



Barnstable County Economic Development Council (BCEDC)

Draft Minutes | January 10, 2024 at 5:00 pm.

Cape Cod Commission Ocean Conference Room
3225 Main Street, Barnstable

Attendance/Roll Call

Member	Business Sector	Attendance
Greg Bilezikian	Real Estate Development	Present
Rob Brennan	Construction/Engineering	Absent
Amanda Converse	Retail Commerce	Present
Kara Galvin	Workforce Development	Present
Lisa Guyon	Social Services	Absent
Cindy Horgan	Childcare	Present
Tammi Jacobsen	Higher Education	Arrived at 5:22
Alisa Magnotta	Social Services	Present
Jack Stevenson	Construction	Absent
Robert Talerman	Banking/Finance	Present
Julie Wake	Arts and Culture	Present
<i>Non-voting members</i>		
Mark Forest	BC Commissioner	Absent
Harold Mitchell	CCC Rep	Present
John Ohman	Assembly of Delegates	Absent
Cape Cod Commission Staff:		
Kristy Senatori	Executive Director	
Erin Perry	Deputy Director	
Carolina Romero	Economist	
Cory Murray	Community Dev Planner	
David Still	Digital Communications Specialist	

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:06 pm with roll call.

Approval of Minutes

Upon a motion by Julie Wake, seconded Kara Galvin, the draft minutes from the 12/13/23 BCEDC meeting were unanimously approved by the council.

Election of Officers: Council members voted to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair of the Council for the calendar year 2024.

Alisa Magnotta nominated Bert Talerman for Chair and Tammi Jacobsen for Vice-Chair.

Upon a motion by Julie Wake, seconded by Kara Galvin, the Council unanimously elected Bert Talerman as Chair and Tammi Jacobsen as Vice-Chair of the Council for the calendar year of 2024.

The meeting continued with Mr. Talerman serving as Chair.

Economic Opportunities Analysis: Kristy Senatori, Executive Director of the Cape Cod Commission, facilitated a discussion amongst Council members about challenges, strengths, and opportunities within the Cape Cod economy for development of the Cape Cod Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) vision and goals.

Ms. Senatori said one of the first components of the CEDS is a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis. Ms. Senatori referenced questions Ms. Perry emailed to the council earlier in the week and said the discussion today will start with core strengths of the Cape, followed by the economic challenges of the region and opportunities to help the region thrive.

The discussion began with the core strengths of Cape Cod. Council members discussed characteristics of the region, including but not limited to innovation, natural beauty, an educated workforce, strong local businesses, strong educational partners (such as technical high schools, Mass Maritime, the community college, and Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution), a creative economy, strong community connections, strong non-profits, advocacy, international destination, local government/town meetings, civic engagement, affluence, strong public and private school systems, history that draws visitors, ease for getting to Boston and Providence, tourism economy, second homeowners, and the expanding new population of people to the area with immigrants and COVID relocations.

Ms. Senatori said Commission staff participated in the same exercise and she shared some of their responses for core strengths, including natural resources that draw people to the region, strong local institutions, local businesses/economy, and a local innovative, scrappy mentality of individuals who live here and want to make a living here. Ms. Magnotta added that mentality probably stems from this area historically being a challenging place to live. She continued and said the 65+ population is a strength for the economy. Ms. Wake said business owners that are 65+ and transitioning into retirement provide an opportunity for the next generation. Ms. Galvin agreed but said the region doesn't have enough young people to take over. Ms. Wake suggested a program to

help people in that situation. Ms. Converse said there are opportunities for employee ownership but that a lot of businesses sell to off-Cape companies because there isn't a local buyer. The members suggested moving this item to the opportunity discussion.

Ms. Senatori moved the discussion to the economic challenges the region is facing. She suggested looking at the best version of the Cape economy five years from now and the economic challenges that could get in the way of achieving that vision. She mentioned younger people moving off Cape. Ms. Magnotta said the region spends a lot of tax money on education but it is a losing investment when so many students move away. Mr. Talerman said retaining a work force requires spending money on schools. Mr. Mitchell said a consideration should be the elderly population that retires and remains in their single-family homes as this impacts inventory for the younger generation.

Ms. Magnotta said this region needs to provide more diverse career opportunities. Mr. Talerman said the region is not a traditional economy and that it is desirable because of its natural beauty. He said retirees and second homeowners leaving the area will negatively impact the region's economy and that they need to find a balance between natural beauty and industry. Ms. Magnotta and Ms. Converse said there are people born here who stay for family, not because of natural beauty. Mr. Talerman questioned if it is right for everyone to be able to stay where they were born and added they need to look at why this area is so desirable and how people can develop careers here. Ms. Galvin said firefighters, police officers, teachers, and entry-level nurses cannot afford to live here. Mr. Bilezikian said wages are a challenge for contractors, healthcare workers, and restaurant workers, too. Ms. Jacobsen said she researched what makes a thriving economy in seasonal areas like Cape Cod and found social determinants of health, which include housing, transportation, parks and recreation, literacy, early childhood education, vocational training, higher education, food security and access to healthy options, are the common thread. She said these are challenges for people trying to raise a family in this region and there is no economy if these social determinants of health are not present.

Ms. Magnotta said HAC just hosted a meeting with 20 people aged 25 to 32 who were born and raised on the Cape. She said they were asked why they live here and what it will take for them to live here as older adults. Ms. Magnotta said no one mentioned the environment or natural beauty. They said they need careers that have a future, access to housing (all but one lived with their parents) and an active community space to stay in the area. Mr. Talerman said there are limitations for what the area can offer and they need to keep in mind the economic contributions of the second homeowners and retirees. Ms. Jacobsen asked if that population would stay if no one is there to provide services for them. Mr. Talerman said the economy needs them to stay. He said the increased immigrant population in the area over the past 20 years has impacted the economy, too. Ms. Wake said there is an artist who wants to tell the story of the J1 workers who are eager to come here and then often endure horrible living conditions while creating a positive experience for tourists. Mr. Talerman stressed the importance of J1 workers and the need to remain a desirable area to attract them. Ms. Converse said desirability is important for the year-round population, too.

Ms. Magnotta said this area is in the current economic situation because of elevating the natural beauty for the second homeowner/tourist population. Ms. Horgan said they need to be invested in the wellness of the year-round communities. Ms. Converse said the need to protect the environment to preserve the desirability of the area is essential for parts of the economy, but it needs to be

recognized that a lot of the year-round population is not here for the natural beauty but instead here because they have a connection to the region. Ms. Magnotta said the challenge then is how to amplify the community and make it an area people want to invest in.

In the interest of time, Ms. Senatori moved the discussion to opportunities. Ms. Jacobsen said they should also consider the rural aspect of this area and how it impacts basic needs. She said the area should be invested in and more welcoming to its new residents. Ms. Galvin said off-shore wind jobs should provide the opportunity to earn wages to afford housing. Mr. Bilezikian said all infrastructure jobs should provide earnings to afford housing. Ms. Magnotta said off-shore wind is both an opportunity and a challenge to get people to see the benefit of wind and to invest in its workforce. Ms. Jacobsen said there are opportunities to reach out to wind related employers about employing Cape residents instead of bringing employees from off Cape. Mr. Talerman said the area doesn't have enough workers and it is good that it is seen as a desirable area for people to commute to. Ms. Magnotta said telecommuting can help connect students on Cape to higher paying jobs in other cities. Ms. Galvin said online education is another opportunity.

Ms. Senatori asked about opportunities with local businesses, ecotourism, and the blue economy. Ms. Converse said there is an opportunity for training local businesses on how to modernize with online access for consumers and elevate their businesses and make them more competitive. Ms. Wake said there are year-round jobs with cultural organizations and suggested developing a creative economy consortium. Mr. Talerman said there is an opportunity to do a better job welcoming visitors. Ms. Magnotta suggested welcoming immigrants, high school graduates, and students returning from college. She added educating younger people on the town meeting process and providing opportunity for civic engagement. Ms. Converse suggested providing this information for everyone.

Ms. Senatori asked the Council to consider their vision of the Cape in five years and to identify their top three strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the region. Members said the vision includes a year-round community that supports young families, diverse and affordable housing options, a strong local business community, diverse and accessible cultural experiences, improved broadband to help with recruiting students and employers, and community involvement. Ms. Senatori said a lot of survey data indicates natural beauty is what attracts people to the region and that it should be factored into the vision.

After a brief discussion, members agreed on the following top strengths, challenges, and opportunities:

Top three strengths: brand, natural beauty, and history.

Top three challenges: housing, bridges, and broadband.

Top three opportunities: engaging immigrant and younger population, infrastructure, support for education and educational institutions

Cape Cod Commission Executive Director Update

Kristy Senatori reported on recent staff activities.

Ms. Senatori said they would appreciate feedback from the Council by January 19th on the draft Regional Housing Strategy.

Ms. Senatori said there are a lot of broadband updates she will share at an upcoming meeting.

Ms. Senatori said they recently contracted with the Eastern Research Group to conduct an economic impact analysis of bridge closures. She said the work should be completed by this summer.

Ms. Wake asked if the analysis will include the impact on goods and services. Ms. Senatori confirmed it will.

Member Reports

Alisa Magnotta provided an update for Housing Assistance Corporation. Ms. Magnotta said tomorrow they are announcing their plans for consolidating all shelters to a new Love Lane location and the existing shelters will be converted to housing and a homeless youth program. She said they will be requesting letters from partners for the Housing Bond Bill.

Amanda Converse provided an update for Love Live Local. Ms. Converse said they had over 10,000 people attend the Love Live Local Fest and the town tracked cell phones that day and tracked 15,000 people in downtown Hyannis. She said they had 165 people sign up to commit to shifting 10% of all purchases over the next year to local businesses. Ms. Converse said small businesses have expressed challenges dealing with the towns and she would like to add that as an opportunity for analysis.

Mr. Bilezikian provided an update and said they just returned from visiting former Christmas Tree Shop suppliers in Hong Kong and Thailand. He said the Christmas Tree model is not viable any longer with increased costs in materials, shipping, and wages. Mr. Bilezikian commented on the Yarmouth Port Stroll and said some of the smaller businesses have trouble with the check-out process. Ms. Converse said that is what she was referring to earlier when she mentioned elevating local businesses.

Julie Wake provided an update for the Arts Foundation of Cape Cod. Ms. Wake said their grant for individual artists and cultural organizations is opening on Friday. She said one of the grant requirements is it engages the artist with the community. She said the organizational grant is similar.

New Business

There was no new business.

Adjourn

Upon a motion by Alisa Magnotta, seconded by Julie Wake, and with a unanimous vote, the meeting adjourned at 6:16 pm

List of Materials Used/Presented

- Draft minutes from 12/13/23 meeting