



Southern
Worcester
County
Economic
Development
Organization

c/o Central Massachusetts Regional
Planning Commission
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**Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization
Executive Committee
Remote Meeting via Zoom
May 2, 2024
Meeting Minutes**

Present:

SWC EDO Exec. Committee Members:

Janet Pierce, CMRPC
Jeff Turgeon, Central Mass Hire
Brad Kadelski, Town of Brookfield
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC
Julie Holstrom, WBDC
Tony Sousa, Town of Oxford
David George, Town of Holden

Guests:

CMRPC Staff:

Trish Settles, CMRPC
Joe Sziabowski, CMRPC

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1. **Facilitated Roll Call:** Janet Pierce called the meeting to order at 3:09 PM. Joe Sziabowski took a roll call vote of the Executive Committee, and a quorum of members was present.
 2. **Minutes:** Tony Sousa made a motion to approve the February 1, 2024, Executive Committee Meeting minutes. David George seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved, with seven members voting yes.
 3. **Discuss SWC EDO Board Composition:** Janet Pierce reiterated the importance of securing a quorum of the SWC EDO Board of Directors at its quarterly meetings. She explained how poor attendance has been a chronic issue for the Board. The last time the Board was able to approve meeting minutes was December 2022. She invited the Executive Committee to offer their thoughts on how to change the composition of the Board to address these issues.

Julie Holmstrom asked if there were Economic Development Administration (EDA) requirements concerning the composition of the Board.

Janet Pierce responded that the original SWC EDO Board of Directors was set up in the mold of a public-private-nonprofit partnership. There was little guidance from the EDA. A particular emphasis was placed on the Board demonstrating regional equity.

Trish Settles added that she based the SWC EDO Board of Directors bylaws on governance documents from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG). The Executive Committee is welcome to change the Board bylaws.

Trish recommended that the SWC EDO Executive Committee should take over the functional responsibilities of the SWC EDO Board of Directors. The Board of Directors would then assume an advisory function in relation to the Executive Committee. That is, the Executive Committee would become the governing body for the SWC EDO in place of the Board of Directors.

Previously, the SWC EDO was formally accepted as a committee of CMRPC and the CMRPC chairperson appoints the members of the SWC EDO. This would change to just appointing a small group, such as that currently operating as the Executive Committee of the SWC EDO, as the SWC EDO and reserving the invitation of the larger body as the Advisory Council.

Several Executive Committee members expressed support for this idea.

Janet Pierce asked if the SWC EDO Board of Directors would need to vote on this change and whether the vote could take place outside of a Board meeting, for example by mail or email.

Trish Settles responded that the Board of Directors should be given notice of the change. The Board could vote on the change remotely. Trish also recommended bringing the change to the attention of the CMRPC Executive Committee and perhaps eventually the organization's full Commission.

Discussion followed concerning whether the Board would still need a quorum if this change was

implemented. Trish Settles explained that the SWC EDO Advisory Council would not need a quorum because they would no longer be making any decisions. Their role would only be advisory. They would provide their insights and recommendations to the SWC EDO (i.e., a small group small modelled off of the current SWC EDO Executive Committee).

It was agreed that these changes should be presented at the next SWC EDO Quarterly Board Meeting on June 20, 2024. CMRPC staff will draft new bylaws to reflect the changes. The bylaws will be shared with the CMRPC Exec Committee, the EDA, and the current SWC EDO Executive Committee prior to the June Board meeting.

David George asked if given these changes, the SWC EDO would still be representative of the region?

Trish Settles responded that the composition of the SWC EDO and The SWC EDO Advisory Council would still be representative of the region. The composition of the decision-making body, the SWC EDO, would look and feel like the current SWC EDO Executive Committee and have similar seats to guarantee representation. The membership of the SWC EDO Advisory Council would also continue to represent the same broad range of interests represented by the current membership SWC EDO Board of Directors.

Julie Holstrom proposed a motion in support of the SWC EDO Executive Committee assuming the functional responsibilities of the SWC EDO Board of Directors, thereby becoming the SWC EDO committee under the framework of CMRPC. The former SWC EDO Board of Directors will assume an advisory role in relation to the newly constituted SWC EDO Committee. Jeannie Hebert seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously, with all those still present voting in favor (six members).

4. Committee Updates: Joe Sziabowski reported the following SWC EDO subcommittee updates:
 - The Workforce Education Committee has not met since their career services summit on February 27, 2024.
 - He was not aware of any recent meetings of the Worcester Business Resource Alliance, which is acting as the Business Support Committee.
 - The following committees are still being built out:

- Responsible Development / Brownfields Advisory Committee
- Marketing Central Massachusetts Committee
- Municipal Capacity Committee

Janet Pierce requested that open subcommittee opportunities be shared with attendees at the June Quarterly Board Meeting.

5. Project Review: Julie Holstrom shared the following updates on the St. Gobain industrial project, which is being overseen by the Worcester Business Development Corporation (WBDC) and their nonprofit arm, New Garden Park (NGP):

- WBDC and NGP are about 30-35% done with abatement and demolition at the site. There is a request for proposal out for more work. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) grant money and revolving loan fund monies from the City of Worcester should be enough to cover any abatement work.
- They plan to apply for funds from the EDA Public Works Program by July 1, 2024.
- They anticipate the St. Gobain project will cost \$20-\$30 million in total.
- They are undertaking a feasibility study for network geothermal at the site.

6. Partner Updates:

Tony Sousa (Assistant Town Manager - Oxford, MA): Tony Sousa reported the following updates from Oxford, MA:

- The Town of Oxford is now part of the Massachusetts Vacant Storefronts Program administered by the Massachusetts Office of Business Development. The vacant storefront program will target the Village Business District in Oxford.
- Oxford is also working on the first phase of a new economic development plan with CMRPC.

Brad Kadelski (Select Board Member - Brookfield, MA): Brad Kadelski shared the following updates from Brookfield, MA:

- Brookfield hired a new Town Administrator. The new administrator has experience serving on both select boards and finance committees.
- Brookfield recently lost their grant writer.

7. Review Meeting Dates/Locations and Other Important Dates: Joe Sziabowski reported that the next SWC EDO Quarterly Board Meeting would take place on June 20, 2024. Janet Pierce requested that the meeting be hosted at the Revere Room at 1 Mercantile Street, Worcester, MA 01608. She also proposed that the meeting be held at a time besides 3:00 PM, if that would result in more Executive Committee members being able to attend.
8. Other Announcements: There were no other announcements.
9. Adjourn: Janet Pierce called the meeting to a close at 4:02 PM. There was no quorum of Executive Committee members at this time, so no vote was taken.