



Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee

Date:	Wednesday, April 13, 2022
Time:	1:00 p.m.
Location:	Virtual Meeting via Zoom due to COVID-19 state of emergency. (Meeting ID: 822 2613 2843)
Duration:	1 hour, 5 minutes
Facilitator:	J. Atwood

CEDS Committee Members (attendees indicated):

- MJ Adams, City of Greenfield
- Rebecca Bialecki, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Workforce Board
- Jenna Day, RCAP Solutions, Inc.
- Gary Dillensneider, FCCDC Loan Review Committee Chair
- Maura Geary, MassHire Franklin Hampshire Career Center
- Alyssa Larose, Franklin County Regional Housing & Redevelopment Authority (alternate)
- Judy Raper, Greenfield Community College
- Alec Wade, Alec Wade

Guests:

- Kristin Cole, Greenfield Community College
- Glen Ohlund, Franklin County Community Development Corporation

FRCOG Staff:

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

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

At 1:05 p.m., J. Atwood called the meeting to order. The meeting was held via the online Zoom application, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants introduced themselves.

2 – Vote to Approve Minutes of the February 17, 2022 Meeting: Jessica Atwood, FRCOG

Day motioned to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2022 meeting; Geary seconded the motion, and the motion passed by roll-call vote with two abstentions (Bialecki, Larose).

3 – Presentation on an Industrial Land Expansion Project in Orange: Alec Wade, Town of Orange

Wade presented the South Main Street Job Creation Corridor project, which will support additional industrial development in the North Quabbin region. He reviewed two land-use zoning changes made the past decade that allowed for more industrial and commercial development. Led by the Orange Economic Development and Industrial Corporation, this work “primed the pump” for this project to create much needed land for industrial development.

He explained how the South Main Street corridor is becoming a new industrial core for the Town and the North Quabbin region. In 2014, at Route 2’s Exit 15, 194 acres were re-zoned industrial/commercial; and in 2020, at Exit 14, 185 acres were re-zoned general commercial. These changes have paved the way for industrial and commercial growth, utility extension, and mixed use development adjacent to the Orange Airport.

Wade reported that he engaged students with the UMass Isenberg School of Management Real Estate Advisors (IREA) program, to conduct a feasibility study to determine potential sites in this area. Wade shared highlights of the feasibility study, including: access to town water and power lines already exist (and 3-phase power is located nearby); the code allows for industrial/mixed use development at 70% lot coverage; and a maximum buildout would mean 7,000,000 sq. ft. of development, 5,200 new jobs on-site, and 13,000 new jobs in the region. It was recommend that the Town pursue grant funding for the extension of sewer service from the EDA, and launch an RFI to build momentum and refine the offering, with an eye toward marketing of the land for sale in 2023, he said. He identified key project partners, including: Orange’s EDIC, Airport Commission, Conservation Commission, Planning Board and Board of Selectmen; UMass’s IREA and Donohue Institute; Stoddard Engineering, elected officials including Sen. Comerford; FRCOG, and Mass Hire Franklin Hampshire. Discussion topics included the need to plan and provide for increasing demand for housing and public transportation; opportunities and challenges pertaining to the competitive EDA grant process; the likelihood that light manufacturing companies will be attracted by the project; and the prohibition of cannabis-related businesses from the partially federally-funded airport property.

4 – Discussion on the Draft Franklin County Economic Recovery and Resiliency Plan: Keith Barnicle, FRCOG

Barnicle introduced the Plan, developed in collaboration with several attendees and other stakeholders, as a means to preparing Franklin County for economic shock due to extreme weather events, human action (chemical spill, cyber attack, civil insurrection), or widespread shutdown (industry closure or a public health emergency). He pointed out that the COVID-19 pandemic brought to our attention an already robust regional framework for response from both the emergency management and business support sectors. The Franklin County Regional Emergency Planning Committee, the Franklin County Chamber of Commerce, the Franklin County Community Development Corporation (FCCDC), municipal offices, FRCOG and others responded vigorously to the pandemic shutdown, he said. Yet there may be a role for a Franklin County Business Recovery Center, either virtual or site-based, he added, to further enable these and other stakeholders assisting small businesses not likely to have their own emergency response and business continuity plans. Adams spoke of the importance of in-person collaboration during the early days of the pandemic at the

emergency response center set up in Greenfield. It was noted that after Tropical Storm Irene, an informal business assistance center was set up in McCusker's Market by the Shelburne Falls Area Business Association was very effective.

Barnicle spoke of two other oft-cited goals of a more resilient Franklin County economy -- diversifying and growing the workforce, and strategically upgrading infrastructure. Efforts might include marketing to attract young entrepreneurs, expanding Welcoming and Belonging Franklin County efforts, supporting entrepreneurial and cooperative business models, and further coordinating essential social and community services. Dunlavy and Raper suggested diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI) work and diversity audits at the organizational level. Regarding infrastructure, Barnicle referenced municipalities' need for assistance in implementing recommendations of the 2022 Franklin County Wastewater and Water Study.

Lastly, he proposed the development of digital recovery and resiliency toolkits to include resources to aid recovery from economic shock, tools for self-paced capacity-building, and sector-specific guidance. Ohlund advocated for including a best practices section with examples from other regions; Atwood indicated that the Cape Cod Commission's work might be helpful. Adams wondered if small businesses would respond to incentives to implement basic systems to sustain them in challenging times. Geary suggested adopting a prevention lens informed by lessons learned, and a rapid response program for employees facing layoffs. Bialecki referenced a resource readiness proposal for employers developed by the Career Center and Workforce Board. Barnicle invited feedback and ideas, by email or phone, in the coming weeks.

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

The next meeting will be held on May 26th at 11 a.m.. Barnicle will review the draft Franklin County Economic Recovery and Resilience Plan, and Atwood will present the 2022 CEDS Annual Performance Report. The meeting adjourned at 2:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted by:

Gary Dillensneider, Chair