



CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Virtual Meeting via Zoom

July 13, 2022

I. Call to Order

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:02 p.m. and recorded attendance via roll call.

Committee Members Present

Roger Bolton, Williams College (Retired)
A.J. Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council
Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network
Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, CEDS Chair
Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society at Arrowhead
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire
Tom Matuszko, BRPC Executive Director
Laurie Mick, PERC
Ian Rasch, Alander Construction
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington
Debra Sarlin, Berkshire Community College
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

Committee Alternates Present

Ciana Barbera, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

Not Present

George Ambriz, Berkshire Community College
Heather Boulger, MassHire
Mike Coakley, City of Pittsfield
John Duval, Town of Adams/BRPC Commission Chair
Jim Lovejoy, Town of Mt. Washington
Mike Nuvalle, City of North Adams
Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures

BRPC Staff Present

Laura Brennan, Economic Development Program Manager

Guests Present

Ed Abrahams, Great Barrington Select Board
Jacob Hane, 1Berkshire
Marcus Lyon, 1Berkshire
Shaw Izikson, Berkshire Edge
Brittany Polito, iBerkshires.com

II. Approval of Minutes from June 15th, 2022

Ben L. made a motion to approve the minutes from May 18th, 2022. Keith G. seconded. The minutes were approved by roll call vote. Chris R., Keith G., Ian R. and 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*

a. Technical Assistance & Capacity Building

Level Up Series/Nonprofit Center of the Berkshires

Laura B. shared an update on behalf of Liana Toscanini of NPC, which is coordinating about 25 workshops around fundraising, grant writing, governance, and marketing for small- to medium-sized non-profits. These will be launched in September and will run through December 2022. Special effort is being made to reach out to very small, volunteer-led groups in the region. Faculty will include local and regional experts. Expressions of interests have been gathered through an online form. Both daytime and evening classes will be offered. Classes will dovetail with other work being done at BRPC with regional partners to establish a Recovery Grants Specialist and online clearinghouse.

MCPPO Training for Municipal Staff

Laura also shared that BRPC will be partnering with the Office of the Inspector General to cover the costs of trainings within their MCPPO courses in the fall of 2022. These are largely procurement and contract management focused courses, but also include topics such as cybersecurity.

V. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS

a. Vision Statement

Laura B. shared her screen and led members to page 21 of the July 8th draft CEDS document. During the previous meeting, we looked at the 2017 Vision Statement, and through a brainstorm using the Zoom Chat feature, developed ideas to develop a new 2023 Vision Statement. Since then, Laura and Wylie G. formulated a draft Vision Statement comprised of three sentences – the first addressing people, the second addressing communities throughout the region, and the third addressing economy.

The group discussed this draft and the exploration underneath on page 21. Roger Bolton expressed concern about opening the list of bullet statements by naming one of the region's main problems. Laura B. explained that each bullet in the bullet list is meant to begin with posing a "negative" challenge, followed by a reframing of that challenge in a more positive way. She also noted that a better description is needed before the bullet list so that readers will experience a better lead-in and understand the format more readily. Chris R. indicated that he does not feel the negative framing needs to be included at all, and that each bullet point could simply state the

positive vision moving forward. Ben L. stated that the existing challenges could be articulated before the bullet list rather than within it. Ben S. expressed concern that the current approach may be missed by some casual readers, causing concern. Roger B. suggested a softening by moving the recognition of the challenge to the end of the bullet point. Keith asked whether the order of the Vision Statement bullet points are intended to follow the People/Community/Economy pyramid. If so, they may be clearer if broken out into sections. Deb S. suggested separating the three sentences of the core Vision Statement, which would help lead the reader into the sectionalized exploration below.

b. Summary Background

Laura B. indicated that this section is still being worked on internally. She asked for any major edits that people wanted to bring to her attention while it is in process. Deb S. stated that she has notes from pages 11-13 and asked what the preference is for receiving edits. Laura indicated that in some cases edits are workshopped with the full group, but if there are multiple notes an email with a list of suggestions is also welcome.

c. SWOT Analysis

Laura B. summarized work that has been done since feedback that was received during the June meeting and asked for additional input from the group. Deb S. complimented the explanation of the importance of access to culture. Chris R. complimented the formatting approach, especially of bolding key words. Deb S. asked for more information about poor health outcomes in the Weaknesses section. Roger B. expressed concern around the phrasing “poor health”, which in everyday parlance has a different connotation than in Public Health terminology. Opioid issues have not yet been mentioned. Under Opportunities, Deb S. reminded the group about ARPA workforce training funds coming to BCC to help address a regional weakness. Keith G. suggested that public transportation should be mentioned under Weaknesses in addition to Threats. Chris R. said the same thing about Housing; Ian R. reinforced this with national data about lags in housing production. An item for the ability to work remotely/digital economy needs to be added under Opportunities. New sub-headings need to be added in Threats for Services/Support, Housing, Supply Chain issues. Keith G. mentioned inflationary pressures related to the cost of loans, fuel, and food. Ben L. indicated that underwriting requirements have become more stringent and burdensome. Roger B. suggested a statement around our regional vulnerability to national trends (small, not particularly well diversified), and the need to be able to adjust to the national business cycle. Ian shared that there are far fewer funding sources than in other areas where he works, which speaks to Roger’s concern.

d. Priority Projects

Kyle H. explained that while we will vote on a number of Priority Project submissions today, there will be additional opportunities for project proponents to submit a proposal. The group first voted on carry-over projects from the previous CEDS as a block, and then vote on new proposals individually. Laura B. suggested removing the Pittsfield Police Station from the batch of returning projects, for possible consideration in a listing where it is combined with other municipal facilities. The group concurred. Chris R. made a motion to approve eighteen previously approved projects were approved for inclusion in the 2023-2027 list, Roger B.

seconded. These were approved by roll call vote. The following newly proposed projects were also approved by roll call vote:

Community Center at 20 East Street in Adams – Keith G. made motion, Chris R. seconded

Redevelopment of Adams Theater – Ben L. made motion, Keith G. seconded

CDCSB Small Business Assistance – Roger B. made motion, Ben L. seconded. The amendment was made that this may need to be grouped with other examples of technical assistance, accepted by Roger and seconded by Ben.

Curtis Fine Paper Redevelopment – Ben L. made motion, Chris R. seconded

The following were not voted on due to lack of quorum:

Digital and Tech Enabled Economy –

Farm to Food Access

Farm Access Conservation

Union Block Redevelopment

VIM Facility Expansion

Wahconah Park

Remaining attendees discussed the possibility of combining certain projects under a few common themes, such as food access and security, municipal facilities, etc. Laura B. will make suggestions during the next meeting, depending on what comes in by the July 29th deadline.

e. **Goals and Strategies**

Revisions to Goals and Strategies were not addressed in depth at this meeting, Laura requested notes and edits via direct email.

VI. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held Wednesday, September 21 at 1 p.m. Ben L. made a motion to adjourn the meeting. AJ E. seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:22 pm.