

JAMES MULLEN, Chair  
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Executive Director

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

*Tuesday, April 12, 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 AB Marya LaRoche (Alt) X Kevin O'Donnell X  
Keith Girouard X Mike Nuvalle X Laury Epstein AB Mike Supranowicz X Lauri Klefos X  
Michael Hoffman X Christine Ludwiszewski X Eleanore Velez X Deanna Ruffer X  
Ann Dobrowolski (Alt) X Helena Fruscio X Tim Geller AB Robert Wilson X Brenda Burdick AB  
Mark Berman AB

**BRPC Staff**

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

**Public**

Allison Johnson X Joe Scelsi X Andrew McKeeves X

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

At 12:35 PM on April 12, 2011 a meeting of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Strategy Committee was convened. 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.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

Mr. Matuszko asked for approval of the meeting minutes from the March 8, 2011 meeting of the CEDS Strategy Committee.

**Ms. Dobrowolski made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Fruscio. Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent, Mr. O'Donnell abstained, 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. Noticing that there were members of the public present; Mr. Matuszko asked if there was anyone whom wished to speak on any non-agenda items? Seeing none, Mr. Matuszko then moved the discussion to the next agenda item.

#### 4. 2011 CEDS – Implementation

- **Economic Development District**
- **Massachusetts Benchmarks**

To start the discussion, Mr. Matuszko explained that the Implementation Section represents the meat of the report and a structure for the implementation of the CEDS. He mentioned that staff hoped to review each of the proposed implementation measures to ensure the language as presented is correct and to verify that no items have been missed. Before Mr. Matuszko transitioned the discussion to Mr. Sexton, he asked the Committee whether there were any broad observations that Committee members wished to make about the proposed language. At this point in the discussion, no comments or issues were raised by Committee members.

Mr. Sexton then briefly explained to the Committee how staff arrived at the revised implementation language. Specifically, he noted that input from the Committee had been incorporated, information obtained from project proponents had been updated (Status and Next Steps) and the priority projects had been incorporated as “Project Based Actions.” Before beginning the review, Mr. Sexton briefly mentioned some of the key aspects of the implementation tables. Mr. Sexton then began to discuss each of the implementation measures, line-by-line.

The comments and concerns raised by Committee members, regarding the implementation measures, included:

- **A Committee member suggested the word “Coalition” could be eliminated from the first two measures.** Staff explained that the word “coalition” could be easily removed without altering the title’s intent.

Since there were questions raised at the last meeting, regarding an Economic Development District (EDD), Mr. Sexton provided the Committee with a short explanation of district designation. He specifically discussed the benefits an EDD may generate for the region (access to Planning Partnership grant funds), as well as touched on general EDD information (7 designated districts in Massachusetts). To clarify how an EDD is designated, he discussed the Economic Development Administration’s requirements as provided in Section 304.1 *Designation of Economic Development Districts: Regional Eligibility* of Chapter III in Title 13. A Committee member asked, “Who at the State needed to sign-off on the CEDS to meet the EDD designation criteria?” Mr. Sexton said that staff is current researching this requirement. Another Committee member questioned how an EDD would be funded. Mr. Sexton explained that some districts are partially funded through the Planning Partnership grant funds, a 50/50 match grant program. Mr. Matuszko explained that the EDD information was meant to inform the Committee. As any project or implementation measure progresses the aspects and elements of that project or program would be fully developed.

Another proposed implementation measure that raised a question at the last meeting was the “Berkshire Benchmarks” proposal. A Committee member had previously asked whether this measure would incorporate information from MassBenchmarks. Mr. Maloy provided the Committee with background information pertaining to the Berkshire Benchmarks and MassBenchmarks data clearing houses. He also mentioned that the Berkshire Benchmarks gathers data from a variety of sources, at county and community levels, making it accessible via the internet and developed some indicators related to the data. A difference of the two data clearing houses is that MassBenchmarks focuses primarily on economic data, where as Berkshire Benchmarks covers a variety of data sets. Mr. Sexton asked whether there were any questions regarding this implementation measure? Seeing none he transitioned back to a line-by-line discussion of the proposed implementation measures.

The comments and concerns raised by Committee members, regarding the implementation measures, included:

- **It was identified that the “Pittsfield Economic Development Authority” (PEDA) should be removed from the Business Development Assistance proposal.** *A Committee member clarified that PEDA is a property owner and was not authorized to provide business assistance services. Staff indicated that the edit would be made.*
- **The “Small Business Development Center” should be re-worded to read “Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network.”** *It was explained, by a Committee member, this change was suggested to reflect the full range of resources that were accessible to the Massachusetts Small Business Development Center Network at the national, state and college levels. Staff indicated that the change would be made.*
- **It was mentioned that the Commonwealth’s Division of Career Services is implementing the LAZER program, which could fit under Business Development Assistance measure.** *A Committee member clarified that this program is meant to gather and make accessible industry sector data.*

- **A committee asked for clarification regarding how the “Regional Activities” were developed?** *Mr. Sexton explained that based on the goals and objectives, established by the Committee, staff identified existing programs and initiatives being undertaken by other organizations that were in line with the intent of the goals and objectives. In those instances where a program or initiative wasn't in place, staff worked with organizations to develop a program that would fulfill the goal or objective.*
- **It was identified that “Pittsfield Economic Development Corporation,” in the Facilitate Access to Loan Programs implementation proposal, should be changed to “Pittsfield Economic Development Authority.”** *Staff indicated that the change would be made.*
- **A Committee member questioned whether the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) should be identified under the Angel Fund Network proposal?** *Staff explained that while BTCF doesn't directly work with businesses it does manage a large portfolio of investors that could be utilized to business start-up funds. Another Committee member followed up by asking why the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce was identified as the Activity Sponsor?* *Mr. Sexton noted that business retention and attraction activities, previously administered by the Berkshire Economic Development Corporation, was merged into 1Berkshire. In the interim these activities are not being administered by any organization. A committee member reinforced that an Angel Fund Network is a collaborative effort of multiple organizations. It was noted that some Committee members were concerned whether any organization in the region had the capacity or skills necessary to manage such this program. Mr. Matuszko suggested that the sponsor and partners for this implementation proposal be left as TBD. It was suggested, by a Committee member, that the next steps should also be modified to include “Identify organization partners,” “Identify a sponsor” and “Secure funding and resources to implement.” Another suggestion was to change the Status of the proposal from “Active” to “Concept.”* Following additional discussion on this topic, by the Committee, it was determined that Mr. Matuszko's suggestion, the changes to the Next Steps and the Status of the proposal should be made.
- **A concern was raised regarding the placement of project based actions within the Implementation section.** *Mr. Sexton explained that the Committee decided, at the last meeting, that the priority projects should be incorporated into the Implementation section. The Committee member clarified that the placement of priority projects within this section gives emphasis to projects that shouldn't necessarily get it and would reflect or support the project solicitation process that had minimal screening. The Committee member also indicated that the solicitation process was flawed. Mr. Matuszko tried to clarify the intent of the concern, specifically asking whether the comment was suggesting the complete removal of the projects from the Implementation section or whether projects should be listed under goals? The Committee member further stated that the placement of priority projects within the implementation section places them in the context of regional projects and regional commitments. While those projects may be important to certain individuals or groups it is disconcerting to place them on a regional implementation list and to direct resources to those projects over the next year. The Committee member thought it was the intent of the Committee to work with project proponents to refine and develop their proposals, but that that wouldn't necessarily be a regional emphasis, in terms of limited resources as a regional level. Another Committee member clarified that the decision to incorporate projects into the Implementation section, at the last meeting, was based on an attempt to eliminate inequities among projects listed as implementations actions. Committee members didn't want certain projects to be listed as implementing actions if they all projects weren't going to be listed. Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee whether there was consensus to eliminate the project based actions. Mr. Sexton also mentioned that other CEDS documents have used different methods, such as using one project based implementation measure to reinforce the progression of projects development or every project has been listed as an implementation measure (similar to the revised implementation languages). After further discussion, Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee for a motion from the Committee directing staff how to modify the language of the Implementation section.*

**Ms. Klefos made a motion to remove “Project Based Actions” from the Implementation section and keep the “Regional Activities.” The motion was seconded by Ms. Ruffer. Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent, Ms. LaRoche opposed, seeing no other objections the motion passed.**

- **A result of the last item discussed, it was suggested that staff incorporate language that captures the broader regional concepts/priorities without identifying specific projects.** *The Committee member further clarified that the proposed language could be incorporated in this section as a couple of paragraphs or additional implementation measures. Mr. Karns explained that this suggestion would help to draw attention and give importance to projects without creating inequity among projects. A Committee member concurred with Mr. Karns, in that the identification of broader regional concepts would help to lessen disproportionate representation of specific projects, level the field for limited regional funds and resources. From further discussion some ideas, identified by the Committee, for incorporation as broad regional concepts/priorities included telecommunications, infrastructure, site development, creative*

industry, etc. Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee for a motion from the Committee to direct staff how this information should be presented.

**Ms. Klefos made a motion to develop new “Regional Activities” encompassing broad regional concepts/priorities that reflect the removed “Project Based Actions,” without listing specific projects. The Motion was seconded by Mr. Bolton. Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent, seeing no objections the motion passed.**

Mr. Matuszko asked whether there was interest among Committee members to continue reviewing the Regional Activities. Seeing general support for continuing the discussion, Mr. Matuszko began a line-by-line discussion of the remaining implementation measures.

The comments and concerns raised by Committee members, regarding the implementation measures, included:

- **It was suggested that the “Healthcare Pipeline” proposal be combined with the “Industry Sector Initiative” proposal.** *To clarify the suggestion, the Committee member explained that the Healthcare Pipeline seemed too specific and that it may fit well as a Next Step. Staff indicated that the edit would be made.*
- **Could language referencing or researching the “Quality of Life” need to attract people (workers) to the region.** *Staff explained that the regional retention and attraction program, listed under the Coordinated Economic Development Activities, may address the concern. Mr. Karns suggested that the Annual Workforce Blueprint may better address the concern. To clarify the focus of the concern, Mr. Matuszko asked whether the concern focused on emphasizing the Quality of Life needs for individuals. A Committee member felt this suggestion was too specific if identified as a stand-alone activity. Another Committee member mentioned that the workers for each industry are completely different and that it would be better to add language to the Next Step field of the Annual Workforce Blueprint proposal, focusing on the critical Quality of Life needs for workers. After further discussion, by the Committee, it was decided that language be added in the Next Step field of the Annual Workforce Blueprint.*
- **It was recommended that the language of the Implementation section be generic and not specific.**
- **A concern was raised regarding the “Berkshire Light Compact,” specifically what this proposal hoped to achieve.** *Mr. Matuszko explained that this is a new initiative being encouraged by Berkshire County’s legislative delegation to advocate for energy efficiency programs, effective consumer advocacy, a competitive electricity supply and more green power options. Mr. Karns then suggested it may be beneficial to incorporate this proposal as one of the elements of the broadly discussed Energy measure, much like the “Alternative Energy and Energy Infrastructure Improvements” proposal. This would consolidate implementation measures and provide a means to identify the regional priority of energy better. After further discussion, by the Committee, it was decided that a summarized proposal should be developed to highlight the region’s energy needs.*

Hearing no further comments or concerns, Mr. Matuszko moved the discussion to the next agenda item.

## **5. CEDS Strategy Committee’s Endorsement of 30-day Public Notice**

Mr. Matuszko began by explaining to the Committee the remaining steps necessary to complete the CEDS process. Specifically, he noted the EDA requirement for a 30-day public comment period and that the final report needs to be sent to the EDA by June 30<sup>th</sup>. He then mentioned that staff was hopeful if there was general support for the Implementation section that the draft report could be distributed for public comments. He explained that Mr. Sexton has been working diligently to address the comments and edits that have been submitted for the other sections of the report. Mr. Matuszko then asked whether there was a motion regarding the announcement of the public comment period?

**Mr. Hoffman made a motion authorizing the distribution of the Draft 2011 Berkshire Comprehensive Economic development Strategy for public review. The motion was seconded by Ms. Ludwiszewski. Mr. Matuszko asked for further discussion. Items that were raised are discussed below:**

A Committee member urged staff to contact all agencies and organization to ensure they were supportive and willing to be listed as a sponsor or partner under the implementation measures. Mr. Matuszko explained that staff has already contacted most of the agencies and organizations identified, but that staff would double check with each entity. Another Committee member cautioned the use of the word “endorsement.” The Committee member also mentioned that staff should be very explicit that this draft report has not been endorsed by the CEDS Strategy Committee, the BRPC (full Commission) or the communities of Berkshire County. Mr. Matuszko acknowledged that staff did not intend the motion to endorse or approve the full report in any way, shape or form. Mr. Karns clarified

by explaining that staff was just looking for authorization from the CEDS Strategy Committee to announce the 30-day public comment period.

**Mr. Matuszko then asked for unanimous consent on the motion, seeing no objections the motion passed.**

#### **6. Next Meeting (Tuesday, April 12th, 2011 at 12:30pm)**

Mr. Matuszko explained that the next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>. Knowing that there may be a large amount of comments to address following the public comment period, Mr. Matuszko suggested that another meeting in May be tentatively added. The Committee agreed that a second meeting should be tentatively scheduled for May 24<sup>th</sup>.

#### **7. Other Items?**

No items were raised.

#### **8. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30pm.

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

- Meeting Agenda
- Draft Minutes from the March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011 CEDS Strategy Committee meeting
- A copy of the revised language for the Implementation section
- A copy of the draft Project Priority List narratives