

CMRPC Physical Development Committee
Meeting Minutes
February 16, 2012

Present: Chair Tim Wheeler, Kathleen Keohane, Otto Lies, Bob Hassinger, Peter Krawczyk, and Chris Baehrecke
Staff: Megan DiPrete, Vera Koliass
Absent: Al Lanni

Minutes: ***MOTION*** was made by Mr. Hassinger to approve the minutes of December 15, 2011. Seconded by Mr. Lies, the motion carried unanimously.

Discussion – Review of FY11 Audit relative to CDAP program

Mr. Wheeler reviewed the FY11 audit notes. In particular, it was noted that several CDAP projects had run over-budget in that time period. A number of accounting changes have been in process over the past 1-2 years in order to identify and/or correct issues. In particular, discussion included:

- Capturing Costs. Historically costs were often not fully captured by a project budget line but were billed to LPA and other contract codes. There was a concerted effort in fiscal years 2010 and 2011 to accurately track project costs in order to improve future budgeting.
- Contract responsibility. The Executive Director has contract signing authorization. This streamlines internal operations significantly.
- Budgeting. Historically project budgets were lump sum and did not contain itemized task detail. Through recent efforts, projects are broken down by task and staff member in order to develop far more accurate budgeting.
- Monitoring. Beginning in FY12, the weekly payroll costs of each project are tracked. This has added a tremendous check/balance opportunity, and also provides timely overviews of project salary costs to date.
- Staffing changes. In the last quarter of FY10, half of the CDAP staff experienced turnover. The replacement staff netted a higher salary payroll. Therefore, projects that had been previously budgeted based on prior staff were off-budget. Also, one of the new staff members was fairly junior level and therefore required significant “shadowing” time, significantly affecting budget.

- Scope Creep. Maintaining the integrity of contracted tasks is challenging. Even in the most conservative situations, however, there are occasions when additional, non-budgeted tasks must be performed. The current 495 Compact project is an excellent example.
- Local Participation. Similar to scope creep, most contract projects require certain activities be successfully coordinated at the local level. In some cases, even basic efforts to secure quorum for a meeting have required multiple unanticipated staff hours. Budgeting in advance for this possibility may vastly increase contract costs, thereby putting the project out of reach of our communities. This is an ongoing concern.

Ms. DiPrete reviewed the current work in the Community Development and Planning Department (CDAP) program including work in progress and potential work under development. For future Physical Development Committee meetings, she will provide the general overview of CDAP projects, including total budget and expenditures through the date most recently available through financial statements.

The Committee reviewed current projects. In particular, several projects are closely interrelated. The Economic Development Vision Plan and Strategy project relies on prior year DLTA funding, which was used to provide familiarity with the Census and American Community Survey data and accessibility for staff and our communities; the EDA planning grant awarded in August 2011, which covers only a small portion of our indirect costs, and a portion of the current year DLTA program. Additionally, some implementation work might be funded by the pending Community Innovation Challenge Grant application.

Consider DLTA-funded Project Requests

CDAP Staff have developed two requests, and one was received from our Communities. One request is the second phase of DLTA-funded work in support of the Economic Development Vision and Plan project. Preliminary budget \$55,389. The second staff proposal is to identify opportunities to regionalize various municipal services. Preliminary budget \$24,931; this budget could change significantly depending on local response. The local request was submitted by Spencer and seeks economic development work with Leicester and Charlton. Staff recommend a project scope and budget that includes Spencer and Leicester, as they are in the same sub-region, along Route 9. Charlton would be included in the next round of EDA- and DLTA-funded work, targeting the Southwest, North and West Sub-regions. Preliminary budget \$32,292.

In addition, Ms. DiPrete indicated that sustainability planning and general municipal assistance would be available.

MOTION by Mr. Hassinger to approve the 3 specific projects, totaling \$112,602. Seconded by Mr. Krawczyk, the motion carried unanimously.

Consider Request for Reimbursement

Mr. Hubbard is a Delegate from Barre, is the Sub-regional delegate from the North sub-region, and agreed to serve as the CMRPC representative to the Scenic Byways of Western Mass. Steering Committee. Mr. Hubbard attended a meeting of the Task Force recently, in Northampton, and inquired whether his mileage costs to attend these steering committee meetings could be eligible for reimbursement. The Executive Director referred the matter to the Physical Development Committee for consideration.

After discussion, the Committee agreed that this constituted a policy determination that should be set by the Executive Committee, and deferred the matter to the EC for their consideration.

CDAP Program Branding

The Committee reviewed their earlier discussion notes. Ms. Koliias reviewed the graphics that had been developed along one of the themes that emerged at the last meeting.

The Committee was pleased with the direction, and expressed concern that the program should be professionally developed. All agreed that the graphics should include examples from around the sub-regions.

The Committee asked that staff develop additional graphics to address each of the statutory master plan categories, as well as the categories captured by the proposed CLURPA legislation. Once the packet is complete, submit it to the Executive Director with a cover letter on behalf of the PD Committee explaining the background, evolution and objective, and seeking his guidance for how best to move the project forward.

MEPA filings:

Ms. Koliias reviewed various MEPA filings with the Committee for projects in the Region.

Adjournment

A MOTION was made by Mr. Hassinger to adjourn at 9pm. Seconded by Mr. Lies, the motion carried unanimously.