

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

March 28, 2018  
9:30 a.m.

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

**CEDS Members present:**

Nora Balgoyen-Williams – Allegan County  
Jim Sandy – Mecosta County Development Corporation  
Tom Porter – Montcalm County  
S. Michael Scott – Montcalm County  
Roger Bergman – Ottawa County  
Joyce Kortman – Ottawa County  
Chris Thelen – At-Large (Consumers Energy)

**Staff:**

David Bee – Director  
Nancy Murphy – Administrative Assistant

**Guests:**

Travis Alden– Barry County Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Alliance  
Christian Borg – City of Grand Rapids  
Mike Womack – City of Cedar Springs – WMRPC  
Sue DeVries – Michigan Economic Development Corporation  
Lindsay Viviano – Michigan Economic Development Corporation

**2. Approval of Agenda**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY T. Porter to adopt the agenda as presented. SUPPORTED BY M. Scott. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**3. Approval of Minutes**

**A MOTION WAS MADE BY T. Porter to approve the minutes for the January 31, 2018, CEDS Committee meeting as presented. SUPPORTED BY M. Scott. MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**4. Guest Speakers**

Sue DeVries and Lindsay Viviano – Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC)

D. Bee introduced today's guest speakers, Sue DeVries and Lindsay Viviano, with the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC). Ms. DeVries provided information about MEDC's community development programs, including the Redevelopment Ready Communities (RRC) program. The RRC program is designed to prepare communities so they are ready when a developer contacts them, with the necessary processes in place. MEDC funding is now formally linked to RRC, with participation required to qualify for funds.

RRC requirements include attending the best practices seminar, completing a self-assessment, and preparing a resolution stating the community wants to be involved in the RRC program.

Community development eligibility varies by the type of downtown within a community. Communities that have a traditional downtown (that meets specific criteria), must demonstrate readiness through “RRC engagement”. For communities without a traditional downtown that have a high impact corridor, or gateway, routes that connect to economic activity, they will demonstrate their readiness through “RRC certification”. Traditional downtowns are a MEDC priority.

The Michigan Main Street (MMS) program provides technical assistance and services to communities that are interested in revitalizing and preserving their traditional commercial districts. The program helps communities develop main street districts that attract both residents and businesses, promote commercial investment, and facilitate economic growth.

Ms. DeVries said that there is a lot going on in local communities and the MEDC wants them to be ready for whatever happens in the future. She mentioned several communities within Region 8 that have participated in MEDC programs, including projects in the cities/villages of Allegan, Wayland, Middleville, Ionia, Lyons, Portland, Mecosta, Greenville, and Evert.

J. Sandy asked about the “carrot” – will MEDC give them money? Ms. DeVries said that they all have a good chance of getting a grant if they have a project, and she listed the criteria (including the local match, compliance with procedures, etc.). R. Bergman cited an example of a project he was personally involved with, saying that it took four years to go through the grant process, with MEDC paying one-third and he paid two-thirds of the costs. M. Womack said that Cedar Springs is going through the process now and he thinks the process itself is valuable to the community – the self-evaluation generates good ideas for them.

Ms. DeVries said that sometimes problems are due to a bank issue – banks might be hesitant to get involved when they’re not familiar with the program. She said that a better approach is to go to MEDC first with a project and they will work with the community to determine the best way to fund a project. The community must first know what they want. MEDC funds and works with communities, not developers. It’s important for communities to know their local priorities.

R. Bergman asked if there are grants for second story apartments? Yes. Is that tied to low income apartments? Ms. DeVries said that previously, MEDC was funding building façades, and MSHDA (Michigan State Housing Development Authority) was doing apartments. But now both departments are in the same agency, so they can do either or both. Communities should go to MEDC first and tell them what they’re trying to accomplish with a building.

J. Kortman asked a question about working with MSHDA now that it is a part of MEDC. Ms. DeVries said that now it is more one-stop shopping compared to previously when there were two separate application processes for the same project. Within MEDC, MSHDA still has housing projects, but not second story units.

T. Alden mentioned the RRC program in Barry County, citing the example of the City of Middleville. They helped them to streamline things. He said that sometimes a community needs to be proactive, like with a white elephant building. Then, they need to know what programs are available, so they can contact the best person to get the project started. There was a case where his own agency wanted a particular property to be improved. Ms. DeVries said that at least the community should have an idea of what they want.

Ms. Viviano talked about MEDC projects in Ottawa County, including the cities of Zeeland and Hudsonville. Hudsonville is creating a new downtown. T. Alden asked how Hudsonville qualifies since they do not have a traditional downtown. Ms. DeVries said that they are becoming redevelopment ready. She added that for projects before October 2017, the new regulations have to either fit a traditional downtown or be part of a corridor. Ms. Viviano also mentioned projects in Kent County, including a movie theater, the Studio Park project, and the former Red Lion Bar on Bridge Street in Grand Rapids. That property could be developed as a five-story building with a restaurant on the first level and apartments on the upper floors. C. Borg commented that for the City, it's good to have Triangle Construction at the table. The developer tends to be more optimistic about what can and will happen, so it's also good to have MEDC for a more realistic perspective.

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

### Program Overview / Opportunities

#### Project Solicitation

#### Review of Goals

D. Bee said that this is the first interim year after the 2017 five-year CEDS update. Not much has changed. We will add some new projects and he will be doing his annual visit to local communities to talk with them about potential projects. Our recent newsletter started the process. At the May CEDS meeting, the Committee will have a chance to review any new projects before completion of the final draft to be presented at the August meeting.

#### EDA Funding History

D. Bee talked about past EDA funded projects in Region 8's communities. He and Lee Shirey, our EDA Representative, visited two communities (Cedar Springs and Greenville) that are applying for an EDA grant. Mr. Shirey liked both projects, especially Cedar Springs. EDA will be up front in the beginning of the application process, and say when the proposed project lines up with their goals.

R. Bergman suggested that we schedule one of our Committee meetings at the site of an EDA grant recipient. C. Borg said that they could put together photos and a tour of the Grand Rapids EDA project on Ottawa Avenue. D. Bee said there have been multiple grants in Grand Rapids, both in the downtown area and on the south end. He added that applicants have to be careful that their project does not serve just one business.

## **6. 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.

## **7. Committee Member Roundtable**

Nora Balgoyen-Williams – Allegan County. She has changed jobs and now works for ITC, a power company. Previously she worked on economic development for Allegan County. She is now a project manager involved with maintaining high voltage power lines. As the company rebuilds lines, she facilitates the work by coordinating local communities, along with working on vegetation management. She still works with Allegan County's economic development as a utility representative.

Allegan County decided to contract with Lakeshore Advantage for economic development activities. They will hire a person to manage the program. Allegan Air has a new events center in Allegan. It is a nice attraction, and they plan to make it a destination facility. Now indoors, they will expand to an outside theme park. ITC is involved with a lot of different programs, including charitable giving, sponsorships, and parks (trees planting).

Tom Porter – Montcalm County. Region 8 is working on a master plan for Maple Valley Township, which is his home. The flea market in Trufant has new owners. The County's finances are about the same.

Jim Sandy – Mecosta County. Ferris State University won the Division 2 national championship for the first time ever (they are all pretty excited about that). The Big Rapids airport is working on an extension, and looking for funding sources. The movie theater in Big Rapids found a potential buyer, but AMC Theatres company thwarted the sale. Now, the interested buyer is gone, and the price is too high – and the community needs a local theater. The new steel tariff has a negative impact on a local manufacturer that uses steel for knives and blades for the wood harvesting business.

Joyce Kortman – Ottawa County. Ottawa County has a committee that is addressing the issue of affordable housing in the county. The City of Holland has evaluated and listed all properties owned by the City. Now that they know what is available, they can determine the best option for each parcel.

Chris Thelen – Consumers Energy. He talked about the issue of attracting talent for jobs. Consumers has a new service center on the west side in Grand Rapids. "Circuit West" – an impressive joint project with Rockford Construction – will test and implement sustainable and renewable energy for businesses and residents within a 10-block area between Stocking, Turner, Second, and Bridge. In January, they initiated Phase 2 of the wind park in Michigan's thumb area. The energy will be going to the General Motors facility in Flint.

R. Bergman asked C. Thelen about the process of Consumers switch to renewable energy – how will they address the need for electricity when there's no wind? C. Thelen said they bought a natural gas plant and are looking for more small scale natural gas plants to supplement wind technology. In the Grand Rapids facility, they are looking at the use of batteries. By 2040, they expect to be coal free – it will take a long time, and there are a range of options to replace the coal plants.

Travis Alden – Barry County. A *Wall Street Journal* article about residential growth said Barry County has the second highest growth rate in the country. Bradford White in Middleville is expanding. Their first Brownfield project is in Yankee Springs Township. The Chamber of Commerce is working on business education – they don't want to focus only on recruitment of new businesses; it's also important to help existing companies to succeed. At the last WMRPC meeting, he mentioned the proposed expansion of the Bay Pointe Inn along Gun Lake. There has been a lengthy public process, with a vocal minority in opposition, but the Planning Commission did approve the project concept. He said that the Main Street program is excellent and he would recommend it for local communities. The City of Hastings will be attending the Main Street training in July.

Mike Womack – City of Cedar Springs. The City just entered the Redevelopment Ready Communities program, including the self-evaluation process. He mentioned a farm-to-table restaurant.

Christian Borg – City of Grand Rapids. The City is under construction, including Bridge Street on the west side and 201 Market Avenue. All Brownfield projects were approved for 2016-17. They are excited about the Consumers Circuit West project. They expect a transformation on Bridge Street similar to past changes on Michigan Street, Wealthy Avenue, and Grandville Avenue. The 201 Market project involves the redevelopment of 16 acres, in addition to the Grand River restoration efforts.

Roger Bergman – Ottawa County. The County's Parks Department received a large grant for the Ottawa Sands property; implementation will take place over a two-year period. A project in Ferrysburg takes a substantial chunk of taxable property from the City's tax roll. In the Spring Lake downtown district, a lot of properties are being purchased by a single company for redevelopment. A property in downtown Grand Haven, which has been vacant for 30 years, will be developed into housing (condos and apartments) and a small hotel.

Mike Scott – Montcalm County. Local businesses continue to have workforce problems. They can't find qualified workers. Part of the problem is lack of affordable housing for prospective employees. Howard City will celebrate its sesquicentennial the third week in September.

## 8. Other Business

D. Bee said the next CEDS Committee meeting will be May 30 in the City of Grand Rapids.

## 9. Adjournment

**A MOTION WAS MADE** By M. Scott to adjourn. **SUPPORTED BY** T. Porter. **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.** The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Attachment: Staff Update