



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	February 11, 2020
Time:	4:00 p.m.
Location:	12 Olive Street, Greenfield, MA
Duration:	1.5 hours
Facilitator:	G. Dillensneider, Chair

CEDS Committee Attendees:

- MJ Adams, City of Greenfield
- Teri Anderson, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center
- Patricia Crosby, Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Gary Dillensneider, Franklin County Community Development Corporation
- Gina Govoni, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority/Rural Development, Inc.
- Shelby Snow, Northfield Golf Club and NATABA member
- Walter Ramsey, Town of Montague

FRCOG Staff:

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

1 – Call the meeting to order, and round of introductions: Linda Dunlavy, FRCOG

The meeting was called to order at 4:06 p.m. by G. Dillensneider. A round of introductions followed.

2 – Vote to Approve Minutes from November 19, 2019: Gary Dillensneider, Chair

At 4:07 p.m. G. Dillensneider asked for a motion to approve the minutes from November 19, 2019. MJ Adams MOVED to approve the November 19, 2019 minutes. P. Crosby SECONDED. The motion PASSED unanimously.

3 – Summary Background Draft Chapter Review: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG

J. Atwood explained that the Background Chapter is a required element of the CEDS Plan. It outlines the existing demographic and economic conditions that support economic development. Atwood sent the draft to the Committee prior to the meeting. She noted that in the past this chapter was lengthy; this draft will be more streamlined. Town level data will now be in an appendix. The chapter includes some new data sources, such as the inflow and outflow of jobs in the county, and focuses on Franklin County, and how the region compares to the state, nation, and surrounding counties.

Atwood noted that labor force and employment levels in the County have surpassed pre-recession levels. Unemployment levels in Franklin County are typically lower than the state and nation, but follow similar trends. A Committee member asked why the labor force is growing when the population in the County is not. It was noted that it could be due to people re-entering the workforce because there are jobs available, or people who are delaying retirement.

Atwood explained that Franklin County has more self-employment, government, and non-profit jobs than other areas, and less private and for-profit jobs. As government funding changes, it can impact the County's workforce to a greater degree than other areas. She noted that according to Census estimates, incomes in Franklin County are lower than the state, but comparable to the nation. Federal funding sources compare incomes to national averages, but in the context of Massachusetts, Franklin County is economically distressed. Atwood presented living wage data for western Massachusetts. Discussion followed about living wages and whether public assistance is included. A Committee member noted that a local group has been working on collecting data related to the "cliff effect," where a household income rises beyond eligibility for public assistance, but is not high enough to qualify as a living wage.

Atwood presented average earnings per job for Franklin County, which have consistently been the lowest among all counties in the state. A discussion followed about whether to include data on average wages per job, or if it would be duplicative. Atwood reviewed data on the number of jobs and businesses in the County, not including self-employment. She said while the number of businesses has increased, the number of jobs is still below pre-recession levels, though is growing. New businesses tend to be small. She noted that wages in Franklin County adjusted for inflation have not increased since the recession.

Atwood presented top industry sectors in the county, not including self-employed. Health care and social assistance is the top sector. Manufacturing is second, with a higher concentration of jobs in Franklin County than the state or nation. A discussion followed about what sub-sectors may be included in the miscellaneous manufacturing category, such as candle manufacturing and precision manufacturing. Atwood noted she will look into the miscellaneous category further, and can add trend data to the sectors to show growth or decline. It was also noted that Franklin County shares many traits with the counties to the north, and those connections should be highlighted. Atwood explained that retail trade, accommodations, and food services is the third largest sector, but also has some of the lowest wages. Educational services is not as large of a sector in Franklin County as it is in the greater 8-county region, where it accounts for a large number of jobs. Many people in Franklin County work for higher education institutions located in nearby counties. The Pioneer Valley Labor Blue Print identifies special needs educators and support positions at the K-12 level as gaps in the industry.

Atwood noted that the data does not show arts, entertainment, and recreation as a large employment sector in the county, but this dataset does not include self-employed individuals. This sector is part of the creative economy and tourism clusters, and helps to attract visitors and new residents to the region. It was noted that having a call-out box in the chapter with trends in different sectors, such as the creative economy, would be helpful. It was noted that seasonal employment might not be reflected in the data.

Atwood presented agricultural trends from the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture. Since the 2012 Census, Franklin County experienced a 12% increase in farms and an 11% increase in the amount of land in farms. Franklin County had \$4.9 million in market value from value-added products, making

up a significant portion of the statewide number. It was noted that the next Census of Agriculture will include data on hemp production. Marijuana growing is not included in the Census.

Atwood then presented information on major employers. Eighty-seven percent of private businesses in Franklin County have less than 20 employees, consistent with the state and nation. Emerging and priority clusters are to be identified in the new CEDS Plan using data and local knowledge. A 2016 cluster mapping tool showed unique concentrations of jobs in metal working, plastics, communications, apparel, marketing, and recreational goods. The data is useful but should not be solely relied upon. Atwood presented the clusters from the last plan and asked what should be the focus for the next five years. There was discussion about the renewable energy and green construction cluster and tourism cluster. It was discussed that the reliance on government and non-profit sectors could be highlighted in some way. It may not be a cluster as it includes a broad range of jobs. Technology was identified as a cross-cutting occupation, but not an individual sector. Atwood will add cross-cutting themes, assets, and infrastructure, such as the broadband and technology, that impact all clusters.

Atwood showed a new chart added about solar PV generation in Franklin County. Many towns in the county are participating in the state's Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) program and Green Communities program. Towns are assessing vulnerabilities and concerns related to climate change. It was noted that the expense to maintain and repair water and wastewater systems should be added to that section. Under workforce development, Atwood noted the county has traditional and non-traditional lending, collaborative workspaces, incentive programs such as new market tax credits and opportunity zones. This section will be streamlined. In addition, FRCOG created a business development resource guide that includes information for entrepreneurs looking to start or expand a business.

Atwood noted that the summary chapter is still a draft, but she wanted to present the draft as a basis for working on the SWOT analysis.

4 – 2020 CEDS Plan Vision and Strengths-Weaknesses-Opportunities-Threats (SWOT)

Activities: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG

Atwood lead the Committee in a brainstorming exercise to identify the region's Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. It was noted that the exercise was a good start and that past SWOT analyses should be referenced and compared.

Atwood then asked the Committee to revisit the vision statement. She asked if the statement should be short or more robust. Discussion followed. A draft vision statement was developed: To leverage the county's intrinsic and emerging assets to collaboratively create economic opportunity in a manner that is sustainable, equitable, and inclusive. Atwood will work to refine the language, and may include a bulleted list of succinct statements or values.

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

Atwood stated that the CEDS project solicitation is out and should be submitted by March 6, 2020.

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

MJ Adams MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 5:49 p.m. G. Govoni SECONDED the motion. The motion PASSED.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gary Dillensneider, Chair