



## **CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*Virtual Meeting via Zoom*

January 12, 2022

### **I. Call to Order**

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

#### Committee Members Present

George Ambriz, Berkshire Community College  
Roger Bolton, Williams College (Retired)  
Heather Boulger, MassHire  
Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Network  
Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, Chair  
Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society at Arrowhead  
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire  
Allison Marchese, CDC of Southern Berkshire  
Laurie Mick, PERC  
Mike Nuvallie, City of North Adams  
Mark Philips, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures  
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington  
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center  
Christina Wynn, Berkshire Community College  
John Duval, Town of Adams/BRPC Commission Chair

#### Committee Alternates Present

Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

#### Guests Present

Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

#### Not Present

Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington  
Ian Rasch, Alander Construction  
Deanna Ruffer, City of Pittsfield

#### BRPC Staff Present

Tom Matuszko, Executive Director  
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 September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

Roger B. moved to approve the minutes from September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Ben L. seconded. No discussion. The motion passed, with Chris Rembold abstaining.

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

No comments from public.

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

**Berkshire Benchmarks** – There were 18 responses to the RFP for the new website. The selected vendor is Badie Design, teaming up with The Simple View for the data side. Mark Maloy shared a preliminary draft of the new BerkshireBenchmarks.org homepage and described the components that will be presented through the new site. Construction of the site is beginning now and should be live by mid-April. There is also a qualitative survey active now. All households in Berkshire County will receive a postcard in the next week. An initial email alert regarding the survey has already garnered over 1200 responses, with a good distribution of ages, income levels, etc. The intention is to have a convening also in April to present the new website, unveil survey results, and distribute a State of the Region report.

**Technical Assistance for Businesses** – Ben Lamb reported that the Berkshire Economic Recovery Project has now completed its first round of contracts with presenters. Through the end of December, 7 or 8 cohorts have been conducted, with attendees then being able to access one-on-one technical assistance support. Two presenters will continue into the next round of sessions, and two additional presenters will be added. We are currently looking for Spanish-speaking TA providers. The next round of cohorts will begin in early February. Laura B. added that the TA organizers are interested in suggestions for topics and presenters for 2022. There are substantial funds set aside in the project for this work.

**Technical Assistance for Municipalities** – Laura B. reminded the group about previous discussions of one-on-one TA being provided on an as-needed basis, and the Recovery & Resilience e-newsletter which is being sent to town administrators/managers, planning board chairs, and select board chairs. BRPC staff has also recently begun working on a “Toolkit” project, comprised of 2-page summaries of a wide range of economic development strategies that municipalities have at their disposal. All Toolkit items will be posted on [www.berkshireplanning.org](http://www.berkshireplanning.org) and sent via the Resilience e-newsletter. Laura shared draft examples related to Accessory Dwelling Units and Affordable Housing Trusts, and described some additional topics which will be addressed, such as the state’s PACE program and Vacant Storefront Program. Committee members are invited to suggest additional topics. Ben Sosne suggested that PACE could also be presented as a TA session, either in-person or via Zoom. Wylie Goodman suggested Business Improvement Districts as a Toolkit topic.

**Long-term Resiliency Planning** – Wylie G. described a survey that the working group has developed which will be used to facilitate interviews with leaders in our priority industries as well as other areas of interest or concern. Wylie shared some example questions with the group and collected suggestions of additional questions related to assistance and relief funding received.

**Project Identification and Support** – Mark Phillips and Shannon Smith from Berkshire Agricultural Ventures provided an update regarding recently awarded USDA grants. Shannon first gave an overview of BAV’s mission and lending programs. They manage a \$400,000 revolving loan fund as well as other programs containing capital BAV is eager to put to work. They are looking to grow their client pipeline and Shannon encouraged referrals. Mark described USDA grants totaling \$1.5 million which BAV is currently administering.

Regional Food Systems Partnership – focused on livestock support program. BAV looks closely at meat processing issues and works to identify solutions. Three primary objects are to 1. Help fund existing livestock support program, 2. Pursue significant grant funding that is available for livestock producers and processing facilities, and 3. Launch a working group in partnership with Berkshire Grown to work across the value chain to improve the quality of communication and coordination across partners.

Local Food Promotion Program – longstanding USDA program, this project is to support the growth of a virtual food marketplace and distribution platform. Partnering with Berkshire Organics to drive local food sales and improve year-round market opportunities.

Laura B. stated that BAV staff were invited because BRPC and 1Berkshire are named as partners in the RFSP scope, but also because food access and security are topics that will be addressed in the resiliency chapter of the CEDS. The working group's next meeting on February 2<sup>nd</sup> will include guests from BAV as well as several other organizations working in the food and agriculture realm. From there, a focus group will expand further the number of people and perspectives being taken into consideration for resiliency planning.

## **V. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS**

Laura B. explained that the next 5-year CEDS will be written during 2022. It will be in effect from 2023 to 2027. There is a pending application to EDA to support work on the CEDS. The committee will need to meet more frequently during the CEDS development process. There is currently a delay in the release of ACS data, so much of the work on documenting and analysis will need to occur in the second half of the year. We will again solicit Priority Projects as has been done during intervening years since the last CEDS. The CEDS goals will be able to be renewed or revamped during this process. Discussion of 2023-2027 CEDS goals will be a major portion of the next few meetings.

## **VI. Adjournment**

Ben L. moved to adjourn the meeting. Heather B. seconded the motion. The motion passed and the meeting was adjourned at 2:41.