



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	October 5, 2016
Time:	3:00 p.m.
Location:	12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA
Duration:	1.5 hours
Facilitator:	Gary Dillensneider, Chair

CEDS Committee Attendees:

- Bob Armstrong, Town of Conway
- Gary Dillensneider, Committee Chair, Franklin County Community Development Corporation
- Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Ann Hamilton, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce
- Tom Hutcheson, Franklin Regional Planning Board
- Larry Jutres, Town of Greenfield
- Mike McCusker, Town of Buckland
- Fran Pheeny, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority
- Walter Ramsey, Town of Montague
- Nan Riebschlaeger, Town of Wendell
- John Ryan, Town of New Salem
- Art Schwenger, Town of Heath
- Bryan Smith, Town of Erving
- Jerry Wagener, Town of Northfield

FRCOG Staff:

- Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager
- Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning and Development
- Alyssa Larose, Land Use Planner

Guests

- MJ Adams, Town of Greenfield
- Andrew Baker, Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Ann Deres, Franklin Hampshire Career Center
- Ethel Dillensneider, Greenfield resident
- Nancy Hazard, Greening Greenfield
- Brice Hereford, South River Sustainability
- Kristin Mehalick, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC)
- Laura Sibilia, Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC)

1 – Welcome and Introductions: Gary Dillensneider, Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3:03 p.m. by Chair G. Dillensneider. A round of introductions followed.

2 – Vote to approve minutes from May 24, 2016

At 3:04 p.m., T. Hutcheson MOVED to approve the May 24, 2016 minutes. N. Riebschlaeger SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

3 – Discussion of CEDS Program updates, including a review of the EDA's new Resiliency Strategy requirement.

Jessica Atwood announced that the FRCOG received a new EDA planning award. She noted there is a new online system to streamline the process contract reporting process, and that contract states the CEDS Annual Report is due by June 30th, though the Committee can set an earlier deadline. Atwood announced that the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC) is the lead on a regional grant application for the EDA i6 Challenge for cluster development. The FCCDC is partnering with Valley Venture Mentors, CISA, and the two regional planning agencies (FRCOG and PVPC), to target farm and food system start-up businesses. Awards are anticipated to be announced in October.

Atwood noted that the FRCOG is continuing work with its partners through the Tri-State Economic Development Initiative. A white paper documenting the lessons learned from the closure of the Vermont Yankee nuclear power plant will be released on October 14th. The paper describes what we wish we knew, and what we were grateful to have found out during the closure process. This fall the partners are also completing a comparison of the three regions' CEDS reports to see if there are areas for collaboration. Atwood will distribute the results of the comparison once completed. MJ Adams asked if John Mullin from UMass Amherst is writing the white paper. Atwood answered that the Windham Regional Commission was the lead with the other partners including the BDCC, FRCOG and Southwest Region Planning Commission contributing to the paper. The Institute for Host Nuclear Communities that John Mullin is associated with had input as well.

Atwood continued with CEDS Program updates. The Western Massachusetts Developers Conference was held at the MassMutual Center in Springfield in June. Over 400 people attended. The FRCOG staffed a table, and ten Franklin County sites with contact information were included on a Featured Sites Map in the exhibit area. The CEO panel included the CEO from Berkshire East. The conference highlighted the amount of development work happening in the Pioneer Valley region, totaling about \$5 billion. A. Schwenger asked if communities unserved by broadband was mentioned. Atwood responded it may been discussed at the CEO Panel, but she was not in the room and there were no specific sessions about broadband at the conference.

Atwood stated that new business succession planning workshops were held by the FCCDC in Greenfield and North Adams for business owners. She presented a list of other upcoming business assistance workshops in the region. Atwood noted that the FCCDC is also working with Valley Venture Mentors to help entrepreneurs with their pitches for investors at the Slow Money Farm and Food Entrepreneur Showcase on October 20th at Smith College. The showcase is specific to farm and

food system businesses, and is an example of the array of technical assistance resources working with this cluster and connecting businesses to potential capital.

Atwood presented recent and upcoming FRCOG transportation planning activities related to tourism and the outdoor recreation cluster. This planners are completing mapping of walking trails and an inventory of public access points to these activities. Coming this year is the creation of a bicycle tourism plan, including marketing and an exploration of the economics of bicycle touring. Another project is working on enhancing visitor use of passenger rail, which will include an event to bring stakeholders together. A. Hamilton asked whether Amtrak Vermonter ridership is still full. Atwood did not have that data, but responded she has heard that the ridership is exceeding expectations.

Atwood stated that the EDA is now requiring a Resiliency Strategy component to the annual CEDS report addressing how a region can be resilient against economic disruption or shocks. Examples of disruptions or shocks include national or international economic events, industry-specific downturns, closure of a significant economic driver, or a natural or man-made disaster. According to EDA, regions need to be able to recover quickly, withstand, and avoid economic shocks. EDA recommends two types of initiatives to be addressed: steady state initiatives and responsive states initiatives. Atwood noted that the current CEDS report incorporates some resiliency elements, such as an established regional cooperative framework, the clusters strategy of economic diversification, and the strategy to support businesses in being resilient to future disruptions. Atwood presented several activities to consider for the coming year, including identifying threats, better understanding current emergency preparedness initiatives in the region and their connection to the business community, and enhancing responsive-state initiatives.

T. Hutcheson stated that integration with current emergency preparedness initiatives would be great, and mentioned multi-coordination being developed by FRCOG and the Franklin County Food Study as initiatives to tie into. A. Schwenger noted that the most effective economic tool in a rural region is broadband and that good communications would enhance resiliency. A. Hamilton asked what the interface with FEMA is, and how to better integrate their services with local services after an event.

M. McCusker stated that the last time there was a train derailment in Charlemont, there was no cell service for the engineer to call for help. In addition the train was blocking emergency vehicle access but that nobody had this information. As the Bridge of Flowers race director, every year he works with the incident management team, who are very professional. This year they couldn't afford to bring them back, so had a lack of communication about potential accidents.

J. Wagener asked if a disaster like the electrical grid going down for a three month period would be too big a problem for the CEDS report to deal with, or if it is worth including. Atwood answered that the report should include infrastructure redundancy, including the grid, but that she would find out more.

4 – Introduction to *The Ecovation Hub*, a green economy cluster development project, and an asset mapping exercise for Franklin County

Atwood introduced Laura Sibilia and Kristin Mehalick of the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation (BDCC) to talk about the Ecovation Hub green economy cluster development project. L. Sibilia stated that their region has identified three priority sectors to focus job growth: green building, health care, and precision manufacturing. Implementation projects for their CEDS included a cluster

analysis and accelerator feasibility study and a SWOT analysis with the Tri-State partners to collaborate on the green building cluster. A Tri-State team was formed and kicked off the cluster analysis in January. The team includes national leaders in the industry. The emphasis of the project is to connect resources in the region. The purpose of the asset mapping is to identify unique assets in the Franklin County region. They have found that through conducting asset mapping sessions, the real knowledge is at the Town level. They want to identify what sets the region apart in the green industry. An asset mapping session was completed in Bennington County, and will be completed in Cheshire County. The intention is to compile the results to have a better picture of the assets across the region.

The L. Sibilina led participants in the asset mapping exercise. Examples of green building and sustainable businesses, organizations, programs, and leaders in the field were identified. K. Mehalick documented the responses given so that they may be shared with the cluster team. There was a question about a previous brainstorming session. L. Sibilina answered that the information collected previously was not broken down by region, but by industry. The purpose of this exercise is to dive deeper into region-specific assets and in particular those at the municipal level.

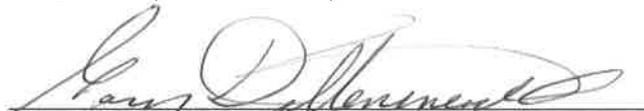
After the asset mapping exercise was completed, L. Sibilina stated that on October 18th, a milestone event will be held where teams working on this initiative will come together to present their business opportunities and potential for new business growth. The event is a networking and connecting opportunity. Atwood thanked Sibilina and Mehalick.

5 - Other Business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance, and Adjourn

G. Dillensneider asked if there is any other business. Being none, he asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

N. Riebschlaeger MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 4:42 p.m. T. Hutcheson SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED.

Respectfully submitted by:



Gary Dillensneider, Chair