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## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Boards of Selectmen, Towns of Auburn, Berlin, Grafton, Shrewsbury, and Mendon  
**From:** Connor Robichaud, Regional Projects Manager, CMRPC  
**RE:** Regional Housing Coordinator Program  
**Date:** February 8, 2023  
**CC:** Planning Boards, Affordable Housing Trusts, Community Preservation Act Committees, Boards of Health, and other relevant Boards Committees and Departments

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In Central Massachusetts, we've seen housing availability and affordability elevate from a concern to a genuine crisis. In Worcester County, 47.1% of renters are Cost Burdened, a rise of 7.4% in just one year (ACS, 2021). Additionally, 22.7% of owner-occupied households are cost-burdened, representing a year-over increase of 4.4% (ACS, 2021). This has a crippling effect on residents and this effect ripples through our communities and the local economy. To confront this growing problem, CMRPC is partnering with municipalities to hire a new, full-time Regional Housing Coordinator to help implement community-approved Housing Production Plans and provide staff support for relevant Boards, Committees, and Trusts.

We anticipate that the Towns of Auburn, Berlin, Grafton, Shrewsbury, and Mendon will participate in at least the first year of this new program. Several have new Affordable Housing Trusts or have adopted the Community Preservation Act, and most have completed or will soon complete Housing Production Plans. In every town, municipal staff capacity is stretched thin. A new Regional Housing Coordinator would dedicate time to each community, providing technical assistance to their Housing Committees, Partnerships, Planning Boards, and Affordable Housing Trusts. Having an employee rooted in Central Massachusetts will help create meaningful relationships with residents, decision-makers, and developers in our communities.

The attached contract outlines the expectations for CMRPC and the Town. We require this one-year no-cost commitment to help launch the new Regional Housing Coordinator program. Thanks to a Community Compact Efficiency and Regionalization grant award, we can provide services at no cost through FY24. While we will not require a formal commitment beyond this FY24 contract, we request that all participating towns consider dedicating local funds to sustain this program through FY25 and beyond. Projected costs for future years are detailed in the attached contract.

Participating in the program allows each town to designate a Member and Alternate to an informal Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will set goals, work tasks, and priorities for the Regional Housing Coordinator, with members serving as the main point of contact for their Town. This group will also be a space to collaborate and share best practices, tapping into the specialized knowledge of the Regional Housing Coordinator and CMRPC's deep bench of municipal expertise.

I look forward to this partnership and hope we can all continue to work thoughtfully and with community support to reduce the cost of housing in our region.