



CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

June 15, 2022

I. Call to Order

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. and recorded attendance via roll call.

Committee Members Present

George Ambriz, Berkshire Community College
Roger Bolton, Williams College (Retired)
Mike Coakley, City of Pittsfield
John Duval, Town of Adams/BRPC Commission Chair
A.J. Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council
Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, CEDS Chair
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington
Tom Matuszko, BRPC Executive Director
Laurie Mick, PERC
Mike Nuvallie, City of North Adams
Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center
Christina Wynn, Berkshire Community College

Committee Alternates Present

Rebecca Lilly, MassHire
Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

Not Present

Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society at Arrowhead
Heather Boulger, MassHire
Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network
Ian Rasch, Alander Construction
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington

BRPC Staff Present

Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager
Wylie Goodman, Senior Economic Development Planner

Guests Present

Jacob Hane, 1Berkshire

II. Approval of Minutes from May 18th, 2022

Kevin P. made a motion to approve the minutes from May 18th, 2022. Ben L. seconded. The minutes were approved by roll call vote. Roger B, Jim L., and Christina W. abstained.

III. Comments from the Public

There were no comments from the public.

IV. EDA CARES Act Grant Update - *Agility & Resilience in Berkshire County: Public and Private Sector Preparedness*

Recovery Project Support – 1Berkshire REDO projects

Ben L. shared information about two rounds of REDO applications to Mass Office of Business Development (MOBD). The first round funded translation services with B Lang Mgmt. and Berkshire Immigrant Center. The second round included three projects particularly relevant to the CEDS group: 1Berkshire is working with BRPC on Outdoor Recreation asset mapping, with a focus on connecting with centers of commerce more directly. They also received funding for a “Best Foot Forward” Facade Improvement micro-grant program across region. They identified 31 to be awarded- no single municipalities received more than \$5K of total. Organizations were awarded up to \$1K with a focus on first-floor front-facing facades. Most used the money to do professional window cleaning, tile power-washing, painting, some signage, outdoor seating, lighting, etc. The money cannot be used for construction. Businesses are putting in their own money too.

1Berkshire is also subcontracting with BRPC to develop a permitting guide in North Adams. This project will hopefully serve as a model for other municipalities. Project includes digitizing forms and consolidating business information for start-ups and businesses seeking to expand.

Additional REDO awards included a banner project in Williamstown, a signage project in Adams, and creative placemaking initiative in Great Barrington to add art to electrical boxes downtown.

FY22 funding will extend slightly into FY23, but most work will be completed by early fall 2022. Most projects were driven by the LRRP program work done in 2021 for which BRPC served as consultant. These were lower cost but high impact projects with a quick turnaround.

Technical Assistance & Capacity Building – Planning Toolkit

The Planning Toolkit contains two-page tip sheets about how to make use of/adapt different economic development tools. These are currently housed on the BRPC website. Laura B. showed some sample toolkits created in partnership with the Community Planning staff at BRPC. The toolkit is starting to be well-populated, but BRPC hopes to continue providing these on a wider range of topics. People can contact Laura B. with ideas for other topics not currently represented.

V. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS

a. Vision Statement

Laura B. had sent out excerpt from last five-year CEDS including vision statement with meeting materials, and also put the vision statement into the chat and shared her screen so that others could generate revisions to the statement. We generated a word cloud of concepts people would like to see associated with the Berkshires. Examples included manufacturing, affordable living, equitable, quality of life, hub for rural innovation, high-tech manufacturing capacity, paper and printing, General Dynamics, medical devices, etc., inclusive and welcoming, accessible local food, outdoor recreation, a place to live and work, raise a family, educational and cultural, and tenacious.

b. Summary Background

Laura B. shared work she is doing to summarize demographic data about Berkshire County. This information is part of the review process and needs to be completed before we share with the general public for comment. The CEDS report will need to be more compacted than it has been in the past. Beyond Priority Projects, this has typically been the longest section of the report and took up the most space in the past. EDA is encouraging that we instead keep the report concise, readable, and engaging. If we have additional information or other ways to look at data, we can put that in the back of the CEDS in an Appendix.

Roger B. suggested, given the perennial problem with introducing data, that we start with a few words about how the data that follow relate to the SWOT. Laura B. suggested to take interview content through resiliency planning side of things to extract quotes reflective of the data to tie it back to lived experience of people we've interviewed and put it beside the data to reinforce it and make it personal. Roger B. asked if we are able to include illustrations, which we are permitted and encouraged to do. We can use more photographs and infographics in this version. EDA guidance is to make it as engaging and interesting and visually appealing within our scope as possible. Wylie G. mentioned that she visited Williams College and talked with their CLIA (Center for Learning and Action) program and suggested maybe even making a short video about CEDS to give people a brief overview of community, what people can do to get involved. Laura shared that part of our funding supports us taking elements of CEDS and breaking them out into more digestible pieces for use on website, and social media. The document is the core of our obligation, but we are also being encouraged to do more user-friendly things.

c. SWOT Analysis

Laura B. touched on the Strengths section of the CEDS which is now written in a narrative style she believes to be aligned EDA guidance about being more engaging. The previous SWOT section was presented topic by topic and went on for many pages. Laura B. shared her screen to show the narrative Wylie has been developing, which had also been distributed ahead of the meeting, and asked for suggestions about specific phrasing or how the document is presented. Roger B. suggested that we mention advanced manufacturing capacity. Michael C. agreed. Roger B. made a second suggestion to mention educational institutions as well as the cultural institutions. Ben L. pointed out that MCLA and BCC are a recruitment and retention piece-keeping talent here- just as critical. Laura B. mentioned that we may also be overlooking high-

school level programs like Miss Halls and Berkshire School. Ben S. said he thought of summer camps in the Berkshires as one of the reasons why people come to live here. In looking at what was highlighted as farm heritage, Shannon S. suggested it might be better to expand the concept and rephrase. Roger B. then suggested the population section be clarified as it may currently be misleading. A.J. E. said that we should be specific in stating how we're aiming to serve under-represented groups and working to improve the quality of life for minorities and racial minorities specifically. He also suggested that this be included in the Vision statement. Shannon S. suggested this be included in the Strengths section, and Wylie G. suggested it may be more of an opportunity, and that we include it in our Vision Statement as something to pursue. Jim L. brought up the remote work theme, specifically the prevalence of high-speed internet in rural communities as a strength, noting that larger communities do not always have the same strengths as the smaller communities and noted Mt. Washington as a good example of that ability to reliably work from home. He also noted that the downside of improvements in remote work from home is a rise in the cost of housing, making it unaffordable for people to live in the region. Wylie G. asked others to send suggestions/feedback to her and Laura B. after the meeting, particularly comments regarding readability.

d. Goals and Objectives

Laura B. noted that those will be generated from the SWOT process. The group noted under the Strengths column that we had not yet addressed some specifics such as institutions of higher education, schools, camps, advanced manufacturing, and high-tech work and high-speed fiber in rural communities. These will be included in the next draft. The group will look at the subsequent portions of the SWOT so that goals and objectives will continue to be derived from that process.

e. Priority Project Solicitation

The group received an update on the Priority Project Solicitation. We list projects in the CEDS that are important on a regional scale (either construction-based or programmatic) and then we have sections for Northern, Central, and Southern Berkshire projects. Projects under those subcategories can similarly be construction or programmatic. We are starting anew with our project list, so even if people have had a project listed in the CEDS in the past or in an annual report, they should fill out the online form again and/or confirm whether older projects should be carried forward. So far, we have five submissions. They include 1) Site 9 at William Stanley Business Park; 2) brownfields program run by BRPC; and 3) White Terrace; 4) Wright Building; and 5) Springside House (all in Pittsfield). Laura B. is continuing to do outreach to project proponents to try and get submissions in soon. At the next meeting on July 13, the group will vote on everything we have by that date. We will probably not have an opportunity to vote on another group of submissions until September, so everyone is encouraged to get things in by July 13 to get as many things voted and approved as possible.

Wylie G. asked representatives from Pittsfield and North Adams if they have mapped a radius from their walkable/bikeable downtown regarding empty lots or properties that could be upzoned or redeveloped for multi-use housing if we wanted to encourage downtown-centric redevelopment projects. Michael C. said that he was not aware of that in Pittsfield. Michael N. from North Adams said that they have developed a downtown cycle track in the area to encourage smart-growth zoning for developers to do more downtown housing.

Laura B. described a recent conversation with Pittsfield staff about priority projects during which we discussed general priority concepts listed in the last CEDS, such as adaptive reuse of mills, that allowed us to identify major areas of redevelopment in a broad way. Laura B. asked if there are other conceptual projects (i.e., projects that affect multiple sites) that we can organize or turn into a priority project such as EV charging stations/hybrid vehicles, use of renewable energy throughout the county in appropriate locations. In response, Jim L. brought up concerns regarding the lack of strategy for renewable resources (i.e., solar in random places). Ben L. agreed but did not know who the owner would be on an initiative of that scale. Laura B. said that, given the level of control that each municipality has over how solar is zoned and permitted, it would be a challenge to include as a priority project, but incorporating discussion of being strategic around this subject is important.

Laura B. reiterated that she is leaning towards phasing out those previous general entries (i.e., adaptive reuse of mills, cottages, and historic homes) and looking at more of these pertinent and timely issues like renewable energy, electric vehicle infrastructure, and workforce housing. Roger B. asked if BRPC has thought about getting funding to look at these regional issues similar to what was done in the past regarding water/sewer but instead focused on renewable energy and specifically solar. Laura B. said she did not know but she would circle back with Tom M.

VI. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, July 13th at 1 p.m. and will be critical as we will have materials for people to vote on at that meeting. There were no final questions or comments. Roger B. made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ben L. seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:04 pm.