

JAMES MULLEN, Chair  
SHEILA IRVIN, Vice-Chair  
GALE LABELLE, Clerk  
CHARLES P. OGDEN, Treasurer

NATHANIEL W. KARNS, A.I.C.P.  
Executive Director

**Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee**

*Tuesday, January 11, 2011, 12:30 PM*

*2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Conference Room, BRPC Office, 1 Fenn Street, Pittsfield, MA 01201*

**Committee Members**

Kristine Hazzard X Roger Bolton X Heather Boulger X Kevin O'Donnell X Keith Girouard X Mike Nuvallie Y Laury Epstein X Mike Supranowicz AB Lauri Klefos X Michael Hoffmann AB Christine Ludwizewski X Eleanore Velez X Deanna Ruffer AB Ann Dobrowolski (Alt) X Helena Fruscio X Tim Geller X Robert Wilson AB Brenda Burdick AB Andy Franks (Alt) X Mark Berman X

**BRPC Staff**

Nathaniel Karns X Thomas Matuszko X Daniel Sexton X Mark Maloy X

**Public**

Allison Johnson X Joe Sceds' X

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

The January 11, 2011 meeting of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs) Strategy Committee was convened at 12:32 pm. Mr. Matuszko explained that he would be the moderator for this meeting and that the meeting was being recorded in accordance with the Open Meeting law. Mr. Matuszko then asked if there was anyone present whom wished to record the meeting as well? Seeing none the meeting began.

Seeing that there were new faces at the meeting, Mr. Matuszko asked that everyone introduce themselves.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Matuszko asked for approved of the meeting minutes from the November 30, 2010 meeting of the CEDs Strategy Committee.

**Mr. Bolton made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Mr. Girouard. Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent, seeing no objections the motion passed.**

**3. Public Comments (Non-Agenda Items)**

Mr. Matuszko then explained that this was a public meeting being held by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and asked if there was anyone present whom wished to speak on a non-agenda item? Seeing none, Mr. Matuszko then moved to the "An Evaluation of the Berkshires Competitive Preparedness" agenda item.

#### 4. 2011 CEDS – An Evaluation of the Berkshires Competitive Preparedness (Draft)

Mr. Matuszko began by explaining that the evaluation section is intended to highlight Berkshire County's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (or SWOT), as well as highlight investments that have been made throughout the region. He explained that this section begins on page 9 of the meeting packet. That being said, Mr. Matuszko turned the floor over to Mr. Sexton to discuss/explain this section in greater detail.

Mr. Sexton briefly explained that the identification of the Region's SWOT is a requirement of the Economic Development Administration (EDA). The key points discussed during this section are the result of input gathered during the last CEDS Strategy Committee meeting and from the public during regional public meeting. Specifically, a number of Committee members provided input on investments that have been made in the region to facilitate economic growth or stability. He then began to discuss the specific components of the section

##### a. Regional Weaknesses and Threats

Mr. Sexton started by briefly discussing each weakness or threat. He explained that the paragraph behind each weakness or threat was meant to highlight the resulting affects and impacts each weakness or threat could or may be having on the region or its communities. Mr. Sexton also explained that staff was looking for concurrence from the Committee as to whether the list of weaknesses and threats was complete and whether there was additional language or information missing.

With that, the CEDS Strategy Committee discussed each weakness or threat. The Committee's input included:

##### General Comments:

- The language of this section should clearly correlate to the dynamics that have, are and continue to affect the region; thus reinforcing these points as weaknesses and threats.
- Build connections between the various sections of the report without being redundant.
- Add a category speaking to "Access to Capital," specifically early seed capital or start-up funds.
- Should the listing of the regional weaknesses and threats be prioritized, such as listing energy first? A follow-up discussion of this suggestion, by the Committee, agreed that prioritization is not necessary.
- It was suggested that the list of regional weaknesses and threats be reduced, such as eliminating population decline. A follow-up discussion of this suggestion, by the Committee, determined that certain categories should be consolidated (i.e. *Population* with *Uneven Stratification of Age Cohorts*).

##### Category Specific Comments:

###### *Population Decline*

- It was suggested this category be consolidated with the *Uneven Stratification of Age Cohorts* category.

###### *Uneven Stratification of Age Cohorts*

- The Region's aging population should be emphasized as a greater detriment to the region, as opposed to population decline.

###### *Wage Shift and Median Family Household Income Drop*

- Speak more specifically to the fact that this translates into lost sales.

###### *Education Attainment Gap*

- Spell out that we are lacking courses teaching basic trade skill sets (i.e. electricians, plumbers, etc). Although computer technicians are necessary, really separate the technical training or trade skill sets.
- Emphasize that none of the Region's educational institutions are really setup for trade or vocational training courses.
- Reference should also be given to the needs for trade individuals in the bio-tech fields.

###### *Housing*

- It was suggested that housing affordability wasn't an issue for all the Region's communities. Therefore, the language of this category should be tweaked to speak at a more sub-regional level. A follow-up discussion of this suggestion, by the Committee, determined that housing should be discussed at the regional level.

###### *Built-Environment Constraints*

- This category should also be included as a strength and opportunity. Highlighting the fact that progress has been made to resolve issues such as the GE site in Pittsfield.

#### *Environmental Development Constraints*

- Speak to the limited availability of large developable tracts of land.

#### *Funding Shortfalls*

- Really highlight the slow and less diversified growth of the Region's property tax base. This is aggravated in Massachusetts by Proposition 2 ½.
- Consider renaming this category. Use a term that is more general.

#### *Infrastructure*

- Give more emphasis to the challenges facing build-out of the telecommunications infrastructure.
- Rename this category to *Physical and Technology Infrastructure*.

#### *Energy Costs*

- The last sentence of this category should speak to the transfer of cost to the customers and the reduced profits of owners.
- Consider consolidating this with the *Infrastructure* category.

Mr. Sexton then asked the Committee if there were any further comments on the Regional Threats and Weaknesses component. Seeing none, Mr. Sexton moved the discussion to the Regional Opportunities and Strengths component.

### **b. Regional Opportunities and Strengths**

Before requesting input from the Committee, Mr. Sexton briefly discussed the regional strengths and opportunities that had been received thus far. It was suggested by the Committee that the discussion progress category by category, thus making the discussion easier to follow.

With that said, Mr. Sexton asked the Committee for input on the strengths and opportunities. Input received from the Committee included:

#### **General Comments:**

- It was suggested that the Regional Strengths and Opportunities be moved ahead of the Regional Weaknesses and Threats. This would make the report read more positively.
- Work to consolidate categories.
- The language of this component should be structured in a more positively tone.

#### **Category Specific Comments:**

##### *Regional Collaboration*

- Reinforce or reference the "People" as a major component of the collaboration within the region. Maybe as a subset or category.
- Highlight the regional collaborations that exist in the Berkshires (Berkshire Connect, 1 Berkshires, Berkshire Compact, etc.)
- Embellish the work being conducted on a daily basis by economic development organizations (i.e. PERC, Lee CDC, MassDevelopment, Community Development Finance Corporation, etc.).
- Mention how collaboration has opened the door for investment opportunities, such as with the State.

##### *Culturally and Naturally Rich Environment*

- Consolidate this category with the *High Quality of Living* category. A follow-up discussion of this suggestion, by the Committee, determined that these categories should be kept separate.
- Use the word "visitors." Highlight the long history of tourism in the region.

##### *High Quality of Living*

- Speak to the cost of living and how it's lower here. This creates a high quality of life.
- Avoid the use of terms like "right balance" and "High Quality of Living."
- Highlight or reinforce small businesses.

##### *Educational Institutions*

- It was suggested that the opportunity to provide trade or vocational training courses within the Region's educational institutions should be highlighted.
- Highlight the fact that the development of alternative energy infrastructure and the upgrading of mechanical equipment requires technical training.
- Speak to all levels of education. Don't limit the discussion to just higher level education. Speak to the K-12 system. Maybe note the Berkshire Educational Compact.
- Educational institutions provide a large amount of jobs, not just "moderate."
- Speak to alternative educational opportunities.
- Highlight the history of partnerships and the strength relationship between businesses and institutions.

#### *Infrastructure*

- Change the title of the category to *Physical and Technology Infrastructure*.
- Speak more broadly (i.e. regionally) or add more community examples.

#### *Entrepreneurs/Small Businesses/Sole Proprietors*

- Verify the information discussed in the first sentence of this component. If it is determined the information discussed in this sentence is not correct, the sentence should be deleted.
- Highlight the home-based business friendly bylaws that many of the Region's communities have.
- The last sentence could reference or reinforce the need for a Berkshire "Brand."
- This section should include the reference of number of patents that are generated within the region.
- Add the reference to Berkshire Creative.
- It is important to reference the national and international presence.

#### *Railroad*

- Fold this category into the *Physical and Technology Infrastructure* category.
- Substitute gas with terms like "gasoline" or "fuel."

#### *Agriculture Production*

- Move the last 2 or 3 sentences further up in the paragraph.
- Highlight the fact that the region has the capacity to produce our own food and be self sustaining in terms of food production.
- Speak to food securities and the associated transportation costs.
- Mention the fact that the region has a history of agricultural production and agri-tourism.
- Expand the discussion of production and processing in terms of value added produce.
- Mention Berkshire Grown.

#### *Manufacturing Facilities*

- Substitute "development" with "redevelopment mill sites."

Before transitioning to the Regional Investments component, Mr. Sexton asked the Committee if there were any strengths and opportunities missed? A Committee member suggested that alternative energy, specifically the possibility of wind turbines, should be added to the renamed *Physical and Technology Infrastructure* category. Mr. Matuszko then asked the Committee if there were any further comments on the Regional Opportunities and Strengths component. Seeing none, Mr. Matuszko moved the discussion to the Regional Investment section.

### **c. Regional Investment**

Before beginning the discussion of the Regional Investments, Mr. Sexton cautioned that this was not a comprehensive list of investment. There are hundreds of investments being made throughout the region each year at various levels, which makes it difficult to track and list them all. He also mentioned that the investments discussed in this section are just meant to highlight the wide range of investments that have, are or will be made within the region.

Mr. Sexton then explained a couple of changes begin proposed by staff, which included: moving *Development Constraints* to the Program and Initiatives section, highlighting such projects as the Colonial Theatre or MassMoCA under the Physical Development section, and renaming the *Infrastructure* category to *Physical and Technology Infrastructure*. These changes are not represented in the Committee's meeting packet.

With that, the CEDS Strategy Committee began discussing the Regional Investments. The Committee's input included:

**General Comments:**

- Ms. Fruscio asked if she could help to re-write the Creative Economy component, since there was a number of incorrect reference made.

Since there were no component specific questions or comments made by the Committee for this section, Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee to forward any further input to Mr. Sexton.

Mr. Matuszko then moved the discussion to *The Action Plan for the Berkshires Economic Future* section.

**5. 2011 CEDS – The Action Plan for the Berkshires Economic Future (Draft)**

Mr. Matuszko began by explaining that this section is intended to give direction to how and what the CEDS report will accomplish. He then discussed the importance of having well thought out goals and objective, since they will be used as one of the evaluation criteria for the economic development proposals. Mr. Sexton mentioned that there have been 82 economic development proposals submitted and that project summaries for each proposal have been included in the meeting packet for the Committee to review.

There was a brief discussion of how prioritization could work, during which Committee members asked how the proposals would be ranks. Staff briefly explained that a comprehensive prioritization and ranking within subcategorizes is currently being proposed; however, the ultimate ranking structure was up to the Committee.

In the essence of time and noting some confusion from the Committee, Mr. Matuszko asked whether the Committee would prefer to begin discussing the proposed goals and objectives or work through proposal prioritization process. The Committee members agreed that it was important to define the goals and objectives for the CEDS report before discussing prioritization of proposals.

Mr. Sexton explained that the structure of the goals, objectives and implementing actions section, specifically highlighting how the language was developed. He mentioned that a number of Committee members had provided comments on the language before the Committee. A number of Committee members questioned whether the Vision Statement should be established before the goals and objective. It was also mentioned that the "New Economy" should be defined. That being said, Mr. Matuszko transitioned the discussion to establishing a Vision Statement.

**c. Vision Statement (Revisit)**

Mr. Matuszko began by solicited input from the Committee on the alternative concepts for the Vision Statement. Mr. Sexton mentioned that the language of the alternatives was developed from input received at the first meeting and e-mailed from the Committee. A couple Committee members proposed a few more word edits, making the language of the alternatives more consistent with important topics that have been suggested to be incorporated into the CEDS report (i.e. innovation, agriculture, entrepreneurship, etc).

Based on comments received from the Committee, Mr. Matuszko asked whether the First alternative could be eliminated. The Committee concurred. He then asked whether the Fourth alternative could be eliminated. The Committee concurred. With the Second and Third alternative remaining, a Committee member suggested eliminating the word "Industrial" from the Third alternative. Following that suggestion, a number of Committee members recommended that the Second alternative be eliminated. That said, Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee whether the Second alternative could be eliminated. The Committee concurred. A Committee member then asked that the second sentence, of the Third alternative, be reworked by replacing the word "to" with "we will."

**Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent of the Third vision statement alternative, seeing no objections the Committee selected the Third vision statement alternative as amended.**

The Committee then began discussing what should be included in the definition of the "New Economy." Mr. Girouard made a suggestion that incorporated the use of the Kauffman report, entitled *The 2010 State New Economy Index: Benchmarking Economic Transformation in the States*. Specifically, he recommended using the methodology and/or the five categories from the report as the basis for the New Economy definition. A couple Committee members asked Mr. Girouard to clarify what the five categories were. The categories from the Kauffman report included: Knowledge Jobs, Globalization, Economic Dynamism, Transformation to a Digital Economy, and Technological Innovation Capacity.

Mr. Matuszko asked whether the Committee agreed with Mr. Girouard's suggestion. Seeing no objections, Mr. Matuszko proposed that the Committee allow staff to develop and tweak this verbiage so it could fit within the CEDS report. The Committee agreed.

Mr. Matuszko then moved the discussion to goals and objectives.

#### **a. Goals and Objectives for the Berkshires**

Mr. Matuszko began by presenting the intent of the goals and objectives. To streamline the discussion, staff recommended discussing the language of each goal and objective individually. With that, Mr. Matuszko began discussion Goal #1.

The Committee's comments on the proposed goals and objectives included:

##### **General Comments:**

- The language of this section should be more general, but still descriptive and to the point.

##### *Goal #1*

- Eliminate the reference to the New Economy.
- This goal should end after "initiative."

##### *Goal #1 Objectives*

- The language of the first objective reads more like an action. It was suggested that that reference to a "standing Economic Development Committee" be replaced with "mechanism."

There was a discussion of how organizations should be referenced within the goals and objectives. At the conclusion of this conversation, the Committee agreed that specific organizations should not be included in the goals and objective, but could be inserted into the implementing actions. When a specific organization is identified, language should be added that allows for other regional partners to contribute to that action, such language could be "other regional partners."

Due to a lack of time, Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee whether they were interested in extending the meeting or scheduling an additional meeting. The Committee agreed that discussion on this item should be tabled and would be reconvened at a meeting scheduled for Tuesday, January 25, 2011.

Mr. Matuszko also asked the Committee if they wanted to continue the discussion at the next meeting with the verbiage proposed within this meeting's packet or allow staff the ability to further refine the sections language. The Committee determined that staff could begin refining the language. That being said, staff will provide the Committee with a revised set of goals and objectives by Friday, January 21, 2011.

#### **b. Berkshire CEDS Project Priorities**

Due to a lack of time this item was not discussed at this meeting.

##### **6. 2011 CEDS – What are the Berkshires Section (Update)**

Due to a lack of time this item was not discussed at this meeting.

##### **7. Update of On-going Activities**

###### **a. Regional Public Meetings**

###### **b. Guest Speaker (Representative from Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development)**

Due to a lack of time this item was not discussed at this meeting.

##### **8. Schedule Next Meeting (Tuesday, February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 12:30pm)**

Due to a lack of time and the need to continue discussion of the goals and objectives, the Committee agreed to hold an additional CEDS Strategy Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 25, 2011.

##### **9. Other Items?**

No items were raised.

## **10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

### **Documents distributed at the meeting included:**

Meeting Agenda

A Meeting Agenda Brief

Draft Minutes from the November 30, 2010 CEDS Strategy Committee meeting

A draft of the *An Evaluation of the Berkshires Competitive Preparedness* section

A draft of *The Action Plan for Berkshire County's Economic Future* section

A *Proposal Description Summary* spreadsheet

A copy of the *A Vision Statement for the Berkshires* section

A breakdown of *2011 CEDS Vision Statement (Revised Concepts)*