

**Minutes of the
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
September 10, 2020 Virtual Meeting**

Vice Chair Jared Gaylord called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. He noted he will be chairing the meeting.

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
Pinal Gandhi-Savdas	Martin County
Jared Gaylord	Martin County
Gary Hines	Palm Beach County
Alan Chin Lee	Palm Beach County
Thuy Shutt	Palm Beach County
Peter Tesch	St. Lucie County

Excused:

Ted Astolfi	Martin County
Pauline Becker	Martin County
Charles Duval (excused)	Palm Beach County
Kathie Smith, Alternate	Martin County
Ralph Davino, Alternate	Martin County
Peter Jones	St. Lucie County

Absent:

Kelley Armitage	Indian River County
Nicholas Rojas	Indian River County
Kevin Kryzda	Martin County
Nepoleon Collins	Palm Beach County
R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County

Council Staff:

Stephanie Heidt	TCRPC
-----------------	-------

Agenda Item 2: Agenda Approval

Committee Action: Gary Hines moved approval of the agenda. Bruce Redus seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 3: Approval of July 9, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Committee Action: Bruce Redus moved approval of the July 9, 2020 meeting minutes. Helene Caseltine seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 4: Annual Review and Update of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Plan

Vice Chair Gaylord indicated that he wanted to have a review and Committee discussion on each section of the Action Plan.

Under Talent Supply and Education, Mr. Hines noted that the Boynton Beach High School has a program in partnership with Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University that if students attend the aeronautical program in grades 9-12, Embry will waive the first year at the university so they can enter as a sophomore. He asked if this program would qualify as a vocationally centered high school under this section. Vice Chair Gaylord stated he believes that would meet the criteria as a vocationally centered school. Ms. Heidt indicated the program could also qualify under actions related to apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships.

Under Innovation and Economic Development, Vice Chair Gaylord noted that staff is proposing to add the following action:

Educate the private sector on the advantages of investing in the Region's Opportunity Zones through promotion of key regional assets.

Mr. Redus asked if this is required by EDA. Ms. Heidt indicated that as part of the annual update, actions related to Opportunity Zones are required to be added into the CEDS Plan. She noted that when the plan re-write is done in 2021 there will be a much more robust section related to Opportunity Zones added to the plan.

Mr. Redus asked if the Committee needs to vote on each proposed change. Ms. Heidt stated that it would be better to have the Committee review all the proposed changes and make suggestions for additional modifications after going through all the sections.

Both Mr. Redus and Vice Chair Gaylord indicated they support the proposed action.

Under Infrastructure and Growth Leadership, Vice Chair Gaylord noted that the following new action is being proposed:

Work with private, local, state, and federal partners to expand broadband services to rural and underserved communities.

Mr. Chin Lee noted that in Palm Beach County the problem is not a lack of infrastructure, it is more a problem of affordability. Vice Chair Gaylord indicated the proposed action appears to only look at the infrastructure and suggested a reference to affordability could be added. Mr. Chin Lee noted that affordability might be more appropriate under other sections, such as Business Climate or Economic Resiliency.

Ms. Caseltine asked to be put on record that not everyone in Indian River County is supportive of Action 1 to extend community rail service along the entire east coast of the Region.

Vice Chair Gaylord noted that there are no actions that discuss existing infrastructure in terms of necessary repairs and maintenance. He stated this is especially important as infrastructure ages, citing the recent incident of complications with the structural integrity of the Roosevelt Bridge. He suggested an action should be added to this section to identify funding sources for inspection and repair of existing infrastructure. Ms. Caseltine indicated upgrades to existing infrastructure should also be included.

After Committee discussion, it was determined that a broadband action should be addressed under Business Climate & Competitiveness.

Under Civic & Governance Systems, there were no proposed changes by staff or the Committee.

Under Quality of life & Quality Places, Vice Chair Gaylord noted that the following new action is being proposed:

Encourage legislation, regulations, incentives, and programs which will provide adequate housing that is affordable to the workforce.

Mr. Redus asked if language needed to be added to indicate there needs to be intergovernmental coordination or partnerships for the proposed action. Vice Chair Gaylord stated that an action related to that type of coordination is included in the previous section. Ms. Heidt stated that in proposing the action, she included language that includes all levels of government as well as the private sector and non-profits.

Under Economic Resiliency, Vice Chair Gaylord indicated that he would like to see language in this section related to local governments providing assistance to small businesses during any disaster, such as the COVID-19 pandemic we are currently experiencing. He noted that this may already be covered in existing actions. Mr. Chin Lee indicated that this might be the section to expand on the accessibility and affordability of broadband. Vice Chair Gaylord stated that the issue of lack of access to broadband could fall under many areas within the Action Plan. He suggested leaving the action proposed as is in the Infrastructure Section, and then also reference this in other sections as appropriate for those sections.

Mr. Chin Lee stated that Quality of Life and Quality Places is another section that would be appropriate. Vice Chair Gaylord indicated that in normal times, this would be less likely to fit under Economic Resilience. However, the COVID-19 Pandemic has brought this issue to the forefront. He stated he is inclined to include broadband under either Talent Supply & Education, Innovation & Economic Development, or Business Climate & Competitiveness. Ms. Caseltine indicated she agrees with that, suggesting it could be put in more than one place. Ms. Heidt indicated that she will incorporate appropriate broadband language into the different sections that have been suggested and review those changes with Vice Chair Gaylord.

Ms. Caseltine asked why Everglades Restoration is included in so many actions. Ms. Heidt indicated that this was an issue that was at the forefront during the re-write of the Plan in 2017, so there was a lot of crossover on this in the different working groups.

Vice Chair Gaylord asked Ms. Heidt to propose a motion for Committee consideration. Ms. Heidt indicated that she would recommend the motion be to authorize the Economic Development Director, in consultation with Vice Chair Gaylord, to finalize the proposed actions for inclusion in the annual CEDS Plan update, including Committee modifications, for submittal to the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council board for final approval.

Committee Action: Mr. Chin Lee moved approval of the staff recommendation. Ms. Shutt seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 5: CEDS Committee Member Discussion of Local Response to COVID-19

Ms. Heidt provided the following update on staff activities:

An application has been submitted to EDA to create a revolving loan fund for the three northern counties that will provide a million dollars for a small business recovery related to COVID. Thomas Lanahan, Council's Executive Director, has been working with the Counties to get commitments for the 80-20 percent required match.

A second application has been submitted to EDA to address the issue of accessibility and affordability of Broadband throughout the Region.

Council has been awarded funding to hire a Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator to help the Region recover from and respond to COVID-19 impacts. This position will primarily be an outreach position that will work with local governments and businesses. Staff has been conducting interviews and plans to fill the position in October.

Vice Chair Gaylord asked if there have been any reports of projected budget shortfalls for the Region's local governments. Ms. Heidt indicated many of the local governments are currently going through their budget planning process, so she has not heard yet what shortfalls there may be. He noted that Council's budget for FY 2020-2021 has been approved and funding is secure to complete all activities in the work program for the year.

Vice Chair Gaylord asked if there is any data available on business closures for the Region. Ms. Heidt indicated that although employment numbers are tracked monthly, this is not a statistic that is usually followed by staff. However, this can be something that the new Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator can track.

Mr. Hines noted that Palm Beach County had one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state prior to COVID-19. He noted that the unemployment rate spiked to 11.5 percent, but he believes that will gradually decline as restaurants and hotels begin to reopen.

Mr. Chin Lee noted that it is very hard to track business closings, because they are not required to file Chapter 7, and many choose to not declare bankruptcy because of the negative credit implications. He noted that he has been looking at Yelp, which has been doing a lot of data mining and found that approximately 3,000 businesses in

South Florida have either been dormant or closed. He noted that it is hard to tell if there are permanent closures, or if the businesses are no longer self-reporting on the app.

Agenda Item 6: Public Comment

None

Agenda Item 7: Staff Comment

None

Agenda Item 8: CEDS Committee Member Comment

None

Agenda Item 9: Next Meeting – November 12, 2020

Ms. Heidt will determine if the meeting will be virtual.

Agenda Item 10: Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chair Gaylord adjourned the meeting at 2:46 p.m.