

JAMES MULLEN, Chair  
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Executive Director

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

*Tuesday, November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2010, 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  
David Rooney Resigned Kevin O'Donnell X Keith Girouard X Mike Nuvallie AB  
Laury Epstein X Mike Supranowicz AB Lauri Klefos X Michael Hoffmann X  
Christine Ludwiszewski X Eleanore Velez X Deanna Ruffer AB Ann Dobrowolski (Alt) X  
Helena Fruscio X Tim Geller X Robert Wilson X Brenda Burdick AB Mark Berman X

**BRPC Staff**

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

**Public**

Allison Johnson X

**Meeting Minutes**

**1. Call to Order**

The November 30, 2010 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 recorded 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 October 26, 2010 meeting of the CEDS Strategy Committee.

**Mr. Hoffmann made a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Hazzard. 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 "What are the Berkshires" agenda item.

#### **4. 2011 CEDS – What are the Berkshires?**

##### **a. A Snapshot of the Berkshire Region (Draft)**

##### **b. Berkshires Regional Analysis and Influences (Draft)**

Mr. Matuszko briefly explained that the following presentation would discuss the economic situation of the Berkshires through a review of demographic, economic, environmental/geographical, governmental, social, infrastructure and clustering industry data. Throughout the presentation, made by Mr. Maloy and Mr. Sexton, they will discuss their analysis of the data, touch on the major trends and highlight some potential conclusions that can be drawn from the data. Mr. Matuszko asked the Committee to keep in mind the major trends and highlights of the data, since at the next meeting (January 11<sup>th</sup>) the Committee the goals and objectives for the CEDS report will be set. That being said, Mr. Matuszko turned to floor over to Mr. Maloy and Mr. Sexton.

Mr. Maloy began with an explanation on how the data had been gathered (i.e. source) and noted that comparisons had been made with adjacent economic regions, the state and the nation. In certain instances, data was not available or was not comparable with previous data sets; therefore, the data was presented as consistently as possible. Mr. Sexton also explained that page numbers had been added to the presentations slides to help orient the Committee during the presentation, those page numbers correlate to pages in the meeting packet.

Mr. Maloy then began the presentation. The key discussion points or questions brought up during the presentation by the Committee, broken down by data characteristic, included:

##### **i. Demographic Characteristics**

- The downward population trend
- Population loss of young adults (20-35 years of age)
- Population growth of aging adults (45-65 and 75-85 years of age)
- Is there an organized movement of people to the Berkshire taking place?
- Can a statement be incorporated to acknowledge the seasonal shift of population and the economic affects?

##### **i. Economic Characteristics**

- What is the usefulness and validity of the CDFIF data?
- Could the Creative Community be highlighted within the economic characteristics section?
- Speak to the fact that the retail industry is indicative of the population trend and the incremental growth of the professional industry.
- Where does e-commerce fit in the industry sectors?
- Change Table 3 to actually represent the top ten employers in the County. Locate a different source for this data (Chambers of Commerce). Limit to businesses that are above 500 employees.
- The end of the Northeast Dairy Compact is a potential reason for the drop in the annual market value of agricultural products for Berkshire County.
- A number of Committee members identified that they had potential sources for entrepreneurial data. Those members will provide that information to BRPC staff.
- Include information on the number of people employed as a proportion of the working age population.
- Try to differentiate between earned and unearned income within the median household income data.
- A comparison of industry changes with adjacent economic regions, state and nationally would help to indicate where Berkshire County is at.

##### **ii. Environmental/Geographical Characteristics**

- Update Land Use map to take into consideration current zoning.
- Correct the labeling on Table 10, so the information being presented is less confusing.

##### **iii. Governmental Characteristics**

- Incorporate some discussion of how BRPC fits within the regional structure as a public body corporate (sub-state district) and its unique enabling legislation.
- Give emphasis to the fact that Massachusetts is much more heavily regulated than other states.
- In Table 11, correct/verify the label and data for the "Tax Rate %" column. It should be a millage rate.

##### **iv. Social Characteristics**

- Note that the Census data didn't provide associate's degree data in the 1980 Census.
- Work with BCREB to ensure appropriate and adequate discussion and representation is given to vocational training opportunities.

- Berkshire County has a larger pool of less educated workers in comparison to the State and adjacent economic regions.
- Berkshire County's greatest export is its students leaving for higher education opportunities.
- A large percentage of Berkshire County's housing stock is aging. This is similar to the New England area in general.
- Berkshire County has a smaller percentage of families that are burdened by their housing costs. A general rule is to not dedicate more than 30% of your income towards housing.
- Proportionally, Berkshire County is doing okay with housing starts.
- Table 12 does speak to home values; however, second homes are most likely skewing this data and should be discussed. There potentially may be an effect on home sale prices because of second homes as well. Find and incorporate data on second/seasonal homes.

#### **v. Transportation/Infrastructure Characteristics**

- Speak about the movement of goods in terms of infrastructure capacity.
- As it pertains to emerging industries or the region economy look into the rates, capacity and the availability within the region to distribute good. Draw a correlation to e-commerce/new economy.
- Edit language within the draft section to include the Town of Monterey as an underserved community for wireless.
- Include discussion pertaining to broadband, specifically speaking to the last mile issue. The state's focus is on the mid-mile.
- Speak more about the fact that Berkshire County is a water rich area, excluding Lenox.
- Since most of the water and sewer systems were designed and constructed to handle capacity needs for manufacturing companies like GE many communities have excess capacity available.
- More emphasis should be given to the aging water and sewer systems.
- Add mapping for water and waste water systems within the county.
- Include a cost comparison of electricity pricing between licensed electric companies within the state.

#### **a. Cluster Factors in the Berkshire**

- Review the calculation in the vertical axis for the cluster graph.
- Can the cluster graph show change over time for the county and nation?

To recap the data discussion, Mr. Maloy highlighted some of the key points and trends to consider when thinking ahead to the next meeting where the goals, objectives and project priorities for the CEDS report will be discussed. He then asked Committee to identify other key points to consider. Some ideas or thoughts generated by Committee members included:

- Speaking to the training capacity within the region's educational/training institutions.
- How could a recently released document entitled, "The 2010 State New Economy Index: Benchmarking Economic Transformation in the States" be incorporated into the CEDS? Staff indicated that a copy of the document would be posted to the CEDS webpage for all the Committee members to review.
- How could the vacant manufacturing mills factor or fit into the economic situation of the region. Mr. Matuszko explained that the closed mills are both an asset and a barrier.
- Another point mentioned, was to give more emphasis to the agricultural industry to modernize agricultural techniques and technologies.
- A Committee member identified that he may have a source for data pertaining to capital infusion.

Mr. Matuszko thanked the Committee for actively participating and contributing to the meeting. He mentioned, as the development of this document progresses staff will keep the key points discussed today in mind. As much as possible those ideas, points, and thoughts will be incorporated into the final report. Mr. Matuszko cautioned that this is an evolving process which may necessitate changes as it progresses.

Mr. Matuszko then asked the Committee if there were any further questions. Seeing none, Mr. Matuszko moved the discussion to CEDS Information.

## **5. CEDS Information**

### **a. CEDS Structure Requirements**

Mr. Matuszko began by explaining that the EDA's requirements for the structure of the CEDS were based on 13 CFR Chapter III of the Interim Final Rule. He clarified by saying, "Although the Berkshire CEDS was required to comply with the EDA mandates it could still be developed under a broader context so other funding avenues can be

pursued. When the EDA reviews the CEDS for its approval they will compare it against the adopted regulations. A copy of those regulations have been included in the meeting packet for reference.

#### **b. EDA Funding Opportunities**

Another follow-up from last meeting, Committee members had asked for clarification on the EDA's programs and funding opportunities and their available. Mr. Sexton explained that the funding opportunities currently noticed, on the EDA webpage, are pending funding appropriations from Congress. Those notices solicited applications for Economic Development Assistance programs including: the Public Works, Economic Adjustment Assistance, GCCMIF, Planning and Local Technical Assistance programs.

#### **c. EDA Approval Process**

In terms of approval process, Mr. Matuszko explained that there are no signature requirements. It was mentioned by the EDA representative that letters of support should be included with the submission of the final CEDS report. If those letters could not be secured, the EDA identified that it would be willing to work with BRPC and the community to work through their differences. Ultimately, whether or not the CEDS is approved by EDA, is dependent upon its compliance with the EDA mandates. After speaking with adjacent Regional Planning Organizations, it looks as though the EDA has eased up and is more conducive to working with regions to get CEDS planning documents adopted.

#### **d. State Engagement w/CEDS Process**

At the last meeting, staff had eluded to the fact that there was an approved CEDS for the State of Massachusetts. After conversations with our EDA representative, this was found to be incorrect. The State of Massachusetts does not have an EDA approved CEDS, but does have an economic framework plan. According to a conversation with an individual at the state, a law was passed this past summer that stipulated the next administration would be required to develop an economic development plan. That being said, the Patrick Administration is planning to re-evaluate the framework plan and will subsequently develop an economic development plan, to be released this spring. The contact at the state also indicated a willingness or interest to incorporate regional level priorities within the State's plan. Also mentioned during this conversation, a representative from the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development could attend/speak at an upcoming Strategy Committee meeting. Staff will keep the Committee apprised of this potential meeting attendee.

Mr. Matuszko then asked the Committee if there were any further questions. Seeing none, Mr. Matuszko moved the discussion to the revised Vision Statement concepts.

### **6. 2011 CEDS Vision Statement (Revised)**

#### **a. 2011 CEDS Vision Statement (Revised Draft)**

Mr. Matuszko explained that as a result of input from the Committee at the last meeting, staff had developed a couple of revised vision statement options. That being said, Committee members were asked to take these options home and evaluate them. Comments regarding the various options should be submitted to Mr. Sexton as soon as possible.

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

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

Mr. Sexton then provided the Committee with a brief update of ongoing outreach activities. During this update he mentioned:

- On October 16, 2010, staff presented an update to the BRPC Commission on the status of the CEDS process; and
- Three regional public meeting were being planned for the month on December in the Town of Great Barrington, the City of North Adams and the City of Pittsfield.
- Staff had contacted the Berkshire Eagle to determine if they would be interested in publishing an article regarding the CEDS process.

Mr. Sexton said, "Once the meeting dates and locations are solidified, staff will notify the CEDS Strategy Committee."

#### **b. Additional Organizations Sent Project Solicitations**

Based in comments from the Committee at the last meeting, staff solicited projects from an additional six economic development organizations. Many of those receiving solicitation in this round included members of the Committee.

**8. Schedule Next Meeting (*Tuesday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2011 at 12:30pm*)**

The Committee agreed to hold the next CEDS Strategy Committee meeting on Tuesday, January 11, 2011 at 12:30pm.

**9. Other Items?**

No items were raised.

**10. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm.

**Documents distributed at the meeting included:**

Meeting Agenda

Draft Minutes from the October 26, 2010 CEDS Strategy Committee meeting

A draft of the "*What are the Berkshires*" section

A copy of the Interim Final Rule on 13 CFR Chapter III, specifically part 303

A list of EDA Programs, Investment Priorities and Federal Funding Opportunities

A copy of the *2011 CEDS Vision Statement (Revised Concepts)*

A list of acronyms and abbreviations being used

A copy of the *2011 CEDS Project Proposal* list