



North Country Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee Minutes

Friday, September 15, 2023 at 10 AM

Physical Meeting: Mount Eustis Commons, 1st Floor Conference Room of AHEAD, 262 Cottage Street, Littleton, NH 03561

Link to Recording: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/6034446303>

Staff: Kaela Tavares, Glenn Coppelman

Committee & Guest Attendance: Jeremy Knowlton (WMSI), Julie Renaud Evans (Northern Forest Center), Peter Corey (NCIC), Benoit Lamontagne (BEA), Katy Kopp (WEDC), Annette Cole (WMCC), Steve Fortier (NBRC), Chuck Henderson (Sen. Shaheen's office), Erica Canales (CEDC), Maeve Cyr (CEDC), Miguel Morales (SBA), Tim Josephson (UVLSRPC),

1. Welcome and Introductions

Kaela Tavares opened the meeting at 10:00 am.

Roll call & Introductions- completed as listed above.

2. Approval of Minutes

April 21, 2023 Meeting, June 16, 2023 Meeting

3. Participant Share Out

- a. Miguel Morales shared that SBA is working on a National Veterans Small Business Week for the first week of November.
- b. Tim Josephson mentioned that UVLSRPC is focused on the micro enterprise program through River Valley Community College.
- c. Chuck Henderson shared information on the acquisition of the Connecticut Lands owned by New Climate who is focused on cutting less timber. Chuck notes the complexity of this topic with lumber companies relying on timber cutting, the need for carbon sequestration, and how companies can make more money off of carbon credits instead of selling timber. Julie adds how the Northern Forest Center has been paying attention to this dynamic on a regional level, as it will eventually impact wood demand, since less is coming from these working timber forests.
- d. Peter Corey gives an update on NCIC since they decided to dissolve. They have sought a suiter to acquire assets and have found a similar nonprofit that they have made a deal with. A press release is expected to occur within the following week. It is expected that many NCIC employees will stay on with the larger organization. For news outside of NCIC, a private group of investors purchased a building in Whitefield to do a complete remodel. The remodel will include apartments in the upstairs portion of the building, and they hope to attract a nice restaurant to occupy the ground floor.
- e. Benoit Lamontagne is working with the Balsams, which is now moving along smoothly. American Performance Polymers in Colebrook is having difficulties and is taking on small

orders due to small staff. He did give good news and stated that the Federal Government has released the mortgage on the building. There will hopefully be an announcement within the coming month about a new manufacture in Berlin. Burgess Biomass is being watched closely in case of a government veto that would cause the plant to close. The new biomass plant in Whitefield is having challenges with broadband and their need for fiber. Benoit is working with BEA to hopefully use some of the broadband funding to resolve this issue. The biomass plant receiving broadband would also benefit the entire industrial park, which could help attract new companies.

- f. Erica announced the release of CEDC's new three-year strategic plan. CEDC is currently working on designing a workforce housing fund with several other entities, which should come out by the new year.
- g. Jeremy Knowlton shared an update on eclipse viewing plans. WMSI is also working on a new workforce development program.
- h. Steve Fortier shared that several million dollars will be flowing through the North Country due to awards from the NBRC Catalyst Program.
- i. Kalea gave an update on the Conservation Fund working on entering the world of activation of natural resources, instead of only having a focus on conservation. This will help towns manage natural resources either through finances or time and capacity to write grants.

Peter mentions the changes in how the North Country's forest economy has shifted greatly from decades ago and the pressures of external forces. Julie agrees on the shifts that have occurred, investments in the industry, and the need to secure enough wood for our needs in the future.

Julie Renaud Evans gave an update for the Norther Forest Center on research and ensuring the supply of mass timber to be support for construction instead of steel. Steve adds that the UNH Extension program received a grant to help builders use CLT.

Peter adds how him and Erica have had conversations with forest economy partners about how investment in railroad infrastructure would be of great benefit for the state in transporting our wood products.

Mention of need for public education and signage around forest harvesting programs.

4. Exploring Recompete – EDA Investment Program:

Kaela reviews the Recompete Pilot grant that has come from the EDA to support areas with low employment rates of those within the prime workforce age group. Coos County is eligible for funding, as it has consistently had a low rate of employment. Phase 1 will create a strategy to understand the background issues that are resulting in low workforce participation in the area, determine projects that will help solve the issue, and getting the projects ready to implement. Phase 2 of the program could bring \$30-80 million to build out plans from Phase 1.

One potential project would focus on outdoor recreation, outdoor classroom models, and CTE Programs to create well-paid, year-round employment in outdoor recreation.

Kaela asks the group who they think would be interested in working on this project or should have a seat at the table. She also asks what sort of projects everyone would be interested in seeing happen during Phase 2.

A brainstorming session occurs to come up with a list of entities that should be included in the Recompete and seeking letters of support.

5. Next Meeting:

Next Meeting Date: Friday, November 17th- Mount Eustis Commons 1st floor meeting room in Littleton

6. Adjournment: Kaela thanked the members for their attendance and participation. Meeting adjourned at _____.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathlin Lord

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