



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
Online Meeting
MassDOT District 3 Headquarters (Fourth Floor)
499 Plantation St., Worcester, MA 01605
Remote Meeting Option via Zoom
September 7, 2023
Meeting Minutes**

Present

SWC EDO Board Members: (Exec Cmte)*

Janet Pierce, CMRPC*`
Jeff Turgeon, Central MA Hire*
Jeannie Hebert, BVCC*
Peter Dunn, City of Worcester
Elizabeth Cruz, LABO
Brad Kadelski,
Dave George, Town Planner Holden
Julie Holstrom, Worcester Business Development Corporation

Guests

CMRPC Staff

Kerrie Salwa, CMRPC
Joe Sziabowski, CMRPC
Zachary Davis, CMRPC

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1. Meeting began at 3:41 p.m.: Janet Pierce called the meeting to order at 3:41. Kerrie Salwa facilitated a roll call of the Executive Committee to note who was remotely in attendance.
 2. Review Minutes of the August 3, 2023, SWC EDO Executive Committee Meeting: Janet stated that the Executive Committee had to approve the meeting minutes from February 3, 2023.

Jeannie Hebert made a motion to approve the minutes. Janet asked if there was any discussion. A roll-call vote of the Executive Committee was conducted. The motion passed.

3. CEDS Update: Kerrie shared her screen and updated everyone that the CEDS has been launched for the thirty day public commenting period. Kerrie did an overview of the timeline and how the CEDS team has reached the current stages. She discussed the goals for Central Massachusetts as these are the words that will be guiding the region. Kerrie highlighted some important aspects of the CEDS that show what the region can accomplish in the next five years. Among the main highlights were the target areas and the goals within those areas. Kerrie then asked if anyone had any questions or comments. Kerrie expressed her gratitude for the people who have read through the document.

Peter Dunn mentioned that there there are many different priorities for the built environment. A lot of these priorities can be in competition with each other. The City adopted inclusionary zoning and the community preservation act. Peter wanted to focus on the fact that Worcester is a stretch code community. Residents want to opt in to the specialized version of the stretch code that aligns with the green Worcester plan. Peter brought up some important questions, how does the City continue to grow and be restricted at the same time? He believes that this question needs more consideration and he does not have the answers. In addition, the city needs to look at the impact of adding more buildings to the grid system. He is concerned there is not enough forward thinking regarding the implications of these policies.

Janet followed what Peter had to say, by discussing the experience CMRPC has had with infrastructure plans in the north part of the region. The municipal light plants expressed the same concern surrounding the capacity of the grid. CMRPC is looking to include a member of the media lights for the CPRG steering committee. Kerrie said that the media lights had a lot to say and were not happy they were not consulted.

Janet asked if there were any more questions and reminded members to review the documents. Janet expressed that members should feel free to reach out with concerns.

4. Project Review: Kerrie has three things she would like to discuss for project review/CEDS. The first topic she brought to the group was a platform to discuss brownfields, as many people have experience with brownfields. The brownfields advisory committee would be under the Economic Development Organization (EDA). It would be a group that would meet one to two times per year and provide guidance on grant applications, to hear and comment on site nominations, and occasionally host interested parties when the state or the FEDS have updates on any of the resources. Kerrie would love to have this sub-committee if the EDO allows. Janet asked Kerrie if there would be conflicts between the two committees. Peter and Julie did not think there should be any conflict surrounding grant applications.

The next project is the north-street project in Douglas -- a three and a half million dollar elevated water tower. The grant application will be worked on over the next few weeks and Kerrie is hoping for a November submission.

The third project is a USDOT federal highway partnering with MASSDOT and the City of Worcester. The study areas is Green Island, Union Hill, and Vernon Hill as these are communities who were impacted by the I290 highway corridor. These communities are undergoing great distress as they are separated from their local businesses and neighbors. This is a \$2 million grant application and it is for planning activities and design concepts of the Vernon Street bridge. There are opportunities for green spaces and recreation spaces and connecting two sides of the City. Kerrie wanted to thank the members of the chamber on behalf of Yahaira. The grant has a submission date of September 28th. Janet asked if anyone had any other project reviews. No one had anything else to share.

5. Partner Updates:

Peter Dunn updated the board on a project The City of Worcester is working on for a zoning ordinance amendment for accessory housing units. It is a hot topic in a lot of cities in Massachusetts and Peter believes The City has devised a good framework to consider. A good change that supports different housing options. The goal is to not be too restrictive. It will be by right, so as long as people conform to some of the specifications you can file for a building permit. It is included in all the areas that allow for residential uses. It will be limited to lots that have one and three dwelling units on them.

Elizabeth Cruz had many updates regarding LABO and their programming. They have a lot of activities going on, for example; on September 25th they have food safety, alcohol guide, and allergen certification in Portuguese for the first time. On September 26th they have an event called, empowering women through real estate which is to help women become self-sufficient and build generational wealth. On September 25th they have a wave accounting class; the first three to four sessions will be via zoom and the other two will be in person. Two separate classes on minority business owned and women business owned certification. Elizabeth wanted to invite the board to attend the Hispanic Heritage annual event that will be Thursday September 28th. LABO will also come up with a venture growth training which is a seven week training to help folks make their business more sustainable. Janet observed that LABO has a lot going on.

Jeannie Hebert announced that next Tuesday they resume their HR round table. It is open to any business in the state and it is free. It is an opportunity to exchange ideas and get an idea of businesses. They have an HR workshop series that is about the future of work and assessments. The workshops happened on the 13th and the 20th at the conference room of the Blackstone Valley Chamber. On the 27th of September they are starting their chamber breakfast for which they will have guest speaker, Education Secretary Patrick Tutwiler. He will discuss connecting work and learning. The big event that everyone is looking forward to is, "Ignite Success in the Blackstone Valley", that is being held October 12th. It is a workshop on storytelling and how to properly tell your story. They will have many guests from the world of storytelling. People can register if they are interested. Janet reflected that they storytelling workshop is very interesting. The event is capped at 31 and it is important for people to sign up.

Jeff Turgeon updated the group on the job fair that is happening at Polar Park. They anticipate about 100 employers and are hoping for several hundred job seekers. They are trying to get as many people there as possible for fair. Jeff has been working with Jon Weaver to get the Tech Hub grant. Jeff and Kerrie are working on getting an event together for later this fall to connect town representatives, administrators, and staff with MASShires federal funded partners that help to support job seekers. So they are aware of all the resources out there. There were no further updates.

6. Review Meeting Dates/Locations and Other Important Dates:

Next quarterly meeting is Thursday September 21st at 3:00pm. The topic of discussion for this meeting will be the CEDS. The next executive committee meeting is Thursday October 5th at 3:00pm.

7. Other Announcements: There were no other announcements.

8. Adjourn: A motion to adjourn was observed.