



**CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
*Hybrid ZOOM Virtual Meeting/In-Person Meeting*  
September 29, 2021

**I. Call to Order**

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:02PM

Committee Members Present

Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, Chair

Roger Bolton, Williams College (Retired) (Present via Zoom)

Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Network (Present via Zoom)

Mark Philips, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures (Present via Zoom)

Laurie Mick, PERC (Present via Zoom)

Deanna Ruffer, City of Pittsfield (Present via Zoom)

Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire (Present via Zoom)

Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington (Present via Zoom)

Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society at Arrowhead (Present via Zoom)

George Ambriz, Berkshire Community College (Present via Zoom)

Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

Christina Wynn, Berkshire Community College (Present via Zoom)

Mike Nuvallie, North Adams (Present via Zoom)

John Duval, Town of Adams (Present via Zoom)

Committee Alternates Present

Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire (Present via Zoom)

BRPC Staff Present

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director (Present via Zoom)

Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager

Mark Maloy, GIS and Data Manager

Wylie Goodman, Senior Economic Development Planner

Kyle H. asked all present to briefly introduce themselves.

**II. Approval of Minutes from August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Roger B. moved to approve the minutes from August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Ben L. seconded.

Roll Call

Roger B. – Aye

Keith G. – Aye

Kevin P. – Aye

Mark P. – Aye

Lesley H. – Aye

Jim L. – Abstain

Laurie M. – Aye

Deanna R. – Aye

George A. – Aye

Christina W. – Aye

Mike N. – Aye

Ben L. – Aye

John D. – Aye

Kyle H. – Aye

Ben S. – Aye

Tom M. – Aye

The motion passed.

### **III. Comments from the Public**

No comments from public.

### **IV. EDA CARES Act project**

**Berkshire Benchmarks** – Mark M. reported on progress made in the Berkshire Benchmarks aspect of the project. He said that all sector indicators have been finalized and will be approved by the Berkshire Leadership Impact Council (BLIC) within a few weeks. The survey is also nearing completion and will go to BLIC for approval. An RFP for the new Berkshire Benchmarks website was opened two and a half weeks ago and closes October 12. Over 70 vendors have been contacted regarding the RFP.

Roger B. asked if any local vendors were contacted. Mark M. said that local, state, regional, national, and international vendors were all contacted.

**Technical Assistance for Businesses** – Ben L. reported on progress made in the Technical Assistance for Businesses aspect of the project. He said that two weeks ago 1Berkshire officially launched registrations for technical assistance. The technical assistance will be provided by four providers in the areas of digital marketing and branding, workforce recruitment and retention, and grant and loan preparedness. Businesses may sign up for seven technical assistance cohorts, three or four of which are already at capacity, with the first sessions beginning next week.

Laura B. asked if businesses will receive individualized technical assistance. Ben L. said that all businesses must first attend group workshops, after which they are given two hours of one-on-one technical assistance.

Laura B. mentioned that the sessions are for both for-profit and nonprofit firms, but that there is also a nonprofit-specific series of workshops.

**Technical Assistance for Municipalities** – Laura B. reported on progress made in the Technical Assistance for Municipalities aspect of the project. She said that the format is similar to the technical assistance being provided to businesses, with municipalities first attending workshops and afterwards having access to one-on-one technical assistance.

The first workshop was held yesterday and was focused on cybersecurity. Four registrants attended. Future workshops will cover topics in which municipalities have expressed interest.

BRPC has launched an Economic Development Recovery & Resilience e-newsletter that goes to town managers and administrators, planning board chairs, and selectboard chairs/city council presidents. So far there have been five or six issues on a nearly weekly basis. The newsletter covers upcoming grant deadlines, educational opportunities, and economic development tools potentially of interest to municipalities.

**Long-term Resiliency Planning** – Laura B. thanked those who have volunteered to be part of the working group on long-term resiliency planning and mentioned that part of the EDA CARES grant is the development of a strong resiliency chapter in the next 5-year CEDS (2022 – 2027).

Wylie G. said BRPC has been analyzing the PPP loans granted to restaurants and businesses in the creative economy sector to identify issues in that sector. BRPC has also been auditing municipality websites with a focus on COVID response, emergency protocols, and welcoming new businesses and residents.

Laura B. said that the first meeting of the working group on long-term resiliency planning will be on October 13<sup>th</sup>. The working group plans on debriefing COVID response agencies and organizations in order to identify gaps and overlaps in services provided.

**Project Identification and Support** – Laura B. said that as part of the EDA CARES grant BRPC is working to identify potentially fundable projects around the region and connecting project managers with funding.

One project that is being supported is the Berkshire Innovation Center (BIC) manufacturing academy.

Ben S. shared that the purpose of the BIC manufacturing academy is to close the gap between local supply chains and the needs of larger manufacturers by providing ongoing education, training, and technology assistance to local firms. The academy is meant to be a hub for an improved manufacturing ecosystem in Western Massachusetts and has partners both in industry and in academia including General Dynamics, MIT's Initiative for Knowledge and Innovation in Manufacturing, and BCC.

The project proposal currently includes five principal components:

1. Technology bootcamps for manufacturing leaders;
2. A regional apprenticeship program among participating companies;
3. Online training content;
4. Demonstration projects;
5. Changing perceptions of the manufacturing sector among local residents and youth

Laura B. said that this project has been in development before the latest round of EDA funding was announced. The advantage of this round of funding is that it requires only a 20% match rather than EDA's typical 50% match.

EDA announced 6 funding opportunities in July. One of these opportunities is the Build Back Better Regional Challenge, which is a national funding competition that is seeking multi-county, statewide, and multi-state proposals. Funding will be awarded in two phases, with the first phase being \$500k for additional planning, and the second phase being \$50-\$100M for implementation. Phase one is due October 18, and Phase two is due in mid-March. Ben S. and the BIC are involved in researching the various proposals which exist and deciding how to the BIC's priorities into a statewide proposal with a focus on robotics.

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) is working with other Massachusetts RPAs and Economic Development Districts to assemble a Build Back Better proposal focused on cybersecurity. This proposal will consist of workforce development, engaging private sector actors, bridging the digital divide by expanding high-speed internet access, and a business and technology accelerator. BRPC is working with MAPC on this proposal and is putting together groups of Berkshire County stakeholders to discuss how cybersecurity concerns impact their area of work and how Berkshire County may fit into this application.

Jim L. asked how these funding opportunities may impact small one-to-two-person manufacturing firms in the area. Ben S. and Laura B. explained that the purpose of the BIC Manufacturing Academy is to address gaps in the local supply chains, especially with regards to the needs of large manufacturers. However, Laura B. said this is also an

opportunity to inventory small local manufacturers and connect them with larger regional players. Laura B. also said that MAPC's cybersecurity Build Back Better proposal could assist small businesses through the expansion of high-speed internet access.

## **V. Review and Approval of CEDS 2021 Annual Report**

**Trends and Conditions Section Overview** – Laura B. said that most of the datapoints in this section have been updated, but industry-specific datapoints have not yet been updated as the requisite data is not yet available from state and national sources.

Roger B. requested that some data regarding aggregate investment in the county be included in the report. Laura B. said that such a section will be included and that the data will be based on that in the investment database after it is updated.

### **Priority Projects –**

*Projects Recommended for Removal* – Laura B. said that the towns of Lenox and Lee recommended that the Elm Court and Spring Lawn projects be removed as they are either dormant or defunct.

Ben S. moved to remove the Elm Court and Spring Lawn priority projects from the CEDS annual report. Keith G. seconded the motion.

#### Roll Call

Kevin P. – Aye  
Deanna R. – Aye  
Laurie M. – Aye  
Jim L – Aye  
Lesley H. Aye  
Christina W. – Aye  
Tom M. – Aye  
Roger B. – Aye

Mike N. – Aye  
Mark P. – Aye  
Keith G. – Aye  
George A. – Aye  
John D. – Aye  
Ben S. - Aye  
Ben L. – Aye  
Kyle H. – Aye

The projects were removed.

*Projects Recommended for Addition* – Mike N. moved to approve the eight new priority projects included in the CEDS annual report. Jim L. seconded the motion.

#### Roll Call

Kevin P. – Aye  
Deanna R. – Aye  
Laurie M. – Aye  
Jim L. – Aye  
Lesley H. – Aye  
Christina W. – Aye  
Tom M. – Aye  
Roger B. – Aye

George A. – Aye  
Keith G – Aye  
Mark P. – Aye  
Mike N. – Aye  
Ben L. – Aye  
John D. – Aye  
Ben S. – Aye  
Kyle H. – Aye

The projects will be added into the final draft submitted to EDA.

**Representative Activities Section Overview** – Laura B. explained that this section categorizes accomplishments relating to BRPC's 6 CEDS goals in the last 12 months. She further thanked all individuals and organizations who have submitted accomplishments, and stressed that the list is not exhaustive.

Keith G. mentioned that his organization has been able to verify additional metrics and asked that they be included. Laura B. said she would include them.

**COVID Addendum Overview** – Laura B. said that BRPC included a COVID Addendum in last year’s CEDS annual report and has updated it for this year’s report to reflect current information. This addendum includes data on unemployment, labor force, and COVID relief programs.

Roger B. said that he was impressed by the sheer number of PPP loans that were disbursed to Berkshire County businesses. Laura B. said that even though the number seem high, in many cases less than half of the businesses in an industry received a loan.

Keith G. mentioned that in addition to the programs mentioned in the COVID Addendum, there have been other programs including the Shuttered Venues Operating Grant Program and the Restaurant Revitalization Fund. Laura B. said that these programs will be included in the resiliency chapter in the next 5-year CEDS Report.

Ben L. moved to approve the CEDS annual report in its current state and approve BRPC to continue to make updates as data become available. Christina W. seconded the motion.

Roll Call

Kevin P. – Aye  
Deanna R. – Absent  
Laurie M. – Absent  
Jim L. – Aye  
Lesley H. – Aye  
Christina W. – Aye  
Tom M. – Aye  
Roger B. – Aye

George A. – Aye  
Keith G – Aye  
Mark P. – Aye  
Mike N. – Aye  
Ben L. – Aye  
John D. – Absent  
Ben S. – Aye  
Kyle H. - Aye

**VI. Adjournment**

Keith G. moved to adjourn the meeting. Roger B. seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 2:18.