

## **CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

*Virtual Meeting via Zoom*  
April 10, 2024

### Committee Members Present

George Abriz, BCC  
Roger Bolton, BRPC  
Michael Coakley, City of Pittsfield  
Linda Clairmont, BCC  
Malcolm Fick, BRPC Chair (ex-officio non-voting member)  
Keith Girouard, Massachusetts Small Business Development Network  
Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society  
Kyle Hanlon, BRPC, CEDS Chair  
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire  
Bryana Malloy, MassHire Berkshires  
Tom Matuszko, BRPC Executive Director  
Mike Nuvalle, City of North Adams  
Laurie Mick, PERC (Pittsfield Economic Development Corporation)  
Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures  
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

### Committee Alternates Present

Justine Dodds, City of Pittsfield  
Maureen McLaughlin, BCC  
Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

### Committee Members Absent

A.J. Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council  
Ian Rasch, Alander Construction  
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington

### BRPC Staff Present

Laura Brennan, Assistant Director & Economic Development Program Manager  
Wylie Goodman, Senior Economic Development Planner

### Guests Present

Cody Chamberlain, 1Berkshire ERC Fellow  
Alex LaValley, 1Berkshire  
Lillian Zavatsky, Brien Center

## **I. Call to Order**

Kyle H. called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m. Laura B. conducted a roll call vote to confirm attendance.

## **II. Approval of Minutes from January 31, 2023**

George A. made a motion to approve the minutes. Ben L. seconded the motion. The motion was approved by a roll call vote.

Abstentions:

Linda Clairmont.

### III. Economic Recovery Corps/1Berkshire – Cody Chamberlain, ERC Fellow

Cody Chamberlain has been in his position for approximately two months. His position will last for two and a half years. Funding for his role is derived from the CARES Act to support economic recovery. The federal government looked at areas of the country that were struggling economically prior to the pandemic and which are still struggling post-pandemic. The federal government selected 65 economic development fellows to work with those communities to develop projects proposed to have a positive economic impact. 1Berkshire proposed a focus on the entrepreneurship pipeline to help individuals hoping to go from starting up to running a sustainable business that would employ people. Cody C. will be working with 1Berkshire for the next 2.5 years on that pipeline project, including an internship to lower the barriers to entrepreneurship for young people, giving young people skills, working with organizations that serve underserved populations, and connecting with entrepreneurs already active in the county. He is currently working to understand the ecosystem. One partner organization is the National Association of Development Organizations (NADO), which has encouraged him to learn about the CEDS and how to leverage it to apply for more federal resources using the CEDS as a guide. He grew up in Western Michigan and attended MIT's Urban Planning Program with a focus on education and economic development and preparing youth for entrepreneurship with a focus on fostering sustainable creative problem-solving. He has also worked on local programming and politics in Boston. Cody C. shared his email with attendees.

### IV. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS – Year 1 PPR to EDA

#### i. Summary Background Data – overview

- Laura B. shared a PDF draft and reported that BRPC is more than 80% done with what we need to submit to EDA by June 30<sup>th</sup>. We can now align data with the latest American Community Survey data published in late 2022. Few trendlines for what we track have changed dramatically, but BRPC is evaluating items such as per capita income data and labor force participation rates. Two areas where Berkshire County has seen a faster rate of growth are median household income and per capita income; both have grown more than many neighboring communities. Laura also noted that while nearly the entire county qualified as economically distressed based on the unemployment rate (24-month data) when we submitted the CEDS, in 18 months, that has shifted dramatically, with only a few census tracts now qualifying under the per capita threshold. Roger B. asked about Hinsdale's higher unemployment rate, and Laura indicated that she will request more information from MassHire.

#### ii. Goals and Objectives – representative activity: Laura B. shared the goals again and noted which ones were new (i.e., not present in the previous CEDS), requiring reporting for the first time as new activities. Laura asked committee members to suggest additional representative activities to include in the upcoming report.

1. **Goal 1: Healthy People** – Shannon S. noted that more could be added under food access, including Berkshire Grown's Mobile Market, and will send information by email. Keith G. noted that there has been a surge of people opening wellness businesses and clinics in the region. Roger B. noted this was a positive sign that private businesses are seeing that there is a market for this. Kevin P. noted the expansion of supportive housing throughout the Berkshires, including affordable workforce housing (former Thornwood and Windflower Inns). Justine D. noted 41 new units at White Terrace in Pittsfield. Kyle H. noted BMC's campus and roadwork improvements. Ben L. added the extension of the rail trail and improved access to pedestrian mobility including an ADA-accessible route. Wylie G. suggested the \$2M philanthropic money recently

awarded to CATA for the Arts. Laura B. may reach out to members for more details.

2. **Goal 2: Resilient Communities** – New items mentioned in this section by attendees included: BCRHA Mediation and Consumer Advocacy (Laura B.), Pittsfield Housing Center (Wylie G.), the Pittsfield Cultural Plan currently under development (Lesley H.); and MBI funding for broadband (Wylie G.).
3. **Goal 3 – Future-Ready Workforce** - Items mentioned in this section by attendees included: The Manufacturing Academy at the BIC (Laura B.); Cody C’s position as the ERC Fellow (Ben L.); a new building nearing completion at McCann High School for expanded HVAC training (Kyle H.); Pathways Program (Wylie G.); Increased program access options for those interested in the building trades /apprenticeships (not specific to Berkshire County) but promotion has expanded to Berkshire County (Ben L.).
4. **Goal 4 – Strong Business Environment** – New or revised items mentioned in this section by attendees included: Redevelopment at Site 9 (Mike C.); Meat Processing and Specialty-Focused Roundtables at BAV (Ben L.; Shannon S.); Expanded Tech. Assistance Offerings Through 1Berkshire (Ben L.); The Façade Program (has been funded in the for two rounds with 70 businesses (Ben L.); TDI-Aligned Grants (e.g. Boost Grant) for North Street (Kevin P.); CDC and Northern Berkshire Chamber work (Laura B.).
5. **Goal 5 – Robust Infrastructure** – New or revised items mentioned in this section by attendees included: MassDOT projects which will be provided by BRPC Transportation staff (Laura B.); Tri-town Connector (micro-transit) (Laura B.); Advocacy around seasonal transportation offerings (Ben L.); broadband infrastructure (Ben L.); Hoosic River Flood Shoot (Tom M.); renewable energy projects (mostly private now) (Shannon S./Ben L.); renovations to electrical transmission infrastructure (Roger B.); Williams College building enlarged art museum (Roger B. / Laura B. suggested this might fit better under another category); Reconnecting Communities grant for City of North Adams and MassMOCA (Ben L.); re-opening of Triplex (Wylie G.); cybersecurity (Shannon S.).

iii. **Priority Projects – updates and new submissions**

There were 40-45 submissions – construction and programmatic - from across the region that were included in the 2023-27 CEDS. Each year we offer people the opportunity to remove, update, or add submissions. Three items were requested to be added this year.

- NbCC Community Resource Center – This was reviewed last time
- Blackshires Community Empowerment Foundation Success Impact Initiative – Questions about the cost of the project and measurable marks of progress were requested at the last meeting. Laura B. noted that she was delayed in getting questions to the group in time for this meeting. A vote can be held until the next meeting.
- MassMOCA – Creative Campus – Details were shared in the meeting notes provided to the group and reviewed again on the screen.

Keith G. had questions about the MassMOCA proposal to confirm the cost of \$40M and asked for more information to ensure it meets our criteria. Ben L. confirmed that work has been going on in the background at MassMOCA for a while and noted the cost of replacing windows as one example of where support was needed. He noted the Hoosic River running through the campus as a particular challenge. Roger B. agreed with Keith G. that it would be helpful to get specific examples of work that could be done to clarify the museum’s current phrasing. Keith G. requested criteria that the group could use to inform the group’s decision-

making. Ben L. stated that not all past proposals have requested or required that level of specificity. Laura B. noted that past proposals have had as their criteria that the proposed project would have an impact on the region economically and affect more than one town. Keith G. felt it would be helpful to have a checklist to ensure equity across projects. Kyle H. asked if EDA has its own criteria. Laura B. stated that they do not, and that this section is now optional, although EDA required it in the past. She reinforced that being on the list does not guarantee federal EDA funding.

- **New submission 1:** Northern Berkshire Community Coalition Resource Center – Roger B felt their submission was sufficiently detailed. Roger B made a motion to approve. Michael C. seconded. Ben L. abstained. The motion was approved by a roll call vote.
  - **New submission 2** Blackshires Community Empowerment Foundation – Success Impact Initiative. The group decided to hold a vote on this until the next meeting to await background information from Blackshires.
  - **New submission 3:** MASS MoCA Creative Campus – This will be postponed until May for a vote.
- iv. Adjournment – Roger B. made a motion to adjourn. Mike C. seconded the motion. The meeting adjourned at 2:06 pm following a roll call vote.
- v. Next Meeting – May 8, 2024, at 1 pm