

Minutes of the
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Committee
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
January 14, 2021 Meeting

Chair Charles Duval called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

Agenda Item 1: Roll Call

Ms. Heidt called roll.

Committee Members and Alternates Participating in Person:

Helene Caseltine	Indian River County
Nicholas Rojas, Alternate	Indian River County
Ted Astolfi	Martin County
Pinal Gandhi-Savdas	Martin County
Jared Gaylord	Martin County
Kathie Smith, Alternate	Martin County
Alan Chin Lee	Palm Beach County
Peter Jones	St. Lucie County

Committee Members and Alternates Participating Remotely:

Charles Duval	Palm Beach County
Thuy Shutt	Palm Beach County
Peter Tesch	St. Lucie County

Excused:

Mark Mathes	Indian River County
Pauline Becker	Martin County
Kevin Kryzda	Martin County
Ralph Davino, Alternate	Martin County
Gary Hines	Palm Beach County

Absent:

R. Douglas Bynoe	St. Lucie County
Nepoleon Collins	Palm Beach County

Council Staff:

Stephanie Heidt	TCRPC
Terry Paulo	TCRPC

Agenda Item 2: Agenda Approval

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

3A. Approval of September 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Ms. Heidt noted the minutes had been revised to reflect that Mr. Caseltine had been changed to Ms. Caseltine on page 2.

Committee Action: Ms. Caseltine moved approval of the September 10, 2020 amended meeting minutes. Ms. Smith seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

3B. Approval of November 12, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Committee Action: Mr. Jones moved approval of the November 12, 2020 meeting minutes. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

4A: Membership Appointments

Chair Duval read into the record the following appointments:

Indian River County Board of County Commissioners

- Helene Caseltine
- Mark Mathes
- Nicholas Rojas, as an Alternate

St. Lucie County Board of County Commissioners

- Douglas R. Bynoe
- Peter Jones
- Peter Tesch

Martin County Board of County Commissioners

- Ted Astolfi
- Pauline Becker
- Pinal Gandhi-Savdas
- Jared Gaylord
- Kevin Kryzda
- Kathie Smith, as an Alternate
- Ralph Davino, as an Alternate

Palm Beach County Board of County Commissioners

- Nepoleon Collins
- Alan Chin Lee
- Charles Duval
- Gary S. Hines
- Thuy Shutt

4B: Election of Officers

Chair Duval indicated the officer positions for 2021 will be elected from the following counties: Chair – St. Lucie County, 1st Vice Chair – Indian River County; 2nd Vice Chair - Martin County; and 3rd Vice Chair – Palm Beach County.

For the office of Chair: *Ms. Caseltine nominated Mr. Jones. Mr. Tesch seconded the nomination, which carried unanimously.*

For the office of 1st Vice Chair: *Ms. Caseltine nominated Mr. Mathes. Mr. Jones seconded the nomination, which carried unanimously.*

For the office of 2nd Vice Chair: *Mr. Astolfi nominated Mr. Gaylord. Ms. Caseltine seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

For the position of 3rd Vice Chair: *Ms. Caseltine nominated Mr. Chin Lee. Mr. Astolfi seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.*

Chair Duval indicated that the new officers will begin serving at the March 11, 2021 meeting.

Agenda Item 5: Review of Town of Lake Park and Community Initiatives Development Corporation Application to the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA) for CEDS Plan Consistency – Formal Committee Approval

Chair Duval noted that the Committee had previously reviewed a proposal for this project and voted to find the project consistent with the CEDS Plan. He noted that what is being presented today is a revised application.

Mr. Jake Botticello with Triad Associates provided the Committee an overview of the revised application. He noted that the proposal is for a 24,000 square foot food production facility in the Town of Lake Park. He indicated that the funding request is in the amount of \$1.5 million under the U.S. Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Public Works and Economic Adjustment Assistance Program. He stated that the project is expected to leverage over \$8.5 million in private investment and create more than 100 jobs. He noted that this project does not include the commercial kitchens component that was previously proposed. He stated that they had received feedback from EDA that they should remove the smaller entrepreneurial aspects of the project as it was EDA's preference to have larger, more stable projects. He noted that the original anchor tenant, Oceana Coffee, will be allocated more space to expand their operations. A majority of the remaining space will be allocated to the Flora Canning Company that will rent facilities to customers who need packing space, canning abilities, and both cold and dry food storage. The remaining space will be for a wholesale juice and beverage manufacturer and a mobile beverage service business. He stated that he believes the current project is consistent with many of the objectives in the CEDS Plan, specifically those related to innovation and economic development; business climate and competitiveness; and economic resiliency. He asked if the Committee Members had questions about the application.

Seeing none, Chair Duval called for a motion on the consistency of the project with the CEDS Plan. Ms. Heidt noted that the motion would be to approve the recommendations contained in the staff report and the stated objectives and actions.

Committee Action: Mr. Astolfi made a motion to find the project consistent with Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy Plan objectives and actions indicated in the staff report. Mr. Gaylord seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 6: Public Marina and Coastline Resilience/Brownfields Initiative

Ms. Worsham from Cardno provided an overview of the Marina and Coastline Resilience/Brownfields initiative which was funded through Council's Brownfields Coalition Assessment Grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. She noted that the goals of the initiative were to improve coastal resiliency, decrease vulnerability, clean up properties, restore habitat, and enhance public access to waterways. She provided an overview of Council's Brownfields program which includes funding to do assessments and planning, and a revolving loan fund that offers low interest loans to do remediation activities on Brownfields sites. She also provided information on the State's program that offers financial incentives to remediate these sites.

Ms. Worsham demonstrated the Marina Viewer, a GIS-based tool that includes an inventory of marinas and boat ramps throughout the seven-county region from Indian River County to Monroe County. She noted that the tool contains several layers such as opportunity zones, community redevelopment areas, hazardous waste generators, flood zones, and endangered species habitats. She highlighted some of the top priority sites in the Region.

Ms. Worsham noted that the next step is to work with each County to identify, from both an environmental and a resiliency standpoint, which sites would be eligible for resilience planning and environmental assessments, and how those activities can be funded.

Agenda Item 7: COVID Update: Terry Ann Paulo, Disaster Economic Recovery Coordinator for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

Ms. Paulo provided an overview on recent activities related to COVID response and recovery. The overview included how the counties in the Region have been allocating their CARES Act funding; COVID-19 business impact surveys; a statewide economic analysis position; and a proposal to organize a COVID-19 Economic Resilience Task Force.

Ms. Paulo indicated that she is putting together a business impact survey for the Region to capture businesses' operational and workforce impacts and identify needed resources. She stated that she is working with chambers of commerce, local governments, and economic development agencies to find out what information is needed and make sure we are not re-inventing the wheel as we develop the survey.

Ms. Paulo noted that in her discussions with the chambers she discovered that membership dues are collected throughout the year rather than annually. She noted that this has made it difficult to determine if COVID has affected membership rates. Ms. Caseltine stated that is done because most chambers do not have a large staff, so it is easier to renew a small number of members each month than renewing all members one time per year.

Ms. Paulo indicated that the Tampa Bay Regional Planning Council is hiring an Economic Analyst who will assist all the regional planning councils in the state to develop technical analyses of the economic impacts of COVID in each of the Regions. She stated this will provide a good picture of the economic impacts on the different industries at the regional and county levels.

Ms. Paulo proposed organizing a regional task force to assess the conditions that local communities in the region are dealing with and provide technical assistance. The task force will provide expertise to mitigate the short-term economic impacts of the pandemic and develop strategies designed to be long-term businesses and community recovery. The task force would be comprised of job creators, community leaders, and business representatives from each county in the Region. She noted that one example to look at is the Northeast Florida Regional Council that created an economic resilience task force that has been reviewing existing economic damages, surveys, data reports, and developing an inventory of available strategies that can increase their Region's resilience to disruptions moving forward. Their deliverables are to create a COVID economic recovery action plan, which will be published this spring. They will then expand their scope to address challenges related to long-range economic resilience planning and identify long term objectives and strategies that will protect northeast Florida from a broad range of future shocks and stresses.

Ms. Caseltine asked if the task force would be comprised of CEDS Committee members, or would other people be brought in from the community. Ms. Paulo noted that the task force could report to the CEDS Committee, but be made up of other members of the community. Ms. Caseltine asked if the task force would fall under the Sunshine Law. Ms. Heidt indicated that if members of the CEDS Committee are on the task force, or if the task force is a sub-committee of CEDS, then that could fall under the Sunshine Law. She noted that the task force will only be making recommendations to develop a plan that will be part of the deliverables to EDA under the grant agreement. She indicated that she will check this with Council's attorney on how to structure the task force.

Mr. Tesch noted that over the last year they have put together an effective economic recovery COVID-related program that will be useful to the task force. Ms. Paulo noted that there are a lot of programs throughout the Region and that she sees the task force as being a source of efficiency and coordination of those efforts so that everyone knows what is going on throughout the Region.

Ms. Gandhi-Savdas asked if the task force will be developing strategies and identifying funding sources. Ms. Heidt indicated that Council, as the Region's Economic Development District, received funding to assist with planning efforts to do COVID-19 recovery and response planning. She noted that Ms. Paulo is running that program to reach out to the community to find out what their needs are and how we can be of assistance in response and recovery efforts. Part of that is to also identify grant-eligible projects and funding sources to help those communities. At the current time, Ms. Paulo is working to gather information on the economic impacts. Ms. Heidt noted that another part of the work will be to either write a full recovery plan or add a section to the CEDS Plan that addresses how to deal with economic impacts caused by pandemics for future use. She stated that she believes it needs to be part of the CEDS plan because that is a document that is frequently used. Ms. Caseltine asked if that funding can be used as grants for small

businesses. Ms. Heidt indicated that the focus of the grant is to do outreach and planning activities for response and recovery efforts related to COVID.

Mr. Astolfi stated he likes the idea of task force to bring everyone together to see what each community is doing and fill in the gaps where needed. He noted that Stuart has just done a resiliency plan and Martin County has recently hired a consultant to do a COVID study. He noted that a task force would be able to bring together information from each of the counties and put together best practices and approaches to dealing with the economic impacts. He stated that sharing the information is the real goal and the task force is a good way to bring that all together and have local community collaboration. Ms. Heidt asked for Committee Members to identify who in their communities would be good to have as part of the task force. Mr. Astolfi noted that Bill West would be a great addition to the task force.

Mr. Gaylord stated that the task force should be responsible for fact-finding and data collection that will help to implement short-term policies and long-term strategies. He stated that job creators need to be included on the task force. Mr. Jones stated that there are also a number of nonprofit organizations that are invaluable.

8A. Committee Member Reference Guide

Ms. Heidt noted that the agenda packet contains an updated Committee Member Reference Guide that contains meeting dates, information on EDA, and the 2021 scope of work. She noted that in the 2020 annual update of the CEDS Plan a new section on Opportunities Zones was added along with actions to address expansion of broadband in the region and provision of affordable housing.

Ms. Heidt indicated that, as staff to the Economic Development District, she has been serving on an advisory committee with St. Lucie to update their Port Master Plan. She noted that they have done a phenomenal job with the update and encouraged members to go see what is going on at the Port.

She stated that last year the Committee reviewed several applications for CARES Act funding. She indicated that applications put forward by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council for a broadband expansion plan and forming a revolving loan fund did not receive funding. However, staff continues to work on these initiatives. She indicated that Council is currently working with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity to help them write a statewide plan for broadband expansion. Also, staff continues to look at opportunities for creating a revolving loan fund in the Region to provide financial assistance to small businesses.

Ms. Caseltine asked why the grant applications were denied. Ms. Heidt indicated that the reason given is that there was not enough money to fund all the projects that were submitted. She noted that EDA has indicated that they want to see projects that create jobs and bring in private investment. Also, the applications need to state the impacts to the community and how they will promote economic development.

8B. 2021 Meeting Schedule

Ms. Heidt noted that the 2021 meeting schedule is included in the agenda packet as well as the Committee Member Reference Guide.

Agenda Item 9: Public Comment

None

Agenda Item 10: Staff Comment

None

Agenda Item 11: CEDS Committee Member Comment

Mr. Jones encouraged everyone to visit the Port in Fort Pierce. He noted that the parts have been arriving to construct the new boat lift, which is being assembled on site. He stated that the lift will be 90 feet tall when completed.

Ms. Caseltine indicated that Indian River County has two new commissioners so she is hopeful that we will get new appointments to the Committee.

Mr. Astolfi suggested bringing in Kate Cotner from Florida Power and Light Company to do a presentation. He noted that she did a presentation to the Business Development Board Martin County on new incentives and tax credits on utility bills for businesses inside Opportunity Zones.

Mr. Astolfi noted that there is proposed legislation attacking regional planning councils. He asked if the Committee could take action, in the form of a letter, opposing this legislation and indicating that as volunteers on the Committee they would like to be able to continue their work. He suggested Committee Members take this back to their respecting organizations and local governments and request the same. Ms. Caseltine asked who sponsored the bill. Ms. Heidt indicated that it is Senator Bradley.

Committee Action: Mr. Astolfi made a motion to authorize staff to draft and send a letter to the legislature in support of the continuation of regional planning councils so the CEDS Committee Members can continue to perform their critical duties and regional planning councils continue to perform the services they do as well. Helene Caseltine seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Agenda Item 12: Next Meeting – March 11, 2021

Chair Duval noted that the next meeting is scheduled for March 11th and will be the first meeting with the newly elected officers.

Agenda Item 13: Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair Duval adjourned the meeting at 3:34 p.m.