

**WEST MICHIGAN REGIONAL PLANNING COMMISSION  
CEDS MEETING MINUTES**

January 31, 2018  
City of Grand Rapids  
9:30 a.m.

**1. Call to Order.** R. Bergman, CEDS Committee Vice-Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

**CEDS Members present:**

Jim Storey – Allegan County  
Cindy Plautz – City of Big Rapids  
Morgan Carroll – Ionia County  
Ron Thomas – Ionia County  
Tom Porter – Montcalm County  
S. Michael Scott – Montcalm County  
Dan Massy – Osceola County Community & Economic Development  
Morris Langworthy – Osceola County  
Roger Bergman – Ottawa County  
Tim Cochran – City of Wyoming

**Staff:**

David Bee – Director  
Nancy Murphy – Administrative Assistant

**Guests:**

Paul Bristol – USDA Rural Development  
Christian Borg – City of Grand Rapids

**2. Approval of Minutes**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY** M. Scott to approve the minutes for the August 30, 2017, CEDS Committee meeting as presented. **SUPPORTED BY** T. Porter. **MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. Election of Officers**

D. Bee said that the 2017 Committee Officers were Jim Sandy, Chair, and Roger Bergman, Vice-Chair. He had contacted both Jim and Roger to determine their potential interest in continuing to serve in 2018. They were both willing to serve again, but did not have a preference for which position. Jim suggested they switch positions.

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY** M. Langworthy to nominate Roger Bergman as the CEDS Committee Chair. **SUPPORTED BY** T. Porter. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY M. Langworthy to nominate Jim Sandy as the CEDS Committee Vice-Chair. SUPPORTED BY M. Carroll. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

#### **4. Guest Speaker**

##### Paul Bristol – USDA Rural Development

D. Bee introduced today's guest speaker, Paul Bristol with the USDA Rural Development, and said that Mr. Bristol is here today to update the Committee on recent projects.

Mr. Bristol provided information about Rural Development's Loan and Grant Programs available in Michigan. The primary categories of funding programs are –

Housing Program

Business and Cooperative Development Program

Community Programs – Utilities and Community Facilities

Telecommunications Program

Mr. Bristol talked about many of their programs and cited examples of projects they had funded within Region 8's member communities.

Although Rural Development does have a limited number of grants, the majority of their funding is in the form of either loans or loan guarantees. But they do have money available, and people seeking funding for projects should contact them. More information is available at [www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services](http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services). Mr. Bristol's office is in Grand Rapids, and he can be contacted by phone at 616-942-4111, extension 6, or via e-mail at [paul.bristol@mi.usda.gov](mailto:paul.bristol@mi.usda.gov).

#### **5. 2018 CEDS Program Planning**

##### Program Overview / Opportunities

D. Bee said that every year we prepare a CEDS (Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy) report for submittal to the Economic Development Administration (EDA). Every fifth year, we do a full document with updated information about our communities and with a complete list of projects with the potential to create jobs and that qualify for EDA funding. Last year we did the five-year CEDS. The other years we prepare an interim CEDS, which includes current information and projects.

There are two categories of projects: 1) "EDA Targeted Projects", which align with EDA's goals and could receive funding. And, 2) "Community Projects", which are important to the local area, but are not likely to receive EDA funding. Every year we encourage communities to develop new projects. Dave Bee goes out to talk to community leaders in villages, cities, and townships within our region.

##### Proposed Project Solicitation Materials

Draft solicitation materials were included with today's meeting agenda. These include: a cover memo titled "Request for Projects", a Project Submission Form, Project Evaluation Criteria, and EDA's Investment Priorities. We will probably continue to use these materials until the Committee wants a change.

R. Bergman said that the job creation criteria are a challenge due to the issue of finding workers, combined with the issue of affordable housing. Shortages of both skilled labor and housing are critical problems for both Ottawa and Kent Counties. D. Bee said that the best answer is that a community needs all the pieces to attract people. Workers need jobs, but they are also interested in other factors like local amenities, lifestyle, roads, and weather. R. Bergman said that the project ranking is based heavily on job creation – what can they do? D. Bee said that it's also an issue in Montcalm County.

Mr. Bristol told Roger to contact Susan Tetil, Director of Multi-Family Housing, and ask how USDA can help with housing issues in Ottawa County. D. Bee said that fewer people are leaving Michigan after they graduate compared to the past, and others who had left are coming back. M. Carroll said that the problem is not unique to any particular area, but is something that everyone is dealing with. During the recession, people did leave the state. But now everyone who wants a job can get one.

C. Borg said that Grand Rapids is also facing the problem of housing that is too expensive and not available. Good wages to attract talent is just one step. He works for the City and he can't afford to pay the market rate in downtown Grand Rapids. There is a need to widen the range of attainable – not necessarily affordable – housing.

R. Bergman said that employees at Ottawa County companies come from Muskegon, which is in a different region, with a different CEDS. He talked to Congressman Bill Huizenga, who co-sponsored a bill to eliminate EDA.

D. Bee said that the Grand Haven project can re-apply to EDA. Although the area is not sufficiently distressed to qualify for funding, they didn't take into account that workers lived in Muskegon County. D. Bee added that housing is not an area that we are involved with.

#### EDA Funding History

D. Bee distributed copies of a memo titled "U.S. Economic Development Projects". The memo lists the projects that have received EDA funding since 1974, for the communities served by the WMRPC. On page 4, there is a summary by county, which shows that projects are fairly evenly distributed among our seven counties.

Mr. Bristol said that EDA support is good because their funding is in the form of grants. USDA, in contrast, provides mostly loans. But if a community needs a grant, they should still go ahead and apply because USDA does have some grants.

#### Schedule of CEDS Meeting Dates

The 2018 Master Schedule was included with today's meeting packet. The schedule includes meetings for the CEDS Committee and also the WMRPC.

## **6. Potential Speakers and Topics for 2018**

The speaker at the March CEDS meeting will be a representative from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality to talk about water systems. Suggestions for future meetings included Ryan Kilpatrick with Housing Next (a new initiative to promote housing availability and affordability in Ottawa County). D. Bee said that Sarah Rainero, with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation would be the speaker at the next Commission Meeting.

## **7. WMRPC Staff Updates**

D. Bee distributed a Staff Update. The Update includes information in the categories of Economic Development, Transportation Planning, Member Projects/Initiatives, and Other. D. Bee highlighted a few of the items.

## **8. Committee Member Roundtable**

Tim Cochran – City of Wyoming. The City is trying to get rental housing for local neighborhoods, but is facing resistance from the neighbors. It is a good project which the City supports. R. Bergman said that people think that “affordable housing” means slums. The proposed project is located at Wilson and 56th and includes 700 total units, with 450 rental units, on 200 acres, and fits all the check boxes. Local residents are trying to overturn Byron Township's decision.

Cindy Plautz – City of Big Rapids. They are still working on the close out process for their EDA grant. She mentioned a MDNR (Michigan Department of Natural Resources) Passport program grant. The City's Master Plan update went well.

Morgan Carroll – Ionia County. They are working on a career and job fair for high school seniors, and the general public, which will take place in the spring. They have tours for students at local manufacturers and agribusiness so they will know what's available in Ionia.

Dan Massy – Osceola County. Some professionals, like engineers and teachers, who come to live in the county and don't want to buy a home yet can't find rental housing. Employers are dealing with issues related to workers who aren't dependable, and who don't show up for work. He mentioned an organization that works with companies to help their employees improve their performance issues.

Morris Langworthy – Osceola County. They haven't had enough snow this winter. It's hard to budget around the weather for the infrastructure for snowboarding. The lack of snow has hit the economy hard in rural communities that rely on environmental factors.

Christian Borg – City of Grand Rapids. He mentioned the City’s Brownfield and Tax Abatement programs. Both 2016 and 2017 have been great years for local developers, who have been very busy with new projects. And 2018 is looking like another good year.

Paul Bristol said that the new Secretary of Agriculture will be in town this week. The visit will be a good opportunity for local residents to voice their concerns related to “rural prosperity”.

Mike Scott – Montcalm County. In the eastern part of the county, wind and solar companies are trying to get leases. It’s an issue to get all the townships with like zoning. The City of Greenville has a new factory in the works.

Tom Porter – Montcalm County. A milk plant in Montcalm sends 100 semi trucks a day to the processing plant in Coopersville. The County’s finances are under control, although many residents are unhappy with reduced services.

R. Bergman suggested a tour of Continental Dairy (in Coopersville) for the CEDS Committee.

Jim Storey – Allegan County. The County is between directors for their economic development commission. They are considering their options. They could partner with the Right Place or Lakeshore Advantage. They will probably hire a director and partner with one of those organizations. They are remodeling the Holland Civic Center. The City of Holland is looking for a new city manager.

Roger Bergman – Ottawa County. He talked about the recent economic forecast for Kent, Ottawa, and Allegan Counties. The forecast includes where we have been and where we are heading for 2018 and 2019. Although 2018 is predicted to be less booming than recently, it should still be a good year. Indicators show a slight recession in 2019. Muskegon County has not experienced the same growth as other areas, but is still in a growth phase. The possible 2019 recession does not include Muskegon.

Ron Thomas – Ionia County. The new representative for Ionia County introduced himself, sharing some information about his background. Welcome, Ron!

## **9. Other Business**

None.

## **10. Adjournment**

**A MOTION WAS MADE** By M. Langworthy to adjourn. **SUPPORTED BY** M. Carroll. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.** The meeting was adjourned at 11:10 a.m.

Attachment: Staff Update