

Rhode Island Statewide Planning Program
STATE PLANNING COUNCIL
MINUTES

Thursday, January 15, 2009
William E. Powers Building
Conference Room B
One Capitol Hill, Providence, RI

I. ATTENDANCE

Members Present

Mr. Kevin Flynn, Chair	Representing Mr. Jerome Williams, RI Department of Administration
Mr. Jared L. Rhodes, II, Secretary	Statewide Planning Program
Mr. Chuck Alves	Representing Michael Lewis, RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Daniel Beardsley	RI League of Cities and Towns
Mr. Peter Osborn	Federal Highway Administration
Ms. Sharon Conard Wells	West Elmwood Housing Development Corporation
Ms. Carmela Corte	Representing Ms. Rosemary Booth Gallogly, Budget Office
Ms. Diane Feather	Representing, Jeanne Boyle, City of East Providence, Planning Department
Mr. Stephen Cavanaugh	Representing Mr. Timothy Costa, Vice Chair Governors' Policy Office
Ms. Bonnie Nickerson	Representing Mr. Thomas Deller, City of Providence Department of Planning & Development
Ms. Janet White-Raymond	Public Member

Members Absent

Ms. Susan Baxter	RI Housing Resources Commission
Mr. L. Vincent Murray	Town of South Kingstown Planning Department
Ms. Anna Prager	Public Member
Mr. Michael Rauh	Environmental Advocate
Mr. William Sequino	Public Member
Mr. Stephen Cardi Esq.	Public Member
Mr. John Trevor	Environmental Advocate

Guests

Mr. Daniel Berman	Federal Highway Administration (Advisory Member)
Ms. Shelia Brush	Grow Smart Rhode Island
Ms. Kelly Mahoney	RI Senate Policy Office
Mr. Bob Shawver	RI Department of Transportation
Mr. Mark Therrien	Rhode Island Public Transit Authority

Staff—Division of Planning

Ms. Maria Costa	Executive Assistant
Mr. Robert Griffith	Chief, Economic Development & Strategic Planning
Mr. Bill McKenna	Economic Development & Strategic Planning
Ms. Katherine Trapani	Supervising Planner, Transportation

II. AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Mr. Flynn called the meeting to order at 9:10 am. He introduced several designees who were filling in for members who were not able to attend the meeting.

2. Approval of December 11, 2008 Meeting Minutes

Ms. White-Raymond moved to approve the Minutes of December 11, 2008, as presented. The motion was seconded by Ms. Conard-Wells and carried unanimously.

3. RI Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy 2008 Annual Report and Accelerated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) List

Mr. Flynn briefly introduced the report and overviewed the process that had been followed to this point. He noted that both the CEDS Subcommittee and the Technical Committee had reviewed the document and are recommending approval to the State Planning Council.

Mr. Griffith next elaborated on each of the component parts of the report. He noted that the Division of Planning (DOP) was in the process of preparing the Annual Report when it was: contacted by the United States Economic Development Administration (EDA); advised of an opportunity for directing additional resources at our high unemployment rate; urged to coordinate efforts with the Rhode Island Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and instructed to integrate any new initiatives that arise as a result directly into the content of the Annual Report. The new small business loan fund recapitalization and CEDS project acceleration initiatives now documented in the annual report are the results of this coordination.

In regards to the 5 million dollar request to recapitalize the small business loan fund Mr. Griffith advised the Council that the Governor himself announced this initiative on December 11, 2008. He stated that the effort was being led by EDC and that it was aimed primarily at persevering existing jobs in the small business community rather than stimulating new jobs. He added that small businesses were finding it difficult to secure working capital “bridge loans” that are sometimes needed to cover operating and payroll expenses on a short term basis. He also noted that EDC has had a successful track record with this program. He pointed out that since inception, the program had made approximately 559 loans totaling an estimated 44 million dollars and that these efforts have resulted in the preservation of roughly 5,292 jobs as well as the creation of 2,583 new jobs. Mr. Griffith concluded on this topic by explaining that although the fund has been successful in the past, it is now nearly exhausted having only approximately 1.7 million dollars available for new loans.

Mr. Griffith next turned his attention to the CEDS Acceleration Initiative and explained that there were two subsets of projects that were now being recommended to EDA for “fast track” funding consideration. These included projects from previously approved 2006, 2007 and 2008 priority lists and those new projects that were recently identified and evaluated through an additional solicitation effort.

In regards to projects from previously approved priority lists, he noted that all such projects had been considered for inclusion but that only those who responded to initial contacts, were still active, and hadn’t otherwise already been funded by EDA were now being recommended for “fast tracked” funding consideration. These included the Federated Lithographers, Mercantile Block, Phase II Davisville Road Reconfiguration, Renewable Energy Wind Turbine Demonstration, Roger Williams University, Aquidneck Corporate Park, Pawtucket Armory, Capco Steel and Providence Piers projects.

In regards to the new projects, Mr. Griffith explained that the DOP undertook a focused project solicitation to identify additional worthy efforts that hadn’t previously applied for CEDS consideration. Through this effort DOP received six applications, two of which were determined to be ineligible for the program and four of which were subsequently scored and presented to the CEDS Subcommittee on January 6, 2008. These included the Thread Factory, Branch Village Growth Center, Marine Highway Terminal Improvements and the URI Research Park Infrastructure Improvement Projects.

Mr. Griffith closed his presentation by reminding the council that both the CEDS Subcommittee and the Technical Committee have recommended the approval of the 2008 Annual Report, including the small business loan fund recapitalization and CEDS acceleration initiatives.

There being no further discussion Ms. Conard-Wells motioned to approve the 2008 Annual Report including the small business loan fund recapitalization and CEDS acceleration initiatives. The motion was seconded Ms. White-Raymond and carried unanimously.

4. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Southeastern Massachusetts Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD)

Chairman Flynn called upon Ms. Trapani to introduce this item. Ms. Trapani first noted that this is not an entirely new effort; that the Council had entered into a similar MOU with SRPEDD in the past; and that this version could essentially be considered an extension of that previous effort. Ms. Trapani also presented a map which depicted the respective geographies of the two districts and overviewed the detailed action items called for in the MOU.

There being no further discussion Mr. Beardsley motioned to approve the MOU. The motion was seconded by Ms. White-Raymond and carried unanimously.

5. Memorandum of Understanding with the Central Massachusetts Regional Planning Commission (CMRPC)

Ms. Trapani also took the lead in presenting this item. She explained that its intent, purpose and content was similar to that previously reviewed but distinguished the two by noting that this would be the first time that the Council entered into a formal MOU with CMRPC. She pointed out that the action was a recommendation of the Federal Highway Administration’s last recertification report and that the MOU would formalize a planning process that already exists.

There being no further discussion Ms. Conard-Wells motioned to approve the MOU. The motion was seconded by Ms. Feather and carried unanimously.

6. Committee Membership Appointments

The Chairman next called upon Mr. Rhodes to address this item. In doing so Mr. Rhodes: reminded the Council that they had adopted a “Slate of Names” for appointments/reappointments to the Technical Committee, Transportation Advisory Committee and the Rhode Island Recreation Resource Review Committee at their December meeting; that they had since taken the “Slate of Names” under consideration for the required one month period; and that they were now in a position to formally act on the appointments.

There being no further discussion Mr. Beardsley motioned to appoint the respective nominees by name and as follows:

Technical Committee (two year term) – Catherine Ady, Lisa Bourbannais, Jeff Broadhead, Ames Colt, Kathy Crawley, Diane Feather, Thomas Kogut, Dennis Langley, Patrick Malone, Ph.D., Eugenia Marks, Robert Vanderslice, Ph.D., Michael Walker, and Jeff Willis.

Transportation Advisory Committee (three year term) - Sue Barker, Alan Brodd, Michael Cassidy, Marilyn Cohen, John MacDonald, Linda Painter, Paul Romano, Jim Soctomah, and Michael Wood.

Recreation Resources Review Committee (two year term) - Jeanne Boyle, Katherine Bradley, George Gifford, Cheri Hall, William Mulholland, Jane Sherman, and Larry Taft.

The motion was seconded by Ms. White-Raymond and carried unanimously.

7. Chief’s Report

The Chairman deferred presentation of the Chief’s Report in lieu of the stimulus discussion documented below.

8. Other Business

The Chairman next took the opportunity to brief the Council on the State’s efforts to prepare for the pending “Federal Stimulus Package.” He noted that the Governor’s office had instructed him and Michael Saul of the EDC to work together in soliciting projects and in compiling a preliminary statewide list. He explained that a detailed request for project submittals had been distributed to state agencies, housing authorities and local municipalities and that he and Mr. Saul were now working to compile the materials into a single comprehensive list. He noted that there were many uncertainties as to how the effort would move forward particularly since a formal Federal “Stimulus Bill” hadn’t been introduced as of yet.

Peter Osborn, of the Federal Highway Administration (FHA) also took the opportunity to share some insights on this topic. In particular he noted that FHA was tracking the “Oberstar” proposal which could be found on the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee website. He went on to say that this proposal anticipates approximately \$30 billion for highways, roads, and bridges; contains very tight spending timelines and many accountability provisions. Mr. Osborn further explained that FHA was advocating for spending deadlines ranging between 120 and 180 days and that FHA had been having bi-weekly meetings with the Obama transition team and others to discuss these issues.

A lengthy discussion regarding the possible variations and ramifications of the “Stimulus Package” that would eventually emerge from Washington then ensued. The discussion was beneficial, but it was acknowledged that much of it was speculative and that there wouldn’t be any real, clear-cut, actionable guidance coming out of Washington until such time that a package was formally approved.

Approved 3/12/9

Mr. Flynn concluded the discussion by emphasizing the overall significance of the stimulus package and by pointing out the opportunity it presents in moving important projects off of wish lists and into reality.

9. **Adjourn**

There being no other business before the Council, the meeting adjourned at 10:05 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Jared L. Rhodes, II
Secretary