



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

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| Date: | April 25, 2018 |
| Time: | 3:30 p.m. |
| Location: | 12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA |
| Duration: | 1.5 hours |
| Facilitator: | Gary Dillensneider, Chair |

CEDS Committee Attendees:

- Jim Basford, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Natalie Blais, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce
- Patricia Crosby, Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Gary Dillensneider, Committee Chair, Franklin County Community Development Corporation
- Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Martha Field, Greenfield Community College
- Tom Hutcheson, Franklin Regional Planning Board
- Adrienne Bedaw, Town of Orange

FRCOG Staff:

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

Guests:

- Bryan Smith, Town of Erving
- Brianna Drohen, LaunchSpace Inc.
- Alec MacLeod, LaunchSpace Inc.
- Sean O'Donnell, LaunchSpace Inc.
- Mark Wright, LaunchSpace Inc.

1 – Call the meeting to order, and round of introductions: Gary Dillensneider, Chair

The meeting was called to order at 3:35 p.m. by Chair G. Dillensneider. A round of introductions followed.

2 – Vote to approve minutes from February 28, 2018

No vote was taken due to a lack of a quorum.

3 – CEDS Program Update: 2018 Annual Report Preview

J. Atwood presented CEDS program updates. Atwood provided an overview of the draft 2018 CEDS Annual Report. This will be the third update to the 2015 CEDS Plan. The Report includes demographic and economic data for the region and updates on key economic development programs and projects. Completing the Annual Report maintains the region's eligibility for select EDA funding programs. A draft Report will be released on May 11 for a 30 day public comment period. At the next CEDS Committee meeting on June 13th, the Committee will review and vote on the Annual Report.

Atwood presented the vision from the 2015 Plan, and provided highlights from the annual update. A map was created based on the MBI Last Mile presentation at the February CEDS Committee meeting that shows the various broadband options being pursued by towns in the region. The map is being vetted by MBI and Atwood hopes to include it in this year's Annual Report. In terms of demographic and economic data, Franklin County experienced a 3% decline in population from 2015 to 2016, while the CEDS Region saw a 1% decrease in population. Unemployment rates remain low, and are lower than the State and national rates. Since the last Annual Report, the labor force and the number of people employed in the region have grown.

T. Hutcheson asked if there are reliable estimates for unemployment rates. P. Crosby answered that when the number of people who are available to work but who are not currently looking for work is included, the unemployment rate is often doubled. If underemployed individuals are included, the rate would be even higher, especially in our region. Atwood noted that the increase in the labor force is due to people re-entering the workforce, not necessarily new people moving into the region to work.

Atwood stated that income and wages increased slightly but remain significantly less than the State, and slightly higher than the nation. Private sector industry data shows an increase in the health care and social assistance industry, which is now larger than manufacturing, which also experienced an increase in employment. Private sector education services also increased, while retail trade and accommodation and food services industries declined. The top traded clusters, which sell outside and inside the region, were distribution and electronic commerce, which includes wholesale trade. The region's strongest clusters, which have a higher concentration than the nation, but not necessarily the most jobs in the region, remain the same as last year. These include apparel, marketing, paper and packaging, plastics, recreational goods, and upstream metals. There was a question about the recreational and small electric goods cluster and what is included. Atwood answered this may include decorative items and candles, but does not include recreational services. It was noted that it would be helpful if the Report better clarified what industries are included in each cluster.

A new chapter will be added on economic resilience. The 2015 CEDS Plan included a strategic goal and action items related to economic resilience, including a workshop held this year on emergency preparedness for businesses. However, EDA would like more focus on the region's ability to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from an economic shock or disruption. These disruptions could be from natural or manmade disasters, or significant economic shifts, like losing a major employer. The chapter will look at vulnerabilities and impacts, and describe the role of organizations and how they fit into the emergency preparedness ecosystem. The region and FRCOG are very active in emergency preparedness and resiliency, which will be described in the chapter. In addition the chapter will explore how the business community can be more involved in resiliency, and how to build relationships between disciplines.

The next chapter in the report identifies strategies and action items, and includes updates on the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint, Middle Skills Manufacturing Initiative, the Western MA Developers Conference, the update to the Industrial Park Inventory, work completed at brownfields sites, co-working and collaborative workspace grant awards, the emergency preparedness business workshop, and the FCCDC lending program. L. Dunlavy suggested adding opportunity zones to this chapter, which is a federal tax incentive designation for low income census tracts. Eleven towns applied and all were designated.

P. Crosby noted that the Middle Skills Manufacturing Initiative has an 84% placement rate in the Pioneer Valley. Atwood commented on the FCCDC's PV Grows funding program. L. Dunlavy asked if information about Common Capital investments in our region is available. Atwood said she would look into it. Atwood then presented the 2018 Annual Report schedule. Once the draft Report is posted to the FRCOG website, Atwood will send an email to Committee members asking for comments before June 11th, which will be incorporated into the final version to be reviewed and voted on at the June 13 CEDS Committee meeting. Atwood presented the five year CEDS plan cycle. A new five year plan will be developed in 2019-2020 program year. CEDS Committee members have a three year term. Atwood would like to explore changing the terms to five years to line up with the planning cycle. She would also like to reexamine the Committee membership, which currently has 57 seats, with 28 people appointed. On average 11 people attend meetings. She would like to consider how to draw members in, and better engage businesses and partners in the region. EDA also recommends that CEDS region borders align with county borders. Atwood proposed an ad hoc committee be formed to brainstorm these issues and report back to the full Committee at the next meeting with ideas. Several Committee members volunteered. Atwood then presented upcoming events.

4 – Presentation of Prospective EDA Projects:

- **Redevelopment of former IP Millers Falls Papermill in Erving**
- **LaunchSpace, Inc. at the Orange Innovation Center**

At 4:09, J. Atwood introduced Bryan Smith, Town Administrator for the Town of Erving, to present on the redevelopment of the former International Paper mill in Millers Falls. Smith noted that FRCOG staff have been assisting with this project. The site is Town owned and one of the last mill sites in town. The 49 acre parcel abuts Route 2 and the landfill, and is accessed from one road. The redevelopment efforts have focused on a 6-acre parcel. The Millers River runs along approximately 5,000 feet, which the Town would like to preserve and promote for recreation and conservation.

Smith described the property. He said there are a complex of buildings, with a variety of ceiling and floor heights. Hazardous materials on the site are limited but there is a real danger of arson, requiring constant Town surveillance which is a drain on resources. The Town is working with MassDevelopment to get assistance for brownfields clean-up. Smith described the work that has been completed so far. In 2015, Tighe and Bond completed a study that evaluated various redevelopment scenarios, including residential and commercial and from full reuse to full demolition. Since then the Town received feedback from local manufacturers with interest in the site for light industrial. The Town commissioned another study to include light industrial uses, which was completed in 2017. This is the current focus for the site.

Moving forward the goals for the site are to complete the clean-up and selectively remove non-marketable buildings. Plans are to subdivide the property into several parcels, provide an additional access road, and reduce the wastewater treatment infrastructure which is overbuilt for future uses. Smith reviewed two development concepts which include either a mix of new construction and reuse of existing buildings, or all new construction. Smith said the Town is not interested in maintaining ownership of the site. The intent is to attract MassWorks funding to make it site ready. The Town has not made a decision on which development concept to pursue, but the Historic Commission and Planning Board have recommended saving a historic building on the site which would provide more square footage overall and more tax revenue than all new construction.

Smith presented probable costs for the two development scenarios. A warrant article is on Annual Town Meeting to pass a resolution to pursue a loan with very favorable repayment terms. The Town debated about trying again for a brownfields grant or to pursue the loan. The main issue is time, if the site were lost to arson, the clean-up would be huge. Atwood noted that the MassDevelopment loan, MassWorks grant, and EDA grant could help cover some of the public investment needed. The Town applied for an economic opportunity zone, and is also eligible for new market tax credits. The Town also has an attractive tax rate.

J. Basford commented that the plans look great, but he is concerned about industrial development along Route 2. Smith noted that this is a challenge and they are looking at ways to improve access to the site and appropriately route traffic. Most businesses interested in the site would likely use parcel trucks. J. Atwood thanked Smith for his presentation.

Atwood introduced the next presentation. Alec MacLeod and Brianna Drohen introduced themselves from LaunchSpace, Inc. LaunchSpace is a proposed makerspace to be located in the Orange Innovation Center (OIC). LaunchSpace has talked to many local makers and are establishing local partnerships that will utilize the space and provide trainings. LaunchSpace is taking a three-tiered approach. The first tier is a member-based set of shops, ranging from arts, robotics, a metalworking shop, and a woodworking shop. MacLeod explained that industrial skills are still in the area, this will help bring people together to share knowledge through classes, courses, and interaction with schools.

The second tier is workforce training and education. LaunchSpace is in conversations with Greenfield Community College, Mount Wachusett Community College, UMass, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and others to provide training in the space. A goal is to build a competent manufacturing workforce to help draw manufacturers to the region. The third tier is for LaunchSpace to provide business and entrepreneurial support as a business incubator. LaunchSpace will help members who are ready to move on develop a business plan and find a space.

Drohen stated that they decided to be proactive about using the OIC space and learned about a program under development by the State to help create makerspaces. MacLeod presented a concept design of LaunchSpace. They have received two grants from MassDevelopment, including a planning grant which was very helpful in developing the business plan and launching a marketing effort. By the time LaunchSpace applied for a buildout grant, 80 people were already signed up to use the space. They hope LaunchSpace will become a replicable economic development model for smaller post-industrial communities. One issue is a lack of classroom space so they are looking at leasing a closed elementary school in Athol that also has a kitchen. There is demand for community kitchens, and they are looking at complementing the Food Processing Center at the FCCDC.

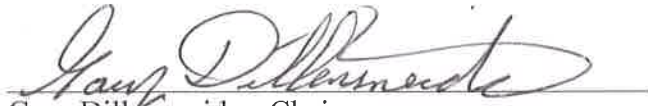
MacLeod answered questions from Committee members. Atwood noted that the project is eligible for EDA funding and is on the project listing. A question was asked where members are coming from. MacLeod said they are focusing on the North Quabbin region but people have signed up from further away. P. Crosby stated that the FHREB would be happy to collaborate with LaunchSpace and have staff and programs in that area. A question was asked how LaunchSpace was getting the word out. MacLeod answered that they have a website and are conducting active outreach to schools, including the Franklin County Technical School, and Boston-based schools. A question was asked about the total project cost. MacLeod said for build out and one year of operation, costs are \$1.2 million including in-kind services and grants. J. Atwood thanked the presenters from LaunchSpace for their presentation.

4 – Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance, and adjourn.

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

T. Hutcheson MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 5:07 p.m. Natalie Blais SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED.

Respectfully submitted by:



Gary Dillensneider, Chair