



Southern  
Worcester  
County  
Economic  
Development  
Organization

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Planning Commission  
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**Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization  
Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
December 7, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

**SWC EDO Board Members: (Exec Cmte)\***

Janet Pierce, CMRPC\*  
Karen Pelletier, WRCC\*  
Jeff Turgeon, Central Mass Hire\*  
Brad Kadelski, Brookfield\*  
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC\*  
Julie Holstrom, WBDC\*  
Tony Sousa, Oxford\*  
Elizabeth Cruz, LABO\*

**Guests:**

**CMRPC Staff:**

Kerrie Salwa, CMRPC  
Joe Sziabowski, CMRPC

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1. Meeting called to order at 3:05 PM: Janet Pierce called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. Kerrie Salwa facilitated a roll call of Executive Committee members to note who was in attendance.
  2. Minutes: Janet Pierce stated that the second item on the agenda was to review the Executive Committee's minutes from September 7, 2023, and November 2, 2023. Tony Sousa made a motion to approve the minutes from both dates, and Jeannie Hebert seconded the motion. Janet Pierce asked if there was any discussion concerning the minutes. A roll call vote of the Executive Committee was conducted, and the motion passed unanimously.
  3. CEDS Update: Kerrie Salwa provided an update on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs). Kerrie shared that a few weeks ago, CMRPC sent the finalized CEDS document and checklist to the regional EDA office. In response, the regional EDA office requested that CMRPC fill out a new, different checklist. Kerrie said she was currently working on updating the new checklist.

Kerrie also mentioned that she and Janet would like to present the final CEDs to the full SWC EDO Board at its next quarterly meeting on December 14, 2023. There has not been a quorum at previous quarterly meetings to approve the CEDs.

4. Committee Updates: Kerrie Salwa shared updates related to the new SWC EDO committees.

She thanked Karen Pelletier for connecting her with Monique Messier, President of Discover Central Massachusetts. Kerrie said that she would consult Monique on the CEDS marketing goals.

Kerrie also reported that she is working on a project with Jeff Turgeon from the Mass Central Workforce Development Board. On February 27, 2024, there will be a meeting at the MassDOT District 3 Headquarters (499 Plantation St, Worcester, MA 01605) from 2:00 to 4:00 PM that seeks to introduce town planners and town managers to regional workforce development programs. There is currently discussion ongoing to see whether the event should be merged another similar event being planned by the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber's event aims to connect schools and school curriculum with local manufacturers and businesses.

Next, Kerrie notified the Executive Committee that she met with David Foss, MassDEP's Statewide Brownfields Coordinator, and he thought that CMRPC's recent brownfields assessment coalition grant application was the only application of that kind submitted in all of New England. David Foss also reported that thanks to the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, there will be some 128A funding that the state can allocate towards brownfields assessment or cleanup projects. Southbridge is a candidate for some of that funding.

Finally, Kerrie recapped the Executive Committee's conversation in November concerning challenges with the full SWC EDO Board's attendance at quarterly meetings. The Board has not been able to field a quorum the past few quarterly meetings. Kerrie and Janet recently met to discuss the possibility of sending out a letter to board members to gauge their interest in continuing to serve on the SWC EDO Board and/or any of its new subcommittees.

Janet Pierce noted that one of her concerns is that that Debra Beavin, Massachusetts's EDA Economic Development Representative, might be looking for the full SWC EDO Board to approve the CEDs, not just the Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee voiced no objections to CMRPC sending out the letter.

5. Project Review: Kerrie Salwa shared that the Town of Douglas applied for a MassWorks grant as part of its North Street project. The grant was intended to serve as a match for another grant application to the EDA. Unfortunately, Douglas did not receive the MassWorks grant, so

the EDA application has been put on hold. Additionally, Kerrie notified the Executive Committee that an engineer was found for the Wrights Mill project in Warren, MA.

## 6. Partner Updates:

- Jeannie Hebert (President, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce--BVCC): BVCC just hosted its annual “Jingle, Mingle, and Stroll” event in Sutton, MA. BVCC has the following events and programs coming up:
  - Educational courses on QuickBooks (January)
  - Love Your Legislator Breakfast (February 16, 2024, at Galliford’s Restaurant & Tavern, Southwick Zoo, 2 Southwick Street, Mendon)
  - Expo at Northbridge High School field house (March 16, 2024)
  
- Karen Pelletier (Executive Vice President, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce–WRCC): WRCC recent / upcoming events:
  - “Clinton Area Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours” event
  - “Breakfast Club” event; Lauren Jones, Massachusetts Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development, was the keynote speaker at the breakfast.
  - CORI workshop for employers (Dec. 6, 2023).
  - “Business After Hours” on December 14, 2023 at Bay State Brewery (112 Harding St, Worcester, MA 01604).
  
- Jeff Turgeon (Executive Director, MassHire Central Region Workforce Board): MassHire Central has been working with a couple shelters in the area to help refugees get their work authorization papers. Jeannie and the BVCC have helped MassHire Central reach out to businesses for support in the areas of transportation and translation. Jeff asked Karen Pelletier if the Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development said anything at the WRCC breakfast about a new workforce training program for migrants that could involve unpaid job shadowing or payments in the form of stipends from nonprofits.
  
- Elizabeth Cruz (President, Latin American Business Organization): Upcoming / ongoing LABO event and programs:
  - Events: End of Year Networking Event (December 8, 2023, at Mechanics Hall, 321 Main St Worcester, MA 01608); Capital Funds Roundtable (December 12, 2023 at

Worcester State University); Business to business networking (start January 20, 2024); Business Expo (April 27, 2024)

- Trainings / Classes: Venture Growth class (at Clark University); first aid and CPR training in Spanish (January 20, 2023); supply diversity training in Spanish (January 22, 2024); food safety, allergen, and alcohol training in Spanish (January 28, 2024);

7. Review Meeting Dates / Locations and Other Important Dates: Kerrie Salwa informed the Executive Committee that the next quarterly SWC EDO Board meeting will be on December 14, 2023, and that the next Executive Committee meeting will be on January 4, 2024. The following Executive Committee meetings will be held on February 1, 2024 and March 7, 2024. After that, a quarterly board meeting will take place on March 21, 2024.

Kerrie noted that the SWC EDO subcommittee meetings will be starting up again in 2024 and asked the Executive Committee if they would prefer to meet only every other month in light of this development. The Executive Committee voiced support for this idea. It was noted that a meeting could always be scheduled on shorter notice if a project demanded it.

8. Adjourn: Janet Pierce made a motion to adjourn, and Julie Holstrom seconded the motion. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 3:43 PM.