

West Central Vermont CEDS – Strategy Committee

Thursday, February 15, 2024 – 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM VIA ZOOM

Join Zoom Meeting <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82047908075>

Taylor Newton, CCRPC
Darren Schibler, CCRPC
Sarah Muskin, CCRPC
Sam Andersen, GBIC
Alex Demoly, GBIC
Hannah Andrews, ACRPC
Fred Kenney, ACEDC
Karen Duguay, ACEDC
Cooper Babbitt, CDERR
Devon Neary, RRPC
Greg Poelker-McKee, RRPC
Christian Meyer, CVRPC
Eli Toohey, CVRPC
Abbey Jenne, CVEDC

Taylor Newton kicked off the meeting by welcoming everyone at about 11:04 a.m.

1. Changes/adjustment to agenda:

Taylor asked for any changes to the agenda. There were none.

2. Minutes – December 15, 2023:

Taylor requested a motion to adopt the previous meeting minutes. Sam Andersen moved to approve the December meeting minutes. Christian Meyer seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

3. Economic Development District (EDD):

a. Application

Taylor reported that the application is 90% complete. In addition, the letter to be issued by the Governor via ACCD has been drafted, and all partner letters of support are submitted.

The current challenge is to understand from the Economic Development Administration (EDA) staff whether the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the CEDS partners can be the basis of the proposed EDD or not. The prior EDA staff contact (Matt Suchodolski) indicated that it could, but current staff (Katherine Trapani) stated differently and that their legal team would need to look into it. Taylor has followed up several times by e-mail with no response and will try a phone call soon.

Later in the meeting, Fred asked how other EDDs have done this. Taylor responded that the Northern Vermont EDD was created as a nonprofit, but he is not sure about the East Central VT EDD.

Fred also asked what the alternative paths are. Based on [13 CFR § 304.2\(b\)](#), there are three options:

- (1) Inter-government agreement
- (2) Creation by state-enabling legislation
- (3) Incorporation as a nonprofit

If EDA does not approve the MOU as basis for EDD formation, the partners agreed to:

- (1) Ask the federal Congressional delegation to work with EDA to resolve the issue
- (2) Propose a bill in the Vermont Legislature to create the EDD
- (3) Pursue creation of a nonprofit.

b. EDD Membership

Taylor noted that the partners also need to start developing a membership list for the EDD board. Should we start asking for prospective members?

S. Andersen thought we should wait until we're ready to submit the application. She said we will need to know the anticipated time commitment for board members, as well as how big the board will be. Taylor referred to the draft bylaws for size and representation proposed for the board, but clarified that the board needs to exist before the EDD can be officially formed – he just thought it made sense to wait until we had clarity on the application process and timeline. He anticipated that a full board would only meet once or twice a year, but there would be an executive committee that would meet more frequently.

The group agreed to wait until we have clarity on application process, but to start talking to prospective members.

c. Timeline

Taylor expected to be able to turn around an application in a few weeks after hearing from EDA on the MOU issue. From there we expect 3-6 months for approval, though based on current response times that might be optimistic. CCRPC will circulate a draft application for the March meeting.

4. EDA Technical Assistance Grant

CVRPC, RRPC, and CCRPC met recently to investigate whether this grant was worth pursuing. Unfortunately, EDA is out of money for this program currently. New funding is tied up in farm bill, which probably won't get passed this year (before an election).

CVRPC is looking into whether eligibility for the FY21 Disaster Resilience Grant, but didn't have any news to report to. Greg and Taylor clarified that only Chittenden and Washington Counties are eligible under the current (FY21) grant, but all regions should be eligible for a future round (FY22 / FY23) since all experienced flooding.

Christian asked if CVRPC applied for FY21, would all regions be eligible? Taylor replied that no, only CVRPC and CCRPC would be eligible, though they could address flooding issues that came up in 2023. CCRPC and CVRPC are not going to apply now due to lack of capacity, but will plan to apply future funding.

Taylor brought up the available Public Works Infrastructure Grant, which can fund infrastructure to create jobs. There is no desire from any RPCs to do this now.

5. Adjournment

Fred Kenney made a motion, seconded by Christian Meyer, to adjourn the meeting. The motion passed unanimously at 11:23am.

Respectfully submitted,
Darren Schibler