



Southern  
Worcester  
County  
Economic  
Development  
Organization

c/o Central Massachusetts Regional  
Planning Commission  
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**Southern Worcester County Economic Development Organization  
Board of Directors  
Remote Meeting via Zoom  
March 2, 2023  
Meeting Minutes**

**Present:**

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

Janet Pierce, CMRPC\*  
Karen Pelletier, WRCC\*  
Jeff Turgeon, Central Mass Hire\*  
Brad Kadelski, Brookfield\*  
Jeremy Thompson, 495/MW\*  
Joe Laydon, Upton\*  
Peter Dunn, Worcester\*  
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC\*  
Elizabeth Cruz, LABO\*  
Julie Holstrom, WBDC\*

**Advisors:**

Kevin Kuros, MOBD  
Lydon Nichols, USDA

**CMRPC Staff:**

Ryan Saul, CMRPC

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1. Meeting called to order at 3:03 pm: Janet Pierce called the meeting to order at 3:03 pm. Ryan Saul facilitated a roll call of the Executive Committee to note who was remotely in attendance.
2. Minutes: Janet stated that the Executive Committee had to approve the meeting minutes from the February 2, 2023, Executive Committee meeting. Jeff Turgeon made a motion to approve the minutes from February 2, 2023, and Julie Holstrom seconded. Janet asked if there was any discussion. A roll-call vote of the Executive Committee was conducted. The motion passed unanimously.
3. CEDS Update: Janet said that Kerrie could not attend the meeting today, so Ryan would be covering Agenda Item 3. Ryan said that the CEDS survey has been open for a while now. There are currently just over 170 responses, and Ryan said that CMRPC would like to see more. Ryan said he would send out another reminder with the link, but that CMRPC would really appreciate it if the group could all keep promoting the survey to all of their networks. Ryan said that, so far, CMRPC has met with a community group organized by Clark University's Joe Corazzini, the entire internal CMRPC staff, all of the town managers and town administrators

about a week or two ago, and QCC's Academic Affairs Leadership Group. Kerry spoke for a bit at BVCC's Love your Legislator event. CMRPC has met with HECCMA, the Chamber this Monday, the Blackstone Watershed Alliance, and Discover Central Mass. Kerrie, Wenzheng, and Ryan will be speaking at CMRPC's quarterly meeting next week and will be rescheduling with Jeff and Central Mass Hire. CMRPC is also scheduled to speak with UMass Memorial, the Greater Worcester Community Foundation, Central Mass Grown, Downtown Worcester, and hopefully other groups as well. Ryan said that CMRPC has been pulling a lot of data using the SimplyAnalytics data tool that we're using. As of right now, CMRPC will be pulling over 85 data points. However, CMRPC is also trying to be conscious of which data points will be in the actual narrative and which will be in the appendices to ensure that the document is easily readable and accessible to a wide variety of audiences. Janet asked if there were any questions for Ryan. There were none. Janet asked Karen if the last CEDS required a push to engage with every single community in the region. Karen said yes. Karen also said that she wanted to make CMRPC aware that she remembers that sign-in sheets from engagement meetings were required. Janet thanked Karen for that comment. Karen said the sign-in sheet requirement needed information about the names of individuals, the organizations they are affiliated with, and the dates that meetings were held. Janet thanked Karen again and said she appreciates any other reminders. Janet asked if there were any other comments. There were none.

4. Project Review: Ryan said that the Town of Warren is almost ready to release the RFP for the engineering aspects phase of the Wrights Mill master plan. Ryan reminded the group that the Board voted to provide a support letter to the Town for their EDA application for funding related to this project. Kerrie is trying to get the Town moving on the project, and the RFP will be going out soon. There are no other project updates at the moment. Janet asked if anyone was aware of other projects. No other projects were discussed.

5. Partner Updates:

- Elizabeth Cruz: LABO is hosting its Expo on Saturday, April 29<sup>th</sup> from 12:00-4:00. If anyone is interested in becoming an exhibitor or sponsor should reach out to Elizabeth. Last year, there were about 75 businesses. This year, LABO hopes to get at least 100 businesses.
- Jeannie Hebert: BVCC is hosting its Home and Community Expo on March 25<sup>th</sup> at the Northbridge High School field house. BVCC is hosting its annual chowder cook-off at the event, in which five businesses are participating. Jeannie also said she is happy to help promote any surveys or other material at the event if needed. On April 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>, BVCC is hosting its Ignite Success in the Blackstone Valley event at the Community Harvest Project Barn. The event will host Cheryl Hamilton, the host of Stories from the Stage from WGBH, along with other facilitators and coaches. The event will focus specifically on the kind of storytelling that is meant to gear a story toward a target market. It will be great for businesses, team building, and workforce development. Jeannie invited anyone to come and said the last day will include a "story slam" to help craft personal stories to make be provocative and meaningful. Janet said the event sounds very interesting and asked Jeannie how she came up with the idea. Jeannie said she had discussed the idea with the chamber in Easthampton that BVCC sometimes collaborates with. That chamber

held a similar event and it was very successful, so Jeannie wanted to hold a similar event in the Blackstone Valley.

- Jeff Turgeon: Central Mass Hire will be having a manufacturing workforce summit to help connect manufacturers, education and training providers, and other workforce stakeholders to make sure there is an awareness of various resources related to manufacturing job training. The summit will be on the morning of March 16<sup>th</sup> at Holy Cross with breakfast included. Jeff put the link to the event in the chat. Jeff also said he had a brief conversation yesterday with the consultant working on the Wrights Mill project in Warren. Jeff said they will be meeting again to discuss how Central Mass Hire may be able to help the project find resources. Jeff asked Kevin Kuros if he was available to join the discussion. Kevin said he has not been involved yet, but he is happy to participate. Janet asked Jeff if the individual he met with was Charles. Jeff said he could not remember, but he is waiting on an email to set up another meeting time.
- Kevin Kuros: There is a new Secretary of Economic Development, Yvonne Hao. Kevin said the Secretary has done a great job getting out into the community. Secretary Hao will continue the Business Community calls that the previous Secretary had started once a month on Fridays. The first of those calls is tomorrow. Kevin said if anyone needs an invite, he can reach out to the person who coordinates those calls. Kevin also reminded the group that every four years, whether there is a change in administration or a continuing of one, the administration must develop an economic development plan. Four years ago, the previous administration held a listening tour that included eight to nine stops throughout the Commonwealth and hosted businesses, officials, and quasi-governmental organizations. A schedule will soon be announced for a similar process to gather input for the new administration's plan. Kevin said he anticipates a schedule to come out in four to six weeks. Janet said that Secretary Hao mentioned this at the previous MARPA meeting as well.
- Peter Dunn: There are upcoming workshops on the draft of the Worcester Now | Next Plan. The Existing Conditions, or the "Now" portion of the plan, is complete. The high-level recommendations, or the "Next" part of the plan, are in draft form. The upcoming workshops will be at the end of March and in April. The City will also be applying for DLTA Assistance under CMRPC for an economic analysis that the City believes it will need to do for the MBTA Communities legislation. The City is confident that it is in compliance with the multi-family density requirement portion of the legislation. However, with the pending inclusionary zoning for the City, the City will likely have to complete an economic analysis regardless of whatever scenario the Council adopts. Janet said CMRPC will help promote the Now | Next workshops, and she will try to attend one of them. Janet also said that CMRPC staff have been involved with the Now | Next development, such as Sujatha sitting on the Steering Committee. Sujatha has been keeping CMRPC informed and shares Now | Next updates with CMRPC's Executive Committee as well. Janet said that she, Trish, and Sujatha had a great meeting with David Quiroa today. Peter told the group that David is the City's new Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs in the Manager's Office. Peter said David was most recently the District Director for Senator Markey. Peter said the City also just hired Tom Matthews in a media relations support position.

- Lydon Nichols: The first deadline for REAP applications is on March 31<sup>st</sup>. USDA had a substantial increase in funding for that program and will have more opportunities for loans and grants for small businesses and farms. USDA has a value-added webinar on March 9<sup>th</sup> for USDA's Value-Added Producer grants. Paper applications for the program are due on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, and electronic applications are due on April 25<sup>th</sup>.
  - Karen Pelletier: The Chamber still has a few grants available for small businesses that are National Grid customers and Chamber members. Such businesses should reach out as soon as possible if they are interested. Karen said that the group could refer any business they are aware of, too, as long as the business is a National Grid customer and a member of the Chamber or one of its affiliate chambers. Recipients will get \$1,000. As of today, Leadership Worcester applications are available. It is a very competitive program. Karen mentioned that there is a great alumni network from the program, which includes Peter Dunn. It is a Chamber program meant to prepare future leaders across all sectors of the community. Applications are due at the end of May and are on leadershipworcester.com. The eligibility criteria are that you either have to live or work in Worcester. The Worcesterpreneurs is on May 12<sup>th</sup> this year. It is an annual event that the Chamber and the SBA hold, along with the WBRA. The purpose of the event is to connect small businesses with the resources they need at a half-day conference. Karen asked the group to promote the event to entrepreneurs and small businesses in their networks.
  - Jeremy Thompson: 495/MW has its annual Statehouse Day on April 12<sup>th</sup> from 11:00 to 1:00. It will be the first time since 2019 that the event will be held in person at the Statehouse. 495/MW has established three working groups under its Transportation Committee to establish criteria to evaluate improved mobility offerings. The three areas are commuter rail, regional transit authorities (RTAs), and surface transportation projects. The commuter rail working group is complete. The RTAs working group meeting will be on March 8<sup>th</sup> at 1:00. 495/MW is trying to get a diverse range of stakeholders to participate, including employers, economic development practitioners, transit experts, or other interested stakeholders. It will be an important discussion, as 495/MW's 36 municipalities are represented by five different RTAs. Jeremy also mentioned that Secretary Hao was at 495/MW's board meeting yesterday and spoke about the Commonwealth's electrical vehicle plan. Janet said that Trish also attended that meeting.
6. Consider a Vote to Allow Remote Participation: Janet said that the SWC EDO Board of Directors (BOD) falls under CMRPC. As such, the SWC EDO BOD is subject to the open meeting laws and all of the requirements accordingly. Janet said that she does not believe that the SWC EDO BOD has voted to allow remote participation. The ability to vote to allow remote participation has been on the books for quite a few years before the Covid-19 pandemic. The provision allowed for members to call into a meeting remotely as long as there is a quorum in person. Janet said that in the event that the Legislature does not extend the opportunity to meet remotely, as was allowed since the Covid-19 pandemic, CMRPC wanted to have the option for SWC EDO BOD members to participate remotely. Janet asked to entertain a motion for Agenda Item Number 6, which is that the regional or district public body must, by a simple majority, vote to allow remote participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 Cmr. 29.10, with that vote

applying to all subsequent meetings of that public body and its committees. Jeff Turgeon made a motion to allow remote meeting participation in accordance with the requirements of 940 CMR 29.10. Julie Holstrom seconded the motion. Janet asked if there was any discussion. Jeff said that after the vote concludes, he would like some information on how this vote could apply to his organization's board. Janet said that the CMRPC Executive Committee had voted on this provision to allow themselves and CMRPC's various subcommittees and committees to enact this. They did not do it on behalf of all of the agency's committees. They left it up to the committee chairs. Now, CMRPC is voting on this provision in all CMRPC's subcommittee meetings for the rest of the month to make sure that every committee has this option. Janet said that she is happy to discuss it further with Jeff. Janet asked if there was any further discussion on Agenda Item 6. There was none. Janet asked Ryan Saul to conduct a roll call vote. Ryan conducted a roll call vote of the SWC EDO BOD Executive Committee. The motion passed unanimously.

Jeff asked whether this was a new regulation that came out from the Governor's office. Jeff asked if this vote was needed to continue with public meetings, or if this was just specific to CMRPC. Janet said, no, it is part of the state laws and was introduced roughly 10 years ago. It gives boards the option to allow members to participate remotely, as long as there is a quorum in person. For example, a board member who lives in Florida for a few months out of the year could call in, actively participate, and be able to vote on different items as long as there is a quorum in person. Janet asked Joe Laydon, Kevin Kuros, or Brad Kadelski if they remembered any other information about this vote. Kevin said he did not. Brad asked where the SWC EDO BOD used to meet prior to the pandemic. Janet said that meetings were held in the offices, as any other meeting would be. The conference spider phone allowed members to dial in and participate as long as they could be adequately heard by the general public. Thus, if someone was speaking through the conference phone, the conference phone would be on speaker phone so that whoever was speaking could be heard by the public. Janet said that the actual legislation that this vote is referencing can be seen on this meeting's agenda if others wanted to refer to that for their own committees.

7. Review Meeting Dates/Locations and Other Important Dates: Ryan said that the next Executive Committee is on Thursday, April 6<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. The Executive Committee meeting in May will be on Thursday, May 4<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. The next quarterly meeting will be on Thursday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 p.m. Through one of the SWC EDO BOD members, Tim Loew, the SWC EDO BOD was invited to host the next quarterly meeting at the Worcester Auditorium, or the "Aud." Kerrie wanted to gauge the Board's interest in holding the meeting at the "Aud," or if the Board would prefer to hold the meeting as it normally does. If the meeting is held at the "Aud", there would be a quick business part of the meeting, and then the group would be given a tour of the "Aud." Ryan opened the matter up for discussion. Karen said she will attend. Jeff said he would attend. Brad asked if the date of the meeting was March 16<sup>th</sup>. Ryan said yes. Brad said that he should be able to attend. Jeff said the last time he was in the building was to see a professional wrestling event when he was 12 years old. Joe Laydon said he has not been in the building since middle or grade school. Brad said he thought it was closed. Peter said that the building is

closed. The City owns the property but effectively has a purchase and sale agreement with the Architectural Heritage Foundation (AHF) of Boston, which restored the old Boston City Hall. AHF is working on plans to develop a viable reuse scenario for the building. It is in rough shape with parts of the floor buckling. There are elements of the building that are spectacular, though, such as the World War I Memorial and other architectural features. Brad asked if the City owns it and if they plan on rejuvenating it. Peter said the City will sell it to AHF and AHF will work with other private entities to work through the ownership and leasing structure. The concept that is being proposed is a venue for emerging events, such as e-sports. They do not want to target live music events to avoid competing with Worcester's other music venues. Janet said that the next SWC EDO BOD quarterly meeting will be held at the "Aud."

8. Other Announcements: There were no other announcements.
9. Adjourn: Janet asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Julie Holstrom made a motion to adjourn and Jeanie Hebert seconded. Janet asked Ryan to conduct a roll call vote. Ryan conducted a roll call vote of the Executive Committee. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m.