoust shared that MassDEP is updating its statewide brownfields inventory (current inventory referenced as 2018) and noted DEP has EPA funding sources that may help fill gaps (including community-wide assessment funding and other federal funding mentioned).
- Joe Spencer discussed stigma/concerns among private property owners about regulatory involvement and emphasized messaging that EPA/DEP can facilitate cleanup and sale/redevelopment.
- Sarah DeStefano noted that in some cases a Phase I ESA alone may be sufficient to facilitate a property sale toward redevelopment.

- Prioritization considerations raised included differing community needs and, from a DEP perspective, whether a site impacts a public water supply or involves exposure conditions that increase urgency.

[Slides 35-39]

Joe Spencer shared the final presentation slides, including where BAC members and the public can find updates about the assessment program.

3. Other Announcements/Updates

There were no other announcements.

4. Next BAC Meeting Dates

Joe Spencer reported that the next BAC meeting will be sometime in the July-August timeframe. Joe Sziabowski said that CMRPC will send out an email confirming the exact date.

Further discussion over Roundtable Questions [Slide 34] ensued:

- Kevin Daoust discussed current DEP project at former Egerton Minerals site (120 Southbridge Street, Auburn) described as primed for redevelopment; discussion included potential for an ABCA and the owner's redevelopment plans.
- Community engagement strategy was discussed. Kerrie Salwa and Joe Sziabowski explained that they plan to solicit site nominations from each community in the CMRPC region, beginning with target areas. Sarah DeStefano explained that in her experience, this is a best practice.
- Kevin Daoust talked about the former GL Finney site in Brookfield, MA. DEP is planning to do a Phase IV at the site.
- Sarah DeStefano and Jeremy Olson discussed Wrights Mill in Warren as a potential candidate for Phase II ESA.

Meeting concluded at 2:52 PM