

MINUTES

Lakes Region Comprehensive Economic Development Strategies (CEDS) Coordinating Committee Meeting

New Hampshire Ball Bearing
Laconia, New Hampshire
July 28, 2010

Committee Members Present:

Debbie Frawley-Drake (LRL Enterprises)	Jack Terrill (Lakes Region United Way)
Dick Waitt (LRPC) College)	Mark Edelstein (Lakes Region Community
Jennifer Boulanger (BCEDC)	Henry Lipman (LRGHealthcare)
Rick DeMark (USDA-North Country RC&D)	Carol Cantin (NH Works/NHDES)
Gary Groleau (NH Ball Bearing)	Pat Farley (Tamworth Eco. Dev.)

Others:

Karen McNiff (Tamworth Economic Development)	
Bea Lewis (Laconia Citizen)	Peter Laufenberg (Plymouth State University)
Herb Parkhurst (NH Ball Bearing)	David Bickford (Senatorial Candidate)
Alan Robichaud (Lakes Region United Way)	

Call to Order / Acceptance of Minutes

Gary Groleau called the meeting to order at 4:07 PM. Introductions were made and a motion was duly made and seconded (Waitt/Edelstein) to approve the minutes of April 28th. The motion was passed with Debbie Frawley-Drake abstaining.

As an introduction to the “State of CEDS” discussion, G. Groleau showed a 5 minute video entitled: “Shift Happens” about the exponential technological advances being made around the globe and the challenge to education in preparing for tomorrow’s workforce. In relating a sense of urgency about where to find the skilled workers for today’s labor market, G. Groleau expressed frustration over “what piece of the elephant to bite off” when it comes to investing his time. In today’s floundering employment market, NH Ball Bearing finds itself in a growth industry with a rapidly diminishing pool of skilled workers, and a need to stay competitive. Needs exceed capacity and he is finding he has to outsource recruitment. The last two mechanical engineering positions were recruited from North Carolina and Utah. Students are no longer entering the field at the rate needed to supply the demand for labor. Introductory courses in machine tool processing have all but disappeared from our high school and college campuses.

The big question for CEDS is “what are we doing to impact the change in our economy?” Is it time to re-examine our priorities and refocus i.e. who are we; where are we going; what

outcomes are we seeking? What is the return on investment, the impact factors, for the commitment of time we are putting in? It feels like we attend CEDS out of courtesy to each other when we need to express and benefit our own self-interests.

M. Edelstein stated CEDS pursued funding for the hospital and the Barnstead pellet company pursuant to the plan. What now? What are the next steps and priorities?

J. Terrill stated that he never fully understood the purpose of CEDS except to access federal dollars from EDA. He feels there is more to be accomplished as a collaborative group such as systems change, social service re-engineering, etc. There is great potential with this group of people but under its current structure there is little CEDS can offer its subcommittees. As an example, the Housing subcommittee has no requests to make of CEDS and doesn't see that CEDS is there to offer them anything at this time.

R. DeMark is working with a similar group in the North Country which he expressed is on "auto-pilot". They are a committee consisting of the directors of various Economic Development Councils, congressional office representatives and others who have plans, goals and targeted outcomes with expectations that projects will come to them from communities. Committees on their own cannot be expected to be "project generators". He reported that the Natural Resources and Energy Committee feels it has completed its goals and objectives. He feels we can do more than access federal EDA dollars by becoming an established Economic Development District. Individual committees can come together to advise and guide the bigger group but we need to market and invite a broader constituency. The multi-committee structure is positive but he is concerned about its sustainability.

Rick asked if CEDS had ever attempted to bring together all of the Economic Development Councils (i.e. municipalities, counties, federal partners, and the like.)

Pat Farley chairs the Tamworth Economic Development Council and is a member of the Lakes Region Planning Commission. While she hears despair she hopes to see the dreams and the challenges of the region come to fruition. She feels the collective groups can become a center for technical knowledge for investors and entrepreneurs.

H. Lipman felt it makes sense to set up opportunities and bring projects to investors/banks. Up to this point CEDS has concentrated mostly on infrastructure. We need to move to the "Get it done" part. Using broad band as an example, he stated his committee served as a task force for problem solving for the Granite State Media Center. He feels CEDs has two parts to it – seeking funding and getting things done. He stated that the health of the hospital is critical to the health of the community and made a plea for answering the question of what do we need to do to prevent outsourcing?

J. Boulanger reiterated that the initial task for CEDS was to develop a plan (started in 2007) and now it is to implement the plan. Ultimately we want to access dollars for improvement to infrastructure. We need to expand our reach in order to access administrative funds needed to

sustain the planning effort. Our region's physical infrastructure is aging and in need of updating. We need to improve our communications and outreach to others.

D. Waitt of the Lakes Region Planning Commission wants to get involved as an Economic Development District in order to access resources to sustain CEDS' effort and qualify for seed money to set up the Economic Development District. When asked by M. Edelstein as to the status of the designation as a district, D. Waitt responded that we have never received an official letter from the Feds. He feels CEDS needs to move forward. We need to get down to the local level to the people who can bring projects forward (e.g. town select boards).

G. Groleau reiterated that there needs to be two tracks for CEDS. One is funding, the other is project development and implementation. We need to reach people who have projects to bring forward. To that point, H. Lipman stated he favored piloting projects – gain small successes that motivate others.

CEDS Committee Reports and Updates

Social Capital and Cultural Heritage Committee ~ D. Frawley-Drake reported that the committee has merged its efforts with the Lakes Region United Way's Healthy Communities Steering Committee. The committee has met five times since the last CEDS meeting with members actively participating in a number of community engagement activities and events. Over 200 community aspiration surveys have been completed; a Better Together initiative launched on May 21st has over 150 people collaborating on numerous community projects (e.g. mentoring, health eating/active living, neighbors helping neighbors, cultural heritage activities), Friends of the Colonial, a tribute to Warren Clements, a Full-Service Community School initiative with SAU 30 (Laconia School District), a Poverty Simulation on August 18th, and an educational/workforce development initiative with Lakes Region schools and businesses). A meeting was also held with Kimon Koulet to discuss broader community visioning with CEDS. A social capital article was placed in a recent edition of the CEDS newsletter.

Sustainability – Energy and the Natural Environment Committee ~ R. DeMark reported that the committee is committed to revitalizing the Lakes Region Energy Alliance and to maintaining and improving water, air and soil resources. Rick also mentioned support for recent community discussions on utilizing the former prison property for the creation of an agricultural-education center. He will be attending a public forum to that effect following the CEDS meeting.

New Economy Committee ~ H. Lipman reported on a UNH ARRA funded broad band mapping project with the nine Regional Planning Commissions. Next steps for the committee include organizing a tech group to help in determining opportunities for commercial and residential broad band applications. The full committee will reconvene once the mapping process is complete. Long-term, the committee is hoping to become project focused while providing technical support for moving projects forward.

Building Employees Committee ~ Carol Cantin stated that the workforce development challenge is to grow the committee and get feedback from employers. The committee needs small, achievable successes and to figure out ways to engage the community.

G. Groleau feels we need to think in a more integrative fashion. We need to think about how to maximize resources such as the Huot Technical Center and the Lakes Region Community College; to engage in legislative advocacy that promotes workforce and enterprise development. We cannot market ourselves collectively unless we are in constant communication with the greater whole.

Peter Laufenberg stated that the major goal of CEDS is to develop a vibrant economy. Action will bring solutions but we need to elicit engaged businesses that will influence the tax rate, income and a healthy economy.

J. Terrill suggested we need to bring these issues to the Better Together arena and get more community participation and investment.

M. Edelstein framed three levels of CEDS functionality -

- a. Visionary - identification of larger needs
- b. Problem-solving - provision of technical assistance to prospective proposals
- c. Invitation, review and promotion of proposals brought forward for funding

He stated a major challenge is one of keeping businesses engaged in the process. For them, time is money and it's difficult to capture and maintain their investment if they see no return. We need to give them concrete action and real results. This builds social capital.

H. Lipman offered a concrete suggestion: Figure out a way to staff up the technical aspects of the Lakes Region Planning Commission then get to work on doing something - i.e. Create jobs! It seems that we have two major aerospace industrial employers right here in the Industrial Park that need skilled workers. They represent a rare growth opportunity in an otherwise dismal economic environment. We need to support them before we lose them.

G. Groleau reiterated his concern that students are not entering the field of mechanical engineering and that the highly skilled tool and die makers of the past can no longer be found. We need to rethink our efforts.

J. Terrill suggested that all Better Together Committees should frame their work around job development.

R. DeMark asked, if the pending application for an Economic Development District is approved, do we have projects ready to go? The response from other members was that "Not that meet EDA criteria (i.e. that create direct jobs)." Then we need to turn elsewhere to expand our reach to others such as state councils and departments that should help to develop such opportunities or for resources that can assist local efforts outside the parameters of EDA. Pat Farley felt that it would not be difficult to reach out to local communities.

C. Cantin suggested we sit down with Better Together to see where we should go from here and to access the Chamber of Commerce for further feedback.

G. Groleau felt the group needs feedback and further clarification from Kimon Koulet.

A. Robichaud offered an observation that it felt the group's needs do not neatly fit into the EDA profile but that CEDS sees greater needs for economic development and is frustrated in spending so much time on something that has yet to, and may not, meet the needs of the community. While others felt the same, there is strong consensus that economic development is CEDS' key focus.

Other Business

G. Groleau read a letter handed to him by D. Waitt from EDA regarding approval of the Lakes Region CEDS.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

G. Groleau offered to chair the next meeting and will distribute a meeting date in the near future. It will be held sometime this fall.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 PM.