



Franklin Regional Council of Governments Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	October 18, 2017
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
- Gary Dillensneider, Committee Chair, Franklin County Community Development Corporation
- Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG Executive Committee
- Tom Hutcheson, Franklin Regional Planning Board
- Nan Riebschlaeger, Town of Wendell
- Carolyn Shores-Ness, Town of Deerfield

FRCOG Staff:

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

Guests:

- Julie Cowan, MassDevelopment
- MJ Adams, Town of Greenfield

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

The meeting was called to order at 3:38 p.m. by Chair G. Dillensneider. A round of introductions followed.

2 – Vote to approve minutes from May 4, 2017, and June 7, 2017

A vote was not taken to approve minutes due to lack of a quorum.

3 – CEDS Program Updates

J. Atwood presented the status of the current EDA contract. The EDA Planning Partnership contract was received in July 2017. It is the second contract of a 3-year cycle. The grant award is for \$70,000. Match is provided by staff time of the FRCOG Executive Director and Planning Director, and State's District Local Technical Assistance grant. There is a new Massachusetts EDA representative at the Philadelphia office who is very experienced and a champion of getting projects funded. She provided

Atwood with a checklist to make sure all CEDS reports created by EDDs are in compliance with federal regulations. One thing required is documentation that the report is adopted by the governing body of the EDD. As the EDD is the FRCOG, the governing body of the FRCOG is the FRCOG Executive Committee. Atwood continued that in the previous program year there was discussion about the governing boards of other EDDs as well as the change in federal regulations regarding governing board membership composition. It is recommended that we transition the membership of the EDD to the FRCOG Executive Committee. No change is needed to the EDD Governing Board bylaws to reflect this, since the FRCOG Executive Committee appoints the membership of the EDD. This does not impact the CEDS Committee, which will continue as is.

Another change is that a revised economic resiliency strategy needs to be included in the annual CEDS report. Currently, the current economic resiliency strategy focuses on helping businesses with being prepared for emergencies, and identifies working with the FCCC and GSFABA to assist with that. The EDA wants this to be expanded to include a list of implementation priorities, a timeline, and key stakeholders, similar to our emergency preparedness program or hazard mitigation plans. To meet the new requirement, Atwood will incorporate the business elements the CEDS program is already working on with what the FRCOG Emergency Preparedness Program does. As a result this new chapter will not focus so much on businesses but more on how our organization reacts to a disaster and interacts with the community.

A question was asked if the CEDS Program would be a point of reference for the county. Atwood responded that the CEDS report will review what is already being done and determine how the CEDS Program can plug into it. Using Tropical Storm Irene as an example, several people stepped up to be key resources to businesses, because they saw the need and just did it. In the future, we need to make sure there is someone ready to fill this role.

Atwood presented updates on brownfields and redevelopment projects in the region. The FRCOG Brownfields Program has two elements, a revolving loan fund and subgrants. FRCOG's original EPA revolving loan fund contract is closed out, but program income has been maintained through loans being paid off. The First National Bank building on Bank Row in Greenfield was one of the program's first projects. Ownership of the building recently transferred from the FCCDC to the Greenfield Redevelopment Authority. The remaining loan balance was transferred into a subgrant to help move the transfer process along. The Usher Mill in Erving is another property that has been redeveloped through the program. In 2012, the Town received a loan and subgrant to clean up the property. The Town then worked with FRCOG on conceptual designs for a riverfront park and received a PARC grant to create the park. The next phase is redevelopment/repurposing the historic boiler building that remains on the site.

Atwood provided updates on the former Ramage paper mill building in Monroe. A loan and subgrant were secured for environmental remediation after the Town took ownership of the wooden part of the structure by eminent domain. The MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EOEEA) then secured funding for the building to be demolished and a park to be created on the site. The wooden structure came down this summer. The next phase is to put in a retaining wall and overlook park. This project is alleviating concerns from the rafting industry and protecting the health of the river. P. Sloan noted that TransCanada also contributed funding to the project.

Environmental Site Assessments are another component of the Brownfield Program. Currently, all funds for assessing sites for potential hazardous substances have been obligated, but funds remain to assess sites with petroleum products. FRCOG is applying for another EPA grant for hazardous substances site assessments in the upcoming grant round. Atwood noted that the brick building in Monroe still needs to be assessed if an assessment grant is awarded. She stated that assessments are available to private and public properties as long as the owner is not responsible for the contamination on the property.

Atwood presented the status of District Local Technical Assistance (DLTA) economic development projects. DLTA is a state grant awarded to FRCOG to work on regional and local projects. There is a process to identify projects, including a letter to towns asking for their priorities. Atwood noted that FRCOG always receives more requests than they have funds for. Atwood is working with the Conway Planning Board on a survey asking residents what they want to see in the community for economic development. The survey went out through a community newsletter and a link on the Town website. In South Deerfield Center, Atwood is working on a project that builds upon existing planning work, including the recent Complete Streets and Livability Plan. Atwood completed an inventory of the village area. The study area includes 75 parcels with 58 businesses. Findings show there is less vacancy and more businesses than might be expected. Atwood is now collecting feedback on how to prioritize strategies and is conducting small meetings with property owners.

In Whately, Atwood is working with the Selectboard on an economic development vision for the town. A charrette-type event will be held in the spring with small facilitated group discussions about different areas of Whately. Atwood is also updating the industrial park inventory. She noted that there are very few parcels available. Greenfield is exploring how to possibly expand the industrial park in the future into the Mackin site. Atwood then took questions from committee members.

G. Dillensneider asked if there was a developer for the Bendix site in Greenfield. Atwood answered that a container manufacturer from Holyoke is working with the Town to expand their business at the site. The site is about 17 acres. Some of the site would be retained by the Town to put in a solar array. Atwood confirmed that a data center facility is not part of the future plans for the site. J. Basford asked if solar arrays are part of the CEDS. Atwood answered that the green economy and businesses working in clean energy are discussed in the report, but that there are no specific strategies related to solar development. P. Sloan noted that it would be interesting to see how much towns receive in revenue from solar installations. It was noted that there is no current inventory of solar production in the county, but that this information may be available through the inspection department.

4 – A Presentation of MassDevelopment Programs, including Manufacturing Innovation Grants and Property Assessed Clean Energy Program, by Julie Cowan, MassDevelopment VP of Business Development – Western Region

Atwood introduced Julie Cowan from MassDevelopment to present information on several programs. Cowan provided background information on MassDevelopment and stated that her responsibilities cover the four counties in western MA. MassDevelopment supports businesses, chambers of commerce, and non-profits in the area. She provided examples of projects she is working on in Franklin County and noted that FRCOG and the county has a reputation for being supportive of businesses.

Cowan presented on the Manufacturing Innovation Grant program. She noted that currently MassDevelopment does not have any funds, but that funding is available through the UMass Innovation Center for businesses. The program supports start-ups in Massachusetts.

Cowan then introduced the Property Assessed Clean Energy, or PACE, program. The program is available in 39 states, and was enacted in MA through the legislature last August. The program was assigned to MassDevelopment in partnership with the Department of Energy Resources (DOER). MassDevelopment is overseeing the administration of the program, while DOER is responsible for technical oversight. A public comment period on the proposed program closed several weeks ago, which resulted in 97 pages of program guidelines. PACE is a way for building owners (not business owners) to make changes to their properties that would provide for energy access of efficiency. An example of access is if a building owner needs access to natural gas, a loan can be secured. Weatherization, HVAC, and structural improvements to support solar PV, could be financed through PACE. The program provides 100% financing. MassDevelopment is currently working with lenders and banks in the area to offer these loans. Property owners need to have an energy audit done to show that the cost of the upgrade is less than the energy savings achieved.

L. Dunlavy asked what the timeframe is for showing that the project breaks even. Cowan answered the timeframe would be the term of the loan. Property owners can take out a small loan through a local bank to make the upgrades and then get reimbursed through the program, or can work with a PACE provider to finance the project along the way. P. Sloan asked if there is a maximum loan term. Cowan answered the maximum would be 20 years. J. Basford asked about underwriting standards. Cowan answered the program is not a traditional mortgage, but more like a sewer or betterment assessment. The program treats it as an asset that is paid off over time by the savings incurred. If the property is sold during the loan term, the loan stays with the property.

Cowan listed potential uses of the PACE program, which include windows, HVAC, structural supports, solar panels, wind turbines on a roof, multi-family, commercial, industrial, and parking structures all qualify. Non-profits and municipalities are not eligible. Cowan then took questions from the committee. She noted there is launch date for the program has not yet been set. J. Atwood asked how the program will be promoted. Cowan answered that MassDevelopment will be promoting the program by talking to municipal entities, because there will be an opt-in requirement by municipalities to be a PACE community. Also she anticipates private property owners will contact municipalities about joining the program.

P. Sloan asked if banks have already signed up to be providers. Cowan noted the program is rolling out differently in MA than in other states, where one bank may have been chosen. MA will give local and regional banks an option to participate. Details are currently being worked out to ensure consistency among banks.

C. Shores-Ness asked what the process is for towns to become a PACE community. Cowan suggested setting up a meeting with MassDevelopment to discuss the mechanics of the program. Opting in is the decision of the Selectboard, not Town Meeting. J. Basford asked what billing the town would be doing for the program. Cowan answered that typically it is a betterment tax, but the details get worked out with each town. Atwood noted that she did not see much solar PV when conducting industrial park inventories and asked if there will be materials available for towns to conduct outreach to industrial properties. Cowan answered that information materials are currently being developed.

Cowan then distributed information on technical assistance available through a Real Estate Services Call for Proposals. Assistance is available for master planning, regional economic development planning, RFP/RFQ development, etc. The criteria is straightforward and must show how the project will attract or retain jobs, with retention of jobs the top priority. Other criteria include housing, redevelopment of blighted properties, serving economically disadvantaged areas, etc. The deadline is December 15. MassDevelopment staff are available to answer questions or do a site visit with prospective applicants. A question was asked who received the call for proposals. Atwood commented that she forwarded it to Town Administrators and Planners in Franklin County towns. Cowan noted businesses come to them through various ways, and some communities bring in MassDevelopment early in the process. It was noted that December 15 is a tight timeframe for most communities to respond, and that in the future having more time and advance notice would be helpful.

Cowan finished her presentation with an announcement that the Mass Cultural Facilities Fund will hold information sessions in West Stockbridge, Grafton, South Yarmouth, Lawrence, Somerville, and online on November 10 at 10:30 a.m. it is strongly recommended that potential applicants attend an information session.

Atwood thanked Cowan for presenting.

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.

N. Riebschlaeger MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 4:46 p.m. T. Hutcheson SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED.

Respectfully submitted by:


Gary Dillensneider, Chair