

**Minutes of the
Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy
Committee Meeting
Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council
421 SW Camden Avenue, Stuart, Florida 34994**

Thursday, December 18, 2008

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

The following members and staff were present:

Martin County	Tammy Simoneau Judson Epperly Kathie Smith (alternate) Cindy Pingolt (alternate) Ron Bunch (alternate)
Palm Beach County	Kevin Johns
St. Lucie County	Larry Daum Gwenda Thompson
Indian River County	Raymond Coniglio Randy Riley
Staff	Greg Vaday Penny Myszkowski
Visitors	Gary Hines

Staff called the roll and announced that a quorum was present.

Agenda and Minutes

Raymond Coniglio moved approval of the Minutes and Agenda. Kathie Smith seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

Motion

Membership Appointments

Greg Vaday reported that County Administrators have received letters asking for new appointments or reappointments to the CEDS board. EDA has asked for representation from two other areas, institutions of higher education and labor groups. Mr. Vaday welcomes suggestions to fill these positions. Larry Daum and Candace Walker will no longer serve for St. Lucie County. New members will be added in January.

Election of Officers

The following officers were elected: Chair, Kevin Powers, Martin County; First Vice Chair, Randy Riley, Indian River County; Second Vice Chair, Gwenda Thompson, St. Lucie County; Third Vice Chair, Tammy Simoneau, Martin County. Motion was made by Ray Coniglio and seconded by Gwenda Thompson to elect these members as officers. Motion was approved unanimously.

Motion

EDA Fiscal Year 2008 Disaster Supplemental Appropriations

Greg Vaday reported that there is a \$100 million supplemental fund approved by EDA for disaster effected counties across the country. There will also be a \$400 million supplemental fund, with Florida receiving about \$50 million for projects in long term disaster planning. It may be possible to fund long term sustainable projects in the Treasure Coast Region.

Kevin Johns said the Glades area now has funds over 25%, but South Bay and Pahokee may go bankrupt. Their water systems were destroyed by the hurricanes. Palm Beach County would like to set up a new water and sewer system for the Glades area.

Larry Daum said that probably only about \$5 million would be available to our region.

Greg Vaday stated that he would like to ask the Banking Consortium to make a one time capital contribution through a 501C3 so they have a tax write-off. We would contribute \$100,000 and raise \$1.5 million. The Research Consortium is looking at a high tech company that is in need of a large amount of credit. It might be the first large loan in January.

Federal Economic Stimulus Package

The Regional Planning Council does not know how big the Economic Stimulus Package will be. Each state will be able to access some part of that money. It will go through the Governor's Office and the council is trying to anticipate how the requests will be made by the municipalities. There will be infrastructure projects and alternative and renewable energy projects.

Larry Daum said that the stimulus package should be geared toward regions with high unemployment rates in order to stimulate jobs. Greg Vaday said the inland port project is one that would definitely impact the region. Kevin Johns mentioned the multi-county airports and business parks. Tammy Simoneau suggested the regional waterways and ecotourism. Gary Hines added the focus on the green movement and alternative fuel. Judson Epperly pointed out that many businesses have left the St. Lucie County industrial park area.

Kevin Johns suggested that they might find some common denominator to help poverty areas within the whole network. One common denominator is jobs and the most employment growth is usually around airports. He would advocate for a cargo airport in

the Glades. The Palm Beach Strategic Economic Plan will include using the canals to create “little San Antonios”. There is one area in Belle Glade where property owners in four city blocks agreed to renovate so they can get from the lake to downtown Belle Glade on this strip. It might be possible to pick several canals to work on. It’s a different kind of strategy.

Tammy Simoneau said that Enterprise Florida was just working on the strategic intermodal system with aeration waterway and roadway connection for transportation.

Kevin Johns said Palm Beach’s airport has had large vacant tracts of land around it for years and only now are they considering using the land for industrial sites. Industrial sites need time sensitive transportation. Tammy Simoneau mentioned that businesses, in order to stay in business, also have to deal with employee costs and health care.

Greg Vaday said there are commercial centers that could be renovated, like the Florida Furniture Mart, which is being considered to house high tech research and development. That is one of the projects the Financial Consortium is looking at. Mr. Vaday said that there is a time factor involved in submitting a project.

Greg Vaday mentioned that he had a discussion with a consultant from Georgia who said Georgia has a one-stop-shop program specifically for renewable energy companies looking to relocate in Georgia. The relocating company would be able to consult with all the agencies at one time.

Tammy Simoneau asked why businesses are having so many problems getting loans. Judson Epperly said he sees a lot of businesses that cannot get loans because the guidelines are stricter now. Randy Riley said the bank underwriting has become more stringent and has been complicated by the fact that the buyers are not qualified for loans anymore. A lot of this problem is from the building trades and certain industries need to be targeted.

Tammy Simoneau pointed out that workers’ skills have to be looked at and we need an educational component to retrain and redirect. Ron Bunch said that there are contracts out there, but money is needed to buy the supplies.

Kevin Johns asked if the banks will start to lend more soon and Randy Riley said they have just started to get TARP funds and capital is beginning to improve in the banks. Kevin Johns asked what kind of lending component would be needed. There is a federal loan program with 40% low interest loan with 10% grant.

Greg Vaday said an EDA loan with the innovation fund works similarly and can be used for financing the equipment and machinery. Larry Daum said once you get the revenue flowing back into the business, then you can afford to pay the employees.

Tammy Simoneau suggested we begin to influence the way the paper reports the economic situation to rebuild consumer confidence.

Kevin Johns said that from his experience in Atlanta, every time you expand an airport, a lot of people go to work, lawyers, engineers, finance and insurance people, etc.

Greg Vaday said one of the analogies could be Kevin John's work on the Glades Public Market. It is more than just a public market. It is the actual system creating innovation with the smaller farmers to grow and sell their crops. Food being grown in Palm Beach County can be sold to the Breakers Hotel in Palm Beach County, rather than importing the foods. Hopefully the school systems and hospitals can be worked into this new system.

Judson Epperly said we should target the industries that are the weakest. For example, QVC and Maverick, who shut down their factory in North Carolina, are consolidating. He said this can have a major regional impact, but it needs to be done now.

Gwenda Thompson said that she has heard from many people that they have plans for their own municipalities for funds from the stimulus package and they may not be focusing on a regional project.

Priorities for 2009

There was a discussion on the priorities of the CEDS projects for 2009. Kevin Johns mentioned that all these projects will need federal intervention. Larry Daums said that members will need to consider how to present the projects to their local governments.

CEDS Meeting Calendar/Location for 2009-01-08

The 2009 meeting schedules is as follows: February 12, April 9, June 11, August 13, October 8, and December 10, all at the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council office in Stuart.

Public Comment

None.

CEDS Committee Comments

Gary Hines suggested that we remember to buy goods locally and look into what is produced in our regions. Glenda Thompson said that Florida manufacturers have asked for some sort of catalog or software that can be used to look up services available locally and this has not been compiled. Larry Daum suggested that we get the media to advocate for the use of local suppliers.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:30 p.m. The next CEDS committee meeting will be held on February 12, 2009 at the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council office in Stuart.