



# Franklin Regional Council of Governments

## Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	May 11, 2021
Time:	2:00 p.m.
Location:	Virtual Meeting via Zoom due to COVID-19 state of emergency. (Meeting ID: 892 1860 4447)
Duration:	54 minutes
Facilitator:	J. Atwood

CEDS Committee Attendees:

- MJ Adams, City of Greenfield
- Marie Breheny, Greenfield Community College
- Gary Dillensneider, FCCDC Loan Review Committee
- Gina Govoni, Franklin County Regional Housing and Redevelopment Authority/Rural Development, Inc.
- Walter Ramsey, Town of Montague
- Nan Riebschlaeger, Wendell Energy Committee and Planning Board
- John Waite, Franklin County Community Development Corporation

Guests:

- Kristin Cole, Greenfield Community College
- Jennifer Gross, Franklin Regional Planning Board

FRCOG Staff:

- Jessica Atwood, Economic Development Program Manager
- Bob Dean, Director of Regional Services
- Liz Jacobson-Carroll, Administrative Services Assistant
- Alyssa Larose, Land Use Planner
- Peggy Sloan, Director of Planning and Development

**1 – Call the meeting to order, and round of introductions: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

At 2:00 p.m., J. Atwood called the meeting to order. The meeting was held via the online Zoom application, due to the COVID-19 state of emergency preventing in-person meetings.

**2 – Vote to Approve Minutes from March 25, 2021: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Ramsey motioned to approve the minutes of the March 25, 2021 meeting; Adams seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously by roll call.

**3 – Review the Draft 2021 Franklin County CEDS Annual Performance Report: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Atwood summarized the draft 2021 CEDS Annual Performance Report, the first of four annual reports on the 2020-2025 CEDS Plan. The draft report was distributed to CEDS Committee members and posted on the FRCOG website for review and comment.

She reviewed the report's major components, highlights, and select graphs, as well as format changes. She noted that a new template of sections required by the US EDA will be incorporated into a final draft. The timeline for review and submission of the report by June 30, 2021 was reviewed. The report's regional economic dashboard includes graphs indicating changes in the size and makeup of the Franklin County population by characteristics such as age, race, ethnicity, education, class, income, housing, and employment status. A pandemic-specific section includes lists of resources for workers, employers and communities, and mentions new ways of operating developed by local businesses. The report provides updates to the Action Plan projects throughout the county, and identifies projects implemented during the past year, with evaluation metrics. Prior to the June meeting, Atwood will add major economic events in the region, a summary of accomplishments and more. She welcomes comments and suggestions for additional changes by June 4<sup>th</sup>.

**4 – Discuss regional economic recovery priorities in anticipation of American Rescue Plan federal funding opportunities.**

**Jessica Atwood, FRCOG**

Atwood gave an overview of the federal 2021 American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) announcement, and noted that both state and local funds will be available. She indicated that the ARPA is similar to the CARES Act in its purpose. Atwood reported that the US Economic Development Administration (EDA) will have ARPA funds allocated for a new project funding round, that will likely be a larger amount than the CARES Act and may be broader in scope. More information will be available when the Notice of Funding Opportunity is released. She noted that the new EDA funding round will require that projects meet at least one of the EDA's new Investment Priorities, which address: equity, recovery and resilience; workforce development; manufacturing; tech-based and environmentally-sustainable economic development; and exports and foreign direct investment. No longer are projects located in a designated Opportunity Zone considered an investment priority.

Dean provided some state- and county-specific detail related to ARPA's Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds. Notably, current calculations provided by the Mass. Municipal Association indicate that Franklin County will receive \$20,555,287. Municipalities will receive funds directly from both the federal and state governments; disbursements are slated for this month and then again in the spring of 2022. Funds must be obligated by the end of 2024, and spent by the end of 2026. He reviewed the categories of allowable uses of the funds: supporting public health expenditures; addressing negative economic impacts caused by the public health emergency; replacing lost public sector revenue; providing premium pay for essential workers; and investing in water, sewer, and broadband infrastructure. Further, he explained ineligible uses, noted some of the procedural and reporting requirements, and cited relevant sections of the law.

Discussion topics focused on ways ARPA funds may be used: how the state and might spend its own allocation; the potential for municipalities collaborating to achieve shared goals; the possibility of a regional strategy to housing-, employment- and diversity-related issues; possible improvements to the natural gas infrastructure; opportunities for public housing renovation; and the difficulty posed, for infrastructure projects, by the strict timeline for spending. For example, Ramsey reported that Montague will be using funds to repair a known problem with the sewer system. Atwood mentioned the imminent hiring of a consultant to research the feasibility of regional water/sewer project, and encouraged attendees to contact her with project ideas.

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

Riebschlaeger moved to adjourn the meeting; Waite seconded the motion, the roll-call vote was unanimous, and the meeting adjourned at 2:54 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gary Dillensneider, Chair