



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	June 8, 2020
Time:	3:00 p.m.
Location:	Virtual Meeting via Zoom due to COVID-19 state of emergency. (Meeting ID: 640 658 461)
Duration:	1 hour
Facilitator:	J. Atwood

CEDS Committee Attendees:

- MJ Adams, City of Greenfield
- Marie Breheny, Greenfield Community College
- Patricia Crosby, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Regional Employment Board
- Gary Dillensneider, FCCDC Loan Review Committee
- Tom Hutcheson, Franklin Regional Planning Board
- Walter Ramsey, Town of Montague
- Nan Riebschlaeger, Wendell Energy Committee and Quabbin Mediation
- Diana Szynal, Franklin County Chamber of Commerce
- John Waite, Franklin County Community Development Corporation

Guests:

- Judy Raper, Greenfield Community College
- Kristin Cole, Greenfield Community College

FRCOG Staff:

- Linda Dunlavy, Executive Director
- Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning and Development
- Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager
- Liz Jacobson-Carroll, Administrative Services Assistant

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

Atwood called the meeting to order at 3:04 PM. The meeting was held online, via Zoom, due to the COVID-19 state of emergency preventing in-person meetings. Atwood announced the participants.

**2 – Vote to Approve Minutes from May 4, 2020: Gary Dillensneider**

Adams moved to approve the May 4, 2020 minutes, with an amended attendee list, Hutcheson seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**3 – Update on economic recovery efforts due to COVID-19 pandemic : Linda Dunlavy and Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Atwood and Dunlavy described efforts to secure federal, regional and local funding. Atwood reported on recent applications to two sources through the US Economic Development Administration and the CARES Act. The first is FRCOG's request for Economic Development Department planning funds to create a recovery and resilience plan, to provide business technical assistance, to plan for water/wastewater critical infrastructure, and to provide technical assistance on Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy projects. It is a non-competitive grant; project approval is pending. The second is FCCDC's application to re-capitalize its Small Business Revolving Loan Fund with \$730,000. Funds will enable FRCOG to manage the procurement process and hiring of an organization to provide technical assistance to Franklin county towns. The FCCDC will apply to be that organization, Waite noted.

There are multiple regional and local efforts underway as well. Community Development Block Grant-funded small business forgivable loan programs are currently available to Greenfield, Montague (\$50k), Buckland and Shelburne (\$50k), and Adams is leading the City of Greenfield's effort to make a larger allocation available to all 26 towns in the region. A 2<sup>nd</sup> round of emergency funding for farms is being administered by CISA and FCCDC. The FRCOG, FCCC, and FCCDC are coordinating the collective purchasing and distribution of PPE for businesses, organizations and municipal governments; so far, 51 of these have been served by the ongoing program, and more are expected to engage by the June 12<sup>th</sup> deadline for the second round. Additional resources include an on-going webinar series for small businesses led by MSBDCN, FCCCD and others, and a MAPC white paper on how municipal governments can help small businesses. FRCOG is advocating for better alignment of EDA and state funding programs. Guidance and links to resources are available at <https://frcog.org/publication/business-development-resource-guide/>.

Waite reported that the FCCDC is assisting many businesses in applying for PPP funds, and processing unemployment insurance paperwork. He remains optimistic regarding the potential for capitalizing a private fund to assist businesses that are not eligible for the various public/government programs. Municipalities can assist businesses by letting them use public sidewalks, he said, and Atwood reviewed recently adjusted state rules regarding the serving of alcohol outdoors.

**4 – Review comments and vote to approve Final Draft 2020 CEDS Plan: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Atwood reviewed substantive additions made to the CEDS plan during the 30-day public comment period. These include the multiple photos; a statement regarding the availability of the plan and updates over the 5-year implementation period; a timeline of state and federal government actions due to the COVID-19 pandemic; a graphic explaining MA's phased re-opening; a snapshot of the availability of local housing; and detailed Franklin/Hampshire labor force and unemployment data through April. Further, she added mention of the importance of seasonal workers from outside the US, and the significance of federal policy, to the local agricultural industry. The CEDS Plan now includes a section on the availability of childcare and eldercare services as a factor impacting economic performance, and their particular importance during the pandemic. At the suggestion of members, Atwood will mention concerns regarding fraudulent unemployment claims, and add reference to the importance of homecare workers in stemming the spread of COVID-19 and economic recovery.

On the Action Plan Table listing 49 projects, at the request of the EDA, Atwood highlighted those with the most significant regional impact:

- Strengthening Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in Franklin County

- The Mohawk Trail Woodland Partnership Forest Center
- Northern Tier 2.0 (small business technical assistance to build capacity, especially to pandemic-affected businesses)
- Capitalize Small Business Revolving Loan Fund
- GCC Rural Innovation Center
- Franklin County Public Water/Sewer system Strategic Plan
- Montague’s Canal District Master Plan and Investment Strategy
- Greenfield’s Industrial Park Expansion
- Erving IP Mill Redevelopment
- Establish Valley Flyer
- Innovative Public Transit Services

Waite initiated a discussion regarding the possible inclusion of a project to build regional food security and infrastructure. He mentioned the Energy and Environmental Administration providing \$36 million to the Department of Agriculture for grants to this end. Hutcheson and Sloan referenced former FRCOG staffer Mary Chicoine’s work on a regional food security plan. Atwood will research and include a project in the Action Plan.

Further changes include the addition of the Greenfield Anaerobic Digester project; amendment of the Last Mile Broadband in Unserved Areas project to address increased municipal operational costs; the editing of several sections to emphasize the importance of not just recovering, but building resiliency; and the addition of town-level census data tables. Discussion included the intent to expand use of the planned anaerobic digester by additional municipalities; the GCC Innovation Center’s inclusion of the formerly incarcerated in its target clientele; and the long trend of a decreasing average wage; and the need to monitor demographics with an eye toward regional housing needs.

Adams moved to approve the **Final Draft 2020 CEDS Plan**, Crosby seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

**5 – Other business not reasonably anticipated 48 hours in advance, and adjourn: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Atwood reviewed the CEDS Plan schedule, noting that the EDD Board will vote to accept it on June 11, the Franklin Regional Planning Board will vote to endorse it on June 25, and FRCOG will submit it to the US EDA by June 30, 2020.

Waite moved to adjourn the meeting, Adams seconded the motion, and the meeting adjourned at 4:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gary Dillensneider, Chair