Barnstable County Economic Development Council (BCEDC)

Draft Minutes | November 8, 2023 at 5:00 pm

Virtual via Zoom

The meeting was held virtually with members of the Barnstable County Economic Development Council participating remotely, pursuant to Chapter 2 of the Acts of 2023.

The Chair announced that because the meeting was being held virtually all votes and other actions would be done by roll call. She stated that the members participating remotely would be announced as roll call is taken.

Attendance/Roll Call

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Business Sector</th>
<th>Attendance</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greg Bilezikian</td>
<td>Real Estate Development</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rob Brennan</td>
<td>Construction/Engineering</td>
<td>Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Amanda Converse</td>
<td>Retail Commerce</td>
<td>Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kara Galvin</td>
<td>Workforce Development</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisa Guyon</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Horgan</td>
<td>Childcare</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tammi Jacobsen</td>
<td>Higher Education</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alisa Magnotta</td>
<td>Social Services</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jack Stevenson</td>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>Present</td>
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<tr>
<td>Robert Talerman</td>
<td>Banking/Finance</td>
<td>Present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Julie Wake</td>
<td>Arts and Culture</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Forest</td>
<td>BC Commissioner</td>
<td>Absent</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harold Mitchell</td>
<td>CCC Rep</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ohman</td>
<td>Assembly of Delegates</td>
<td>Absent</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Cape Cod Commission Staff:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kristy Senatori</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Erin Perry</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steve Tupper</td>
<td>Deputy Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chloe Schaefer</td>
<td>Chief Planner</td>
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Call to Order
The meeting was called to order at 5:01 pm with roll call.

Approval of Minutes
Upon a motion by Rob Brennan, seconded Bert Talerman, the draft minutes from the October 11, 2023 BCEDC meeting were approved with a roll call vote.

Roll Call Vote
Greg Bilezikian  Yes
Rob Brennan  Yes
Amanda Converse  Yes
Lisa Guyon  Yes
Tammi Jacobsen  Yes
Alisa Magnotta  Yes
Bert Talerman  Yes
Jack Stevenson  Yes

Agenda Items
Cape Cod Canal Bridges Closure Economic Impact Analysis: Steve Tupper, Deputy Director of the Cape Cod Commission (CCC) summarized existing reports related to the economic importance of the Cape Cod Canal Bridges and discussed the potential for additional analyses of the economic impacts of bridge and lane closures. Council members were provided with the opportunity to discuss the existing and potential future bridge closure analyses.

Before Mr. Tupper began, CCC Executive Director Kristy Senatori informed the council that an economic analysis will provide additional information to help continue advocating for bridge replacement.

Mr. Tupper said the bridges are a critical connection for year-round residents, daily commuters, visitors, and businesses and it is important to understand the economic impact of bridge closures for the region. He said the bridges are currently safe for travel, but deterioration will continue and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) stated major rehabilitation will be necessary for both bridges if they are not replaced. Mr. Tupper briefly reviewed the existing Massachusetts Department of Transportation (MassDOT) and USACE bridge reports. He also reviewed the 2023 Massachusetts Federal Delegation report and said it includes firsthand accounts of the impacts from the recent bridge maintenance closures and addresses potential impacts for the region if the bridges are not replaced.
Mr. Tupper said a major rehabilitation of the Bourne Bridge will result in the bridge being completely closed for six months, followed by lane closures for sixteen months. He said the Sagamore Bridge would be completely closed for four months, followed by twelve months of lane closures. Mr. Tupper said currently there is no comprehensive analysis of what these closures would mean for the region. However, the fifty-three days of maintenance construction on the Sagamore Bridge in Spring 2023 resulted in an estimated $10 million in direct travel time delay costs and the forty-six days of maintenance construction on the Bourne Bridge this past fall resulted in an estimated $4 million in direct travel time delay costs. Mr. Tupper pointed out the direct travel time delay costs do not include indirect costs from people not being able to get to work or to appointments.

Mr. Tupper reviewed data from a USACE Major Rehabilitation Evaluation Report from 2020 that showed an emergency repair to either bridge could result in a sixty-month closure and result in traffic delay cost of $10 billion for the Sagamore Bridge and $4.6 billion for the Bourne Bridge. He pointed out these amounts do not include indirect costs that would impact the regional economy. Mr. Tupper stressed there is low probability of an emergency repair but that it is important to consider a possible five-year closure should an emergency occur.

Mr. Tupper reviewed data for the more likely scenario of a planned major rehabilitation for each bridge which would result in $661 million traffic delay costs for the Sagamore Bridge and $530 million in traffic delay costs for the Bourne Bridge. Again, he pointed out these amounts do not include secondary costs that would impact the regional economy. Mr. Tupper said existing economic analyses have focused on travel time costs rather than overall economic impacts, short-term impacts and haven’t accounted for potential long-term impacts. He said information has also been more anecdotal and the benefit cost analyses have been narrow in scope.

Mr. Tupper said CCC staff is working on Potential Future Analysis to answer core research questions to help plan for long-term impacts. He said key questions include the impact of cost of goods and services on the Cape & Islands, lost value of goods, local business impacts, impact on visitation, loss of tax revenue, impact on the real estate market, as well as impact to municipal services specifically in Bourne.

Mr. Tupper asked council members for questions they would like to include with the future analysis.

Mr. Talerman said the USACE dollar amounts included in the presentation are 2020 numbers and that the future analysis should estimate an increase of at least 20% for current costs. He also suggested quantifying migration from the region to determine if the bridge situation is making it a less desirable region for year-round and seasonal residents.

Ms. Magnotta said it is important to include resident perceptions and perspectives along with real estate data.

Mr. Bilezikian said the dollar amounts provided in the presentation are huge and agreed the regional reputation is an important consideration. He said he would like to see numbers for the economic impact on commuters who are not able to get to their jobs on the Cape due to bridge closures as well as the impact on the commodities that come on to the Cape.

Ms. Magnotta said this type of data could help the region be proactive establishing a recovery plan and asked if there is information on what other places have done in similar situations.
Mr. Tupper said all of these comments will be included in the analysis as well as looking at similar scenarios. He said the Cape bridges are competing against large scale bridge projects nationwide for funding and they need to stress the regional impact with quantifying data.

Mr. Talerman said the total amount needed is huge, but it will be an economic disaster if the bridges aren't replaced. He said they need to make sure people understand the impact.

Ms. Magnotta said they need data to advocate for the funding and to start a recovery plan to possibly avoid an economic disaster.

Mr. Brennan suggested looking at the economic impact analysis for Amesbury & Newburyport for the Greenleaf Whittier Bridge (GWB) replacement. Mr. Tupper said they are using the same consultant team from that project. He said they have asked about insights from the GWB project as well as the Lake Champlain Bridge in Vermont.

Mr. Bilezikian asked if there is an appeal process for rural areas that are competing for funding with urban areas that have larger populations and financial resources.

Ms. Guyon asked if there is any upside to the situation, such as alternative transportation and/or retaining Cape Cod resident workforce. Ms. Magnotta said a previous BCEDC meeting included a discussion on alternatives. Ms. Guyon said any upside may be a long-term consideration but suggested it be included in the analysis. Mr. Tupper said the work this past summer on the Sumner Tunnel in Boston is a good example of successful alternatives, including incentivizing public transportation use. He said it is possible this approach could be useful for future maintenance on the Cape bridges.

Mr. Talerman said he appreciates Ms. Guyon's comments but that there is nothing positive in the situation. He said the entire regional economy is dependent on what comes across the bridges, including goods and services and half of the workforce. Mr. Talerman said even the closure of one bridge will negatively impact the region, including the Islands. He said he doesn't understand why the public isn't fired up about the situation.

Mr. Tupper agreed the bridges are a gateway to the Islands and that should be included in the analysis.

Ms. Magnotta asked for clarification of when the bridges will completely close. Mr. Tupper said complete closure will only happen in the case of a major rehabilitation. He said for bridge replacement, any lane or bridge closure will be minimal as the bridges will be built parallel to the existing structures.

Ms. Jacobsen said she commutes on to the Cape and the Bourne Bridge maintenance significantly impacted her commute, not just the bridge work but the construction on surface roads approaching the bridge. She suggested coordination of road construction projects in the future. For alternative transportation, Ms. Jacobsen suggested using waterways, including the port in New Bedford, to help get goods and services on Cape through Falmouth on a temporary basis.

Ms. Magnotta said coordinating construction and other projects is a good suggestion and said this might be a good business opportunity or a way to get ahead of the situation by including it in the analysis. Mr. Tupper said it is a challenge coordinating USACE, MassDOT, and other agencies that manage traffic. He said there is construction on the horizon for the Bourne rotary and it could be a good opportunity to advocate for increased coordination.
Ms. Magnotta agreed with the coordination efforts but also asked about alternative transportation opportunities. Mr. Tupper said it should be explored, including increasing the use of public transportation to reduce the number of cars crossing the bridges. He said rail transportation could be an alternative as well as waterways. He said when the canal was first commissioned there was a ferry. Mr. Tupper said these alternatives will not make a significant difference, but they could be helpful and are worth exploring.

Ms. Converse asked if there is a way to quantify the amount of goods and number of employees that come to the Cape over the bridges and suggested reaching out to a broader coalition of local businesses that have contacts with diverse sets of groups.

Mr. Bilezikian suggested providing education about the bridges and the impact to the economy to gather public support. He suggested highlighting the positive impacts for the region if the bridges are replaced rather than focusing on the costs. Mr. Tupper said the CCC website has a page with project updates at https://capecodcommission.org/our-work/cape-cod-canal-study-resources/ He said it includes a handout that highlights why the bridge program is important along with the current status and future outlook for the program.

Mr. Stevenson commented on the impact a bridge closure would have on the summer season and said he isn't aware of any hotel on the Cape that could survive a five-year bridge closure. He said from the construction perspective, not being able to get building materials on the Cape will impact a lot of construction workers. He agreed with the need to raise public awareness.

Ms. Magnotta asked when the bridges were previously closed for sixty months. Mr. Tupper clarified that the sixty-month timeframe is the USACE estimation if the bridges need to close for emergency rehabilitation or replacement. He reiterated it is unlikely to happen, but it is a possibility. He said it is what occurred with the Lake Champlain Bridge and suggested members review those project details to see the impacts to that region.

There were no additional questions or comments.

**Freshwater Initiative Economic Impact Analysis:** Erin Perry, Deputy Director, Cape Cod Commission summarized the components and initial findings of the economic impact analysis of freshwater ponds on the Cape Cod regional economy.

Ms. Perry said the CCC has been working with the Eastern Research Group (ERG) on a series of analyses to help quantify the economic impact of ponds and lakes on the region. She said they looked at spending by residents, non-resident homeowners, and tourists on freshwater activities and the ripple effect on the economy. They also explored freshwater impacts on property values, public willingness to pay for water quality improvements, and the cost of improvement and potential benefits of pond remediation to improve and protect the region's freshwater quality. Ms. Perry said the information being shared today is preliminary.

Ms. Perry said the ERG economic analysis included a Perceptions Survey, Intercept Survey, Hedonic Analysis, and a Discrete Choice Experience. She reviewed each component, starting with the Perceptions Survey that was launched in February 2023 to identify preferences, perceptions, and attitudes about freshwater. She said they collected over 800 responses through March 2023 and the
survey indicates most people agree that ponds and lakes are important to the Cape Cod economy and environment and that addressing pond health should be a priority. She said survey results identified bacteria and algae free water, public beach and restrooms, and being free of litter as the most important characteristics of a pond area.

Ms. Perry said the Intercept Survey was developed to assess spending on expenditures related to freshwater activities and the ripple effect on the economy. She said the ERG team visited seventy-five ponds and collected over six hundred surveys between May and October. She said the preliminary results of the survey also include foot traffic based on cell phone activity at specific ponds. Ms. Perry said the data estimates there are 1.3 to 1.7 million annual visits to Cape Cod ponds and lakes, with almost half of the visits from residents. She said the survey results show there is an association between water quality and visitations as ponds considered to have better water quality are more highly recreated areas.

Ms. Perry said the ERG used a Hedonic Analysis to quantify the impact of freshwater ponds on property values and the preliminary data indicates ponds with higher water quality are associated with increased home prices on the Cape.

Ms. Perry said the ERG is using a Discrete Choice Experiment (DCE) to evaluate “willingness to travel” and preferences for freshwater attributes. Ms. Perry said the survey has currently captured 95% of the targeted sample but they do not have any preliminary data to share at this time.

Ms. Perry said the ERG project will conclude in a couple of months and CCC staff will present final data at that time.

Ms. Magnotta asked if the information will be part of the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Ms. Perry said freshwater and freshwater resources have been a key element of the CEDS in the past. She said the current work with ERG should help inform the goals and actions of the next CEDS.

Mr. Talerman commented on the condition of ponds in the area and how poor water quality conditions impact property values. He said new sewer projects should help improve water quality.

Mr. Brennan said he was involved with water quality issues on the Hudson River and recreational fishing was an important consideration. He asked if the CCC has reached out to Cape Cod Trout Unlimited to discuss the economic impact on recreational fishing. Ms. Perry said they are coordinating with recreational fisherman to make sure they are part of the stakeholder process and they are open to suggestions for other people to connect with.

There were no additional questions or comments.

**Member Reports**
There were no member reports.
**New Business**

Ms. Senatori said they would like to discuss the CEDS at the December meeting, including the EDA requirements and an outline of the process that will begin in early 2024.

**Adjourn**

Upon a motion by Tammi Jacobsen, seconded by Rob Brennan, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 pm with a roll call vote.

**Roll Call Vote**

- Greg Bilezikian: Yes
- Rob Brennan: Yes
- Amanda Converse: left prior to adjournment
- Lisa Guyon: Yes
- Tammi Jacobsen: Yes
- Alisa Magnotta: Yes
- Bert Talerman: Yes
- Jack Stevenson: Yes

**List of Materials Used/Presented**

- Cape Cod Canal Bridges Closure Economic Impact Analysis Presentation
- Freshwater Initiative Economic Impact Analysis Presentation