BRPC
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

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CEDS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES - APPROVED
Virtual Meeting via Zoom
1pm, May 6, 2026

Committee Members Present
Bryana (Malloy) Bayly, MassHire Berkshires
Roger Bolton, Williams College (retired)
Robert DelMastro, Massachusetts Small Business Development Center
A.J. Enchill, Berkshire Black Economic Council
Brandon Gill, PERC (Pittsfield Economic Development Corporation)
Kyle Hanlon, City of North Adams; BRPC Executive Committee
Lesley Herzberg, Berkshire County Historical Society
Ben Lamb, 1Berkshire
Marya Kozik, City of North Adams
Chris Rembold, Town of Great Barrington, CEDS Committee Chair
Shannon Smith, Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Ben Sosne, Berkshire Innovation Center

Committee Alternates Present
Kevin Pink, 1Berkshire

Committee Members Absent
Linda Clairmont, Berkshire Community College
Tova Clark Brown, Berkshire Black Economic Council
Michael Coakley, City of Pittsfield
Malcolm Fick, BRPC Chair (ex-officio non-voting member)

BRPC Staff Present
Laura Brennan, Executive Director
Wylie Goodman, Principal Planner

Guests Present
Rania Makham, LICSW

I. Call to Order and Roll Call
Chris R. called the meeting to order at 1:01 p.m. once a quorum was reached. Laura B. conducted the roll call.

II. Acknowledgement of Guests/non-Committee Members
Rania Markham was welcomed by Chair Chris R.

III. Approval of Minutes of March 18, 2026, meeting
Ben L. moved to approve the minutes of the March 18, 2026, meeting. Roger B. seconded. Approval of the minutes was passed by roll call vote. Kyle H. abstained.

IV. 2023-2027 Berkshire County CEDS – Year 3 Performance Progress Report

a. **Overview of current document status** – Laura B. had shared a link via email to the draft CEDS report that will go before the full commission in late May. The draft features FY26 representative activities and the most recently available economic data. The only unconfirmed data is for 24-month unemployment, as we lack information from October 2025 due to the extended government shutdown. Until late April, we lacked January unemployment rates by town. Laura B. would like to refrain from finishing that section as long as possible so that the 24-month look back is as close as possible to the time of submission.

Next steps involve presenting the draft to the full BRPC Commission on May 21. It will then be submitted to the EDA at the end of June. Chris R. asked for comments. There were none. Chris R. asked for approval by the committee to move the CEDS draft forward. Kyle H. made a motion to approve. Ben L. seconded. Laura B. took a roll call vote. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. Chris R. asked Laura B. to send the committee the final version once done.

b. Further discussion and vote on New Priority Project submission:

i. **Submission 2** - Rania B. refreshed the group on her project's intent and how it would positively impact the region from an economic development perspective. Her nonprofit - Families Like Ours – has gone from serving 20 to 200 families and is serving closer to 600-700 individual people. Funding would help with issues related to healthcare and social assistance and help caregivers address burnout, provide emergency respite, address the gap in summer activities for children with disabilities, and provide stipends to families struggling financially. The project would also help families connect to resources in a one-stop shop model. The organization is particularly helpful for middle-class families who do not qualify for low-income support programs. Laura B. asked Rania to explain her organization's budget and budget sources. Their budget had gone from $15K in year one to $50K with funding coming from the Coolidge Hill Foundation, Price Chopper, Berkshire Taconic Foundation, and Berkshire United Way, among others. They also receive sponsorships, in-kind donations, and $20K from individual fundraising. Their model is similar to a Special Needs Resource Center. She explained that parents can train to be home health aides in Springfield. Rania M. noted, however, the many families they are not reaching and the high rates of family burnout due to parents' and children's intense needs, with funding failing to meet the level of need. Chris R. felt this project could fit under Healthy People and Workforce Development. Chris R. asked for a motion to include Renia's proposal as a CEDS' Priority Project. Roger B. made a motion to include it. Ben. S. seconded. Laura B. led a roll call vote, which was unanimously in favor.

V. Discussion regarding CEDS Committee participation in FY27

Since Malcolm F. was not present to appoint Laura B. as a voting member, she attended this meeting as non-voting staff. An appointment as a voting member is anticipated soon.

Wylie G., going forward, will perform Laura's meeting-related tasks as well as gathering and analyzing data. This change will apply to the current CEDS as well as the next five-year CEDS.

BRPC needs to provide an annual CEDS Performance Progress Report while simultaneously working on the five-year CEDS that will cover 2028-2032, with both needing to incorporate the most up-to-date data available.

The group will need to decide on goals for a future five-year CEDS which could mean, in calendar year 2027, the committee may need to meet more than the minimum of four times per year. Wylie G. and Laura B. will reach out to committee members to ask about their willingness to continue serving on the committee.

The last five-year CEDS included intense resiliency planning funded through the CARES Act, but the upcoming one lacks funding for that topic. Nonetheless, the next CEDS opens up the potential for the group to approach the task in a new way, for example, hosting focus groups and adding representatives from areas not currently present.

The CEDS is categorized as a special committee of BRPC, as opposed to a standing committee (standing committees are specifically named in BRPC's bylaws).

BRPC was recently invited to apply to EDA for Partnership Planning grant again, and we are waiting for approval of our three-year application. Roger B. asked for Laura B.'s impressions of EDA currently. Laura B. shared that BRPC is located within the Philadelphia Region, which covers the northeastern part of the country, including Massachusetts. However, the Philadelphia Office is currently being overseen by the Chicago Office because there is no director in Philadelphia. EDA has not rolled out new grant opportunities with the same frequency as in recent years, although this may be a result of pandemic relief funding winding down. There has been an attrition in staffing. She is still optimistic about the potential positive impacts of the reauthorization of EDA, including more favorable match rates, and an increase in the amounts EDDs are provided each year. Partnership Planning grants (three-year grants) are $70K per year, an amount that has not changed for many years. Reauthorization includes a proposed increase.

VI. Adjournment

Kyle H. moved to adjourn the meeting. Ben S. seconded. Laura B. took a roll call vote. The meeting adjourned at 1:47 p.m. The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.