



Southern  
Worcester  
County  
Economic  
Development  
Organization

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**Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization  
Executive Committee  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
August 1, 2024  
Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

**SWC EDO Exec. Committee Members:**

Elizabeth Cruz, LABO  
David George, Town of Holden  
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC  
Julie Holstrom, WBDC  
Brad Kadelski, Town of Brookfield  
Joseph Laydon, Town of Upton  
Karen Pelletier, WRCC  
Tony Sousa, Town of Oxford

**Guests:**

**CMRPC Staff:**

Kerrie Salwa, CMRPC  
Joe Sziabowski, CMRPC

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- 1. Facilitated Roll Call:** Karen Pelletier called the meeting to order at 3:05 PM. There was not a quorum present, so the meeting began unofficially. A quorum of Executive Committee members was reached at 3:13 PM, and the meeting was subsequently begun officially.
  - 2. Minutes:** Agenda item 2, “Review Minutes of the May 2, 2024, SWC EDO Executive Committee Meeting” was initially tabled due to a lack of quorum.
  - 3. Update on Structural Changes to SWC EDO Board of Directors:** Kerrie Salwa reported that the structural changes to the SWC EDO Board of Directors (voted on at the May 2, 2024, Executive Committee Meeting and discussed at the June 20, 2024, Board of Directors Meeting) will be presented at the September 12, 2024, CMRPC Quarterly Commission Meeting.
  - 4. Committee Updates:** Kerrie Salwa shared the following updates concerning SWC EDO subcommittees:
    - **Marketing Central MA Subcommittee:**
      - Kerrie recently met with Tim Power from Discover Central Massachusetts, the regional tourism council representing most of the SWC EDO region. Discover

Central Massachusetts is currently looking to work with municipalities on an individual basis or in groups to help them with tourism marketing.

- Responsible Development / Brownfields Advisory Subcommittee: Kerrie informed the Committee that CMRPC is still waiting to receive a debrief on their EPA Brownfields Assessment Coalition grant application from last year. She added that CMRPC is likely to reapply for the grant again this year.
- Workforce Development Subcommittee: Kerrie reported that she recently organized a meeting between Quinsigamond Community College (QCC) and the Worcester Regional Transit Authority (WRTA). The WRTA anticipates that several of its bus fleet mechanics will retire soon, so it is looking to recruit new workers to fill these vacancies.
- Municipal Capacity Subcommittee: Kerrie said that she is still recruiting participants for the Municipal Capacity Committee.
- Business Support Subcommittee (Worcester Business Resource Alliance, WBRA): Karen Pelletier shared that the WBRA has continued to meet monthly. At each meeting, local organizations share updates on programs, resources, and events intended to support local small businesses and entrepreneurs. The WBRA recently discussed the City of Worcester's new program to provide \$5,000 grants to Worcester-based businesses that achieve specific certifications with the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office (SDO).

Elizabeth Cruz mentioned that the Latin American Business Organization (LABO) has hosts supplier diversity certification workshops.

2. **Minutes (reintroduced after quorum was reached)**: Tony Sousa made a motion to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2024, SWC EDO Executive Committee Meeting. Brad Kadelski seconded the motion. Seven members voted in favor of the motion. Karen Pelletier abstained.

## 5. Project Review:

Kerrie Salwa notified the group that Debra Beavin, the Economic Development Administration representative for the region (CT, MA, & RI), visited Worcester County on July 15. Debra toured several sites in the region, including:

- The former Saint Gobain industrial campus (part of the Worcester Business Development Corporation's [WBDC] Greendale Revitalization Initiative)
- Polar Park
- The Worcester Memorial Auditorium
- The Worcester Reactory
- Douglas, MA (site of EDA infrastructure funding to support new warehousing and industrial space)

Kerrie also said that Debra discussed potential funding projects in Worcester and the surrounding region with her and others in attendance. Debra reiterated that the SWC EDO is next in line for EDA Planning and Local Technical Assistance funding.

Julie Holstrom shared an update on the WBDC's Saint Gobain project. She informed the group that WBDC will be submitting an application to the EDA through the City of Worcester for infrastructure funding on Friday of next week. WBDC will be asking for \$2.5 million in funding, an increase over their initial estimate of \$2.25 million.

Karen Pelletier thanked CMRPC for hosting Debra and accompanying her on her trip around the region. She also thanked Julie and Roberta Brien from the WBDC for doing a great job guiding Debra on a tour of the former Saint Gobain industrial campus.

Jeannie Hebert also thanked Kerrie and CMRPC for their involvement in securing EDA funds for Douglas.

## 6. Partner Updates:

- Jeannie Hebert (President, Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce--BVCC): Jeannie Hebert shared the following upcoming BVCC events with the Committee:
  - o Wednesday, August 14, 2024: "Steamers at Sunset" event
  - o Thursday, September 5, 2024: Educational Breakfast with Congressman Auchincloss
- Julie Holstrom (Director of Projects, Worcester Business Development Corporation - WBDC): Julie reported that the WBDC is working with the City of Worcester on an EDA funding application for the Saint Gobain project. WBDC has turned over all relevant documents to the City for review.
- Elizabeth Cruz (President, Latin American Business Organization--LABO): Elizabeth shared the following news from LABO:
  - o LABO is continuing to host supplier diversity certification workshops in Spanish, Portuguese, and English.
  - o Saturday, August 17, 2024: A Celebration of Puerto Rico at Polar Park
  - o Sunday, August 18, 2024: Roberto Clemente Youth Baseball Clinic at Polar Park
  - o LABO is hosting a 7-week venture start up training course in Southbridge, MA on Saturdays beginning September 7, 2024.
  - o Friday, December 6, 2024: End of Year Networking Event Friday
- Karen Pelletier (Executive Vice President, Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce--WRCC): Karen shared the following developments concerning the WRCC:
  - o The WRCC hired a new director of business recruitment, Darnell Dunn. Prior to joining WRCC's staff, Darnell was an active member of the WRCC's Board. Part of his portfolio will be to conduct outreach to manufacturers and developers.

- Tuesday, August 20, 2024: The MassHire Central Region Workforce Board and the WRCC are hosting “A Special Conversation on the Future of IT in Healthcare.”
- Friday, October 11, 2024: WRCC’s “Game Changers 2024” workforce development event

7. **Review Meeting Dates/Locations and Other Important Dates:** Joe Sziabowski shared that the next Executive Committee would be held on October 3, 2024.
8. **Other Announcements:** There were no other announcements.
9. **Adjourn:** The meeting adjourned at 3:33 PM.