



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  
January 5, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

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

Janet Pierce, CMRPC\*  
Karen Pelletier, WRCC\*  
Jeff Turgeon, Central Mass Hire\*  
Dave George, Rutland\*  
Brad Kadelski, Brookfield\*  
Jeremy Thompson, 495/MW\*  
Joe Laydon, Upton\*  
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC\*  
Julie Holstrom, WBDC\*

**Guests:**

David Sullivan, WRCC

**CMRPC Staff:**

Kerrie Salwa, CMRPC  
Ryan Saul, CMRPC  
Wenzheng Wang, CMRPC  
Rob Raymond, CMRPC

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1. Meeting called to order at 3:04 pm: Janet Pierce called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm. Ryan Saul facilitated a roll call of the Executive Committee to note who was remotely in attendance. Janet welcomed everyone and thanked them for making the time to remotely attend the January 2023 Meeting of the Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization (SWC EDO) Executive Committee.
  2. Minutes: Janet stated that the Executive Committee had to approve the meeting minutes from the December 1, 2022, Executive Committee meeting. Julie Holstrom made a motion to approve the minutes from December 1, 2022, and Jeff Turgeon seconded. Janet asked if there was any discussion. A roll-call vote of the Executive Committee was conducted. Dave George abstained. The motion passed.
  3. CEDS Priorities and Project Review: CMRPC held the CEDS kick-off at the SWC EDO Quarterly Meeting in December at Polar Park, which included a great discussion on economic development in the region. Kerrie mentioned that she, Ryan, and Wenzheng continue to meet weekly to track progress. A community engagement plan has been made, the survey has been launched,

and stakeholder interviews have begun. Meeting takeovers have also been scheduled for the WRBA on February 2<sup>nd</sup>, QCC on February 13<sup>th</sup>, CMRPC's Town Managers and Administrators meeting on February 9<sup>th</sup>, and CMRPC's Quarterly Meeting on March 9<sup>th</sup>. Thus far, productive meetings and interviews have been held with Kathy Rentsch of QCC, Kyle Brenner of Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School, and local BIPOC community leaders organized by Joe Corazzini of Clark University. At the SWC EDO BOD Quarterly Meeting on December 15<sup>th</sup>, CMRPC will also be hosting an official CEDS Kickoff meeting. CMRPC is going to continue conducting meeting takeovers, interviews, and other one-on-one meetings with stakeholders. Kerrie said CMRPC would appreciate the opportunity to present about the CEDS if any of the group members' organizations were holding meetings. Kerrie said CMRPC would be happy to speak to individuals or smaller groups as well. Concerning projects, Kerrie said there are no updates on current projects, but that CMRPC is preparing to help communities identify opportunities for EDA or state funding assistance. Through District Local Technical Assistance, CMRPC has funding that can be used to assist communities with federal or state grants.

Janet asked Jeannie to share any dates for meetings that CMRPC could speak it with Kerrie. Jeannie said she would do that and specifically mentioned the radio and television shows and BVCC's Legislative Breakfast on February 14<sup>th</sup> as potential opportunities. Kerrie said that she would be sending some potential times for a CEDS subcommittee Zoom meeting to Julie, Karen, and Kathy. Janet asked Jeff, Jeremy, and David to please share any opportunities for meeting takeovers with CMRPC. David said that a Clinton Chamber of Commerce event would be a good opportunity. Janet said it would be great, but Clinton is unfortunately not in the CMRPC region. Janet also said that CMRPC would be conducting outreach to all communities about the CEDS and to identify potential projects. She said that the DLTA funding Kerrie mentioned was previously not allowed to be used to help communities with state and federal grants, so it is a great opportunity. Kerrie also said CMRPC was considering the idea of asking Planning Boards and Selectboards if CMRPC could present about the CEDS. She asked Dave, Joe, and Brad for feedback on this idea. Joe said that it would vary from town to town. In Upton, he thinks that the Town's EDC would be best suited for CEDS matters. Brad said that he would mention the idea to Brookfield's other two Select Members. Dave said he would like CMRPC to speak about the CEDS to the Town, possibly in a joint Planning Board, Selectboard, and EDC meeting. He said he would think of the best way to proceed and coordinate with CMRPC. Karen Pelletier arrived to the meeting at the end of this agenda item.

4. EDD Designation Discussion: Karen congratulated CMRPC on receiving the EDD designation. Janet thanked Karen for setting the stage and thanked the group for their support throughout the process. Janet said she emailed Debra Beavin to thank her for her help during the process, and Debra congratulated CMRPC for receiving the designation. Debra also sent an email to all of the Massachusetts RPA's congratulating CMRPC and Berkshire Regional Planning Commission for receiving EDD designation. Janet said CMRPC received a lot of congratulatory messages from the other RPAs.

Karen asked if the EDD designation status expires. Kerrie said that it does not, but that CMRPC must have an active and approved CEDS to keep the designation. Karen asked how the designation status helps the region. Julie and Janet said that it makes the region more competitive for funding. Janet also referenced how a few years ago during the pandemic, the region was not eligible for \$400,000 in funding that other EDDs in the state received because CMRPC was not officially designated as an EDD.

## 5. Partner Updates:

- Rob Raymond: Janet introduced CMRPC transportation staff member Robert Raymond to the group. Rob thanked the group for having him and said that he was looking forward to getting feedback from the group to improve CMRPC's input to the socioeconomic projections process. Rob began by explaining what the Central Massachusetts Metropolitan Planning Organization (CMMPO) is and its role as the organization responsible for the cooperative transportation planning process mandated by the U.S. Department of Transportation. CMRPC transportation staff serve as the staff to the CMMPO, which is responsible for preparing and updating the Long Range Transportation Plan (LRTP), the Transportation Improvement Program, and the Unified Planning Work Program. Federal regulations require the creation of socioeconomic and population projections to help guide the LRTP development. The projections will aim to show how many people will live in the region, where will people live in the region, how many people will work in the region, and where will people work in the region. Rob then explained how the projections process is structured, with MassDOT leading the effort, with the UMass Donahue Institute (UMDI), MAPC as contractors, and with input from all of the regional planning agencies. Rob went on to explain the workflow of the process, as well as the hierarchy of the projections (state control total, regional control total, and town totals). Rob detailed the methodology and the inputs of the projections and reviewed some national population trends. The MassDOT/UMDI 2020 projections show the CMRPC region gradually growing until 2040, but then show a declining population after 2040. This could be because of lower birth rates, higher death rates, and a decline in in-migration.

Rob explained the current status of the process. The population projections have been made and the regional control totals have largely been finalized. The current step is the household and jobs projections, which CMRPC still has opportunities for input and review. Rob reviewed Census household and jobs data alongside the current MAPC UrbanSim model projections on households and jobs in the CMRPC region. Household projections show a steady gradual increase, while the jobs projections show a significant increase from 2010 to 2020, but a plateauing or very gradual increase from 2030 and onward. CMRPC sent MAPC all CMRPC region Towns' zoning data to inform the model projections. CMRPC has also been uploading data to the MassBuilds statewide database, which is used to identify projects for inclusion into the UrbanSim model. The model relies heavily on projected developments, which are informed by MassBuilds entries. CMRPC staff enter as many developments as possible into MassBuilds, but it can be difficult to keep up or to be aware

of all developments. Rob believes that the CMRPC region is missing many developments from MassBuilds and does not have its development reflected accurately by MassBuilds. Rob said that CMRPC has reached out to every Town in the region to get updated zoning data and to get any development information that could be added to MassBuilds. Rob explained that socioeconomic and jobs projections are slightly concerning to CMRPC, so CMRPC is developing its own set of projections. Rob showed the group the current draft CMRPC population projections, with projections based on growth rates and on absolute growth. CMRPC will be discussing the socioeconomic and population projections at its January 12<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting. Rob asked the group to please send him any developments they feel are missing from the MassBuilds database so that CMRPC staff can input them. He concluded by saying that the projections process occurs every three to four years and that CMRPC is starting work now to gather better data for regional projections and the next round of state projections. Rob also noted that UMDI acts as the state Census data center, and it has projected that Massachusetts was overcounted in the Census. This could be due to the fact that the actual Census counting period was during the height of the pandemic lockdowns when many people had traveled to their vacation or secondary homes in locations like the Berkshires or Cape Cod.

Janet asked the group if they had any questions. David said that he had a full list of developments in the City of Worcester for the past ten to twelve years that he would send to Rob. Janet asked Rob where the data and information that informs this process comes from. Rob said the zoning data came directly from the Towns, which was then sent to MAPC. MAPC then synthesized the reported data from all towns in the state. The development data inputted to MassBuilds comes primarily from the MEPA environmental monitor process. These are typically larger projects of regional significance, but CMRPC is still looking for projects of smaller scale to enter into MassBuilds, too. The Boston region has many developments, and MAPC has a method to auto-populate MassBuilds input. This is a disadvantage for the CMRPC region in the employment projections. Dave asked if subdivision development would be something CMRPC is looking for. Rob said yes, subdivisions would be inputted into MassBuilds. Rob said the major category for MassBuilds input is residential, with subcategories of single-family, multi-family, studio apartments, large buildings, and other subcategories.

Janet asked Rob to briefly explain the TIP process and the transportation funding that flows through the region. Rob explained that the LRTP identifies a set of transportation needs for the region and a list of projects. The TIP is how the LRTP is implemented and it is the funding mechanism for the CMMPO. Every spring, a solicitation for bids is put out and Towns come forward with project ideas. The Town is responsible for producing and funding the design of the project. The design element of the project shows the CMMPO that there is buy-in from the Town. The CMMPO has various scoring criteria for projects. The TIP is a five-year document. For the first year, the design of a project does not have to be officially complete and may still be conceptual. Over the next four to five years the project will progress and eventually be funded and constructed at year five at virtually no

cost to the Town besides the design. It is possible, for projects to be pulled forward, and the schedules of projects can often change due to a wide variety of factors. Janet said that CMMPO members vote to determine which projects will be selected and that regional equity is a factor. She also said that design costs are typically paid out of Chapter 90 funding. Rob added that starting this year, the CMMPO decided to set aside \$500,000 on each year's TIP for micro transportation projects. These are smaller-scale projects such as bike share stations or bike racks, that are not always funded in the standard TIP process. Rob said this can relate to economic development if communities identify the need for things like bike racks in a downtown area. Janet said that if anyone is interested in learning more about these transportation processes or the socioeconomic and population projections processes, they should reach out to Rob or any CMRPC staff members.

- Dave George: Janet said that the Smithsonian exhibit in Rutland was informative and included economic development aspects important to smaller towns. Dave said it was great for the Town to host something that was so competitive. Just six Towns in the entire state were selected. The exhibit goes until January 28<sup>th</sup>, with exhibitions taking place each Sunday. This upcoming Sunday, January 8<sup>th</sup> will be a farming exhibition, which is important to Rutland and its many active farms. Dave said he would share a link with details in the chat. He thanked CMRPC for bringing the opportunity to the Town's attention. Janet added that it is located in the downstairs of Rutland's library and is free of cost.
- Karen Pelletier: The Chamber is co-hosting the Annual Economic Forecast with the Worcester Business Journal on February 7<sup>th</sup> at the Beechwood Hotel. Karen said that the applications for the Diverse Food Business Cohort are due tomorrow.
- David Sullivan: David elaborated on the Diverse Food Business Cohort program by explaining that it is a program meant to help food entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities in the Worcester region. The program is eight weeks long with a variety of information and educational resources to help entrepreneurs get their businesses up and running. Following the program, participants will emerge with all the permits, licenses, and certifications they need to start their businesses. The applications are due tomorrow, but it is a very simple application. Interested entrepreneurs have to email the Food Hub for the application.
- Jeannie Hebert: BVCC is hosting an open house on January 25<sup>th</sup> from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. at BCC's offices. It will be showcasing that BVCC has moved back into the offices after they had to temporarily relocate due to a flooding incident. The event will also be celebrating BVCC's partnerships with the Blackstone Valley Hub for Workforce Development and the Blackstone Valley Educational Foundation. Students from the high schools and from the Grafton Job Corp. will be attending and exhibiting their skills. Jeannie invited the group to attend and said that registration can be found on BVCC's website. BVCC is hosting a virtual session on January 26<sup>th</sup> from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on the future of work. BVCC is also having its "Love your Legislators" legislative breakfast on February 14<sup>th</sup>. Janet asked if childcare is a topic for the future of work session. Jeannie said that childcare will be discussed.

6. Review Meeting Dates/Locations and Other Important Dates: Kerrie said the following Executive

Committee meeting will be on Thursday, February 2<sup>nd</sup> at 3:00 p.m. The next Executive committee meeting after that will be held on March 2<sup>nd</sup> at 3:00 p.m. The first Quarterly Meeting of 2023 will be on Thursday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m.

7. Other Announcements: There were no other announcements.
8. Adjourn: Julie Holstrom made a motion to adjourn and Karen Pelletier seconded. The motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

*Amended by Ryan Saul on 3/1/2023 at 4:02 p.m., to correct the date listed for the March Executive Committee meeting in Item 6, which was incorrect. The date was incorrectly listed as March 16, 2023, and was corrected to state March 2, 2023.*