

**Minutes of the  
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee  
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council  
May 14, 2020 Committee Virtual Meeting \***

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Chair Duval called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

**Agenda Item 1: ROLL CALL**

Ms. Heidt called roll.

Committee Members Participating Via Virtual Meeting:

Helene Caseltine	Indian River County
Bruce Redus	Indian River County
Ted Astolfi	Martin County
Kevin Kryzda	Martin County
Jared Gaylord	Martin County
Charles Duval	Palm Beach County
Gary Hines	Palm Beach County
Alan Chin Lee	Palm Beach County
Thuy Shutt	Palm Beach County
Peter Jones	St. Lucie County

Excused

Pauline Becker	Martin County
Kathie Smith, Alternate	Martin County
Ralph Davino, Alternate	Martin County
Peter Tesch	St. Lucie County

Absent:

Kelley Armitage	Indian River County
Nicholas Rojas	Indian River County
Pinal Gandhi-Savdas	Martin County
Nepoleon Collins	Palm Beach County
R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County

Council Staff:

Stephanie Heidt	TCRPC
Thomas J. Lanahan	TCRPC

Guests:

Matthew Kalap	Indian River County
William Schutt	Indian River County

- \* This meeting was conducted virtually through the GoToMeeting platform pursuant to Florida Governor's Executive Order 20-69 authorizing use of communications media technology to conduct meetings.

Ms. Heidt indicated a quorum was not currently present. In order to give Committee members time to join, the meeting began with Agenda Item 4.

**Agenda Item 4: CARES Act Recovery Assistance – Presentation by Gregory Vaday, AICP, Economic Development Representative, U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration**

Mr. Vaday provided an overview of the opportunity available through the CARES Act federal funding allocation to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA). This funding is being made available to advance locally-developed projects tied to regional long-term, sustainable economic development and recovery from negative impacts due to the Coronavirus Pandemic. Mr. Vaday noted that EDA has determined that all injury from the pandemic constitutes a “special need,” therefore applicants do not need to demonstrate additional economic distress to be eligible. He indicated that the projects need to be designed to assist communities in catalyzing public-private partnerships to foster collaboration, attract investment, create jobs, and foster economic resiliency and prosperity. Additionally, funding can be used to establish business incubators and capitalize or re-capitalize revolving loan funds (RLF) to improve access to capital for small businesses. He noted that there is a 20% match requirement for each project, which must be committed and available for the same purposes at the time of the grant request.

Mr. Vaday indicated that each project must be consistent with the current regional CEDS Plan and EDA investment priorities. Additionally, proposed projects must clearly show how they will “prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus” or respond to “economic injury as a result of coronavirus.” He reviewed the process for applying for the grant and provided resource links.

Ms. Heidt stated that if anyone has questions they can send to her and she will forward those to Mr. Vaday and distribute the answers to all Committee members. She also indicated that the grants need to be submitted through the Grants.gov system, which requires a SAM.gov account. She noted that this takes a few days to obtain, so applicants should do this as soon as possible.

Ms. Caseltine asked what the maximum amount is that can be applied for under the RLF program. Mr. Vaday indicated that there are no set standards and that applications are reviewed on a case-by-case basis. He stated that if someone has a potential project they should contact him to discuss the specifics.

Mr. Astolfi stated that he would like to see the RLF programs run through regional planning councils. He asked if it made sense to tie into the South Florida Regional Planning Council’s (SFRPC) current RLF, or apply for a separate RLF. Mr. Vaday noted that it is not easy to set up an RLF program, so it may make sense, if it is allowed, to partner with SFRPC, especially since Palm Beach County has already been approved as a lending area for the program. Mr. Astolfi asked if the 20 percent match is also a requirement for an RLF program. Mr. Vaday indicated that the match requirement does apply.

Mr. Chin Lee asked if there is a pre-application process for grant projects. Mr. Vaday indicated that since all projects qualify under the special needs eligibility determination,

projects can be submitted directly through grants.gov without going through the proposal approval process.

Mr. Duval asked if there is a deadline for submission of applications. Mr. Vaday stated the funding is available on a rolling basis, but indicated that there is limited funding and applications need to be submitted as soon as possible.

Ms. Caseltine asked if any applications have been received, and what the timeline is for the review and approval process. Mr. Vaday stated he could not speak to how many applications have been submitted, but noted that construction grant review can take up to 8 months. He stated they will review the applications as quickly as possible.

Chair Duval thanked Mr. Vaday for his presentation.

### **Agenda Item 2: Agenda Approval**

Having obtained a quorum, Chair Duval called for a motion to approve the Agenda.

*Committee Action:* Mr. Hines moved approval of the agenda. Ms. Caseltine seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 3: Approval of Meeting Minutes for March 12, 2020**

*Committee Action:* Mr. Astolfi moved approval of the March 12, 2020 meeting minutes. Mr. Redus seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

### **Agenda Item 5: CEDS Committee Member Discussion of Local Response to COVID-19 and Recovery Plans**

Mr. Hines stated that Verdenia Baker, Palm Beach County's Administrator, has been working on the County's recovery plans with working groups that represent the various business sectors. He noted that the Business Development Board has developed a website, BizHelpPBC.com, which is designed to help companies struggling from the COVID-19 pandemic. He also noted they are doing calls every Friday that include federal, state, local elected officials, County administrative and departmental heads, and community business leaders.

Ms. Shutt indicated that the Boynton Beach CRA Board has approved approximately \$1.2 million to help local businesses with expenses such as payroll and inventory. She stated that the loans are being offered at \$10,000 per business. She said that they received over 90 applications in one week, and have already processed 31 loans. She stated she would provide all the information on the program to Committee members.

Mr. Chin Lee stated that the County will be doing a similar program to provide relief packages to businesses throughout the County that have 25 or more employees. He indicated the program will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners the following day for approval.

Ms. Caseltine stated that the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce has been promoting their businesses wherever possible through social media campaigns. She indicated they have created a GIS property search and list of restaurants that are open. She noted that since meetings cannot be done in person, they are posting pictures on all social media. She reported that manufacturers in the County have retooled to produce face shields, cotton masks, and surgical gowns.

Mr. Astolfi indicated that the Business Development Board of Martin County has set up a Biz Hub website to get out information to local businesses. He noted that the chambers throughout the County have been having events, such as outdoor movie night in a plaza with the local restaurants providing food to people's cars, and giving the proceeds to non-profits organizations. They are also working to get approval for restaurants to expand their seating to parking lots. He noted that in the City of Stuart they have started a campaign called "We Are Ready" that has a camera crew going around to various businesses to let people know who is open for business and show that safety protocols are taking place to build consumer trust. He stated they are also asking the County to waive impact fees, so if companies fail there will be others able to open in their place.

Mr. Jones noted that St. Lucie County is working closely with the other local governments, institutions, and non-profits. He stated that the Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County has established a virtual recovery center that provides webinars, counseling, and training for local businesses and chambers of commerce, with experts at the ready to assist and answer questions.

Chair Duval noted that even though the staff of CareerSource is home, they have not stopped working. He indicated that their main concern is unemployment and they are receiving an overwhelming amount of calls for assistance with applying for benefits. He stated that they can only help with the application, and then it is in the hands of the Florida Department of Opportunity. He stated that they have partnered with the County library system to provide resources to the public and are providing virtual workshops to assist job seekers and let them know what is available.

#### **Agenda Item 6: Public Comments**

None

#### **Agenda Item 7: CEDs Committee Member Comments**

Mr. Astolfi thanked Chair Duval for his update from the workforce standpoint. He stated that he has noticed an increased level of collaboration among organizations, which has been a positive coming out of all this.

#### **Agenda Item 8: Staff Comments**

Ms. Heidt noted that District staff has been researching projects that could benefit from the EDA CARES funding opportunity presented by Mr. Vaday. She stated staff is available to assist with researching and preparing grant applications for projects in the Region.

Ms. Caseltine asked if the Committee will have to approve any projects. Ms. Heidt stated that it is an EDA grant requirement to show consistency with the Region's CEDS plan, so each project will need to be presented to the CEDS Committee for review. She indicated that as projects come forward there may be a need for a special meeting to conduct those consistency reviews in a timely manner. She noted that as projects start to develop, Mr. Vaday puts her in touch with the applicants to coordinate the consistency review. Ms. Caseltine noted that the next meeting is not scheduled until July, and by that time all the funding might have already been allocated. Ms. Heidt indicated a special meeting can be scheduled at the direction of the Committee.

Ms. Caseltine asked how the application is progressing to establish an RLF program in the area. Mr. Lanahan stated that he has been working with the SFRPC to determine if their lending area can be expanded to include the entire Treasure Coast Region. He noted that two years ago the program was expanded into Palm Beach County. He stated that it may be more efficient to build on an existing program that has a good track record, versus trying to stand up our own capacity. He stated he is exploring several scenarios, including the required match, and will update the Committee at the next meeting.

Mr. Astolfi asked how much funding is available for Palm Beach County in the current program. Mr. Lanahan noted that the existing program is fully obligated, but SFRPC is getting additional money from the EDA CARES Act through recapitalization funding that has been made available to current programs. Mr. Astolfi asked if the match will have to be cash money. Mr. Lanahan indicated that it would need to be cash, and that typically the match for EDA money would be 50/50, but for this program that match is 20 percent. Ms. Caseltine asked if the northern counties pursue going through the SFRPC RLF program, would all seven counties be responsible for the 20 percent match. Mr. Lanahan noted that this is where it gets complicated and he still needs to work with SFRPC and EDA on the requirements.

#### **Agenda Item 9: Next Meeting**

Chair Duval asked if the Committee should schedule a special meeting to conduct consistency reviews. Ms. Heidt indicated that a meeting may be required within the next three to four weeks to accommodate potential EDA project applications. A special CEDS meeting was scheduled for June 4, 2020 at 2pm to conduct consistency reviews for any pending EDA applications.

The next regular meeting of the CEDs committee is scheduled for July 9, 2020.

#### **Agenda Item 10: Adjournment**

There being no further business, Chair Duvall adjourned the meeting at 3:11 p.m.