

Appendix I: CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes

2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee Meeting

Wednesday, February 1, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Sara Black, Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Trish Johnson, Lindsay Keisler, Zack King, Lisa Miller, Stacey Rash, Crissy Thomas, Christopher Todd, Malla Vue

Committee Members Absent: Jeremy Ku

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, Taylor Dellinger, John Marshall, Wendy Johnson, Jason Toney, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:10.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone and thanked them for agreeing to serve on the committee. Mr. Luckadoo encouraged members to feel free to speak up and offer any suggestions. Committee members and WPCOG staff then introduced themselves to the rest of the group.

III. Orientation of the CEDS Process

Anthony Starr, WPCOG Executive Director, thanked everyone for their willingness to serve on the CEDS Committee. Mr. Starr stated that the WPCOG serves as the Economic Development District (EDD) for the US Economic Development Administration, and is responsible for developing a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) every five years. The first CEDS was completed in 2002, and was updated in 2007 and 2012. The CEDS serves as a blueprint for creating a sustainable economy for the region, and the WPCOG will use this plan to coordinate efforts to improve the region's economic competitiveness and quality of life.

Mr. Starr stated that the committee, chair, and vice-chair were appointed by the WPCOG Policy Board, and when the committee has completed its final plan, the Policy Board will need to approve it in September.

IV. CEDS Social Media Presence

Jason Toney, Communications Specialist, showed committee members where they could find information about the CEDS process. Mr. Toney stated that there is a link on the www.wpcog.org main page, which will have information about each meeting. Mr. Toney encouraged members to visit the WPCOG Facebook and Twitter pages and to use the hashtag #wpcogceds2017 to get information out to the community.

V. Presentation: CEDS Regional Profile

Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst, presented the CEDS Regional Profile to committee members. Mr. Dellinger focused on several different regional trends: population, employment, education, income and poverty, and housing.

Mr. Dellinger stated that population of the region has declined since 2010 by less than one percent. Population projections between now and 2035 shows a growth of 2.4%, which is only around .12% per year. The biggest population loss occurred in the 25-34 year old age group, a decrease of 22.5% between 2000 and 2015. Mr. Dellinger stated that millennials leaving for college and not returning seems to be a huge loss for the region, and we have to figure out how to get them to come back to the area.

Employment has been trending upward since hitting rock bottom in 2010-2011, but is still not close to where it was at the peak in 2000. The manufacturing sector has decreased since 2000, while the service sector has increased. Following the national trend, the area is becoming more service based. The unemployment rate, meanwhile, has decreased dramatically since November 2010, going from 12.7% to 4.7% in November 2016. The current labor market is tight, and employers are struggling to find workers.

Mr. Dellinger presented an Educational Attainment comparison, showing that among 15 other regional MSA's, our region was ranked 14th (with 15th being the lowest) of the percentage of persons age 25 or over with a high school diploma or higher, as well as 14th of 15 of the percentage of persons age 25 or over with receiving a bachelor's degree or higher. Median earnings for people over 25 with less than a high school diploma were \$22,089, while high school graduates and those with some college or an associate's degree with were both around \$27,500. Obtaining a bachelor's degree increased median wages to \$41,853, and having a graduate or professional degree increased median wages to \$50,879. Mr. Dellinger also presented the percentage of students graduating in four years, and

the percentage of students passing EOG tests. The percentage of students passing EOG tests in the six school districts in the region ranged from 55.5% to 62.0%, while the percentage of students graduating in four years ranged from 84.7% to 93.5%.

Mr. Dellinger then presented the numbers on income and poverty trends. The average annual wage in the Hickory MSA in 2000 was \$26,780. By 2010, that number had increased to \$33,384, for a total of 24.7%. The US Inflation Rate during that time was 26.3%. Between 2010 and 2015, the average annual wage grew to \$37,528, or 12.4%. The inflation rate at that time was 8.7%, so the region's wage growth exceeded the rate of inflation. The percentage of persons under age 18 at or below the poverty level has gone from 13.3% in 2000 to 22.3% in 2015, while that number fell slightly for the "over 65" age group, from 11.4% to 9.0%. Overall, poverty rate has risen from 9.8% in 2000 to 15.8% in 2015.

Housing trends showed that one in every six to seven homes in the region are vacant. Almost half homes in the region were built before 1980, which is the highest of any metro area in the state. Houses built between 2000-2015 accounts for only 15% of all homes in the region, which is the lowest of any metro area in the state. The number of Civil Foreclosure Cases, however, have been reduced by half between 2010 and 2016.

Mr. Dellinger then talked about infrastructure and the environment. The committee was told about new interchanges, connectors, and road upgrades made since 2012. In terms of air quality, no violations have occurred at the Lenoir or Taylorsville ozone monitors in the past five years, and ozone levels have been reduced in that time period, thanks to the Early Action Compact and the efforts of the Western Piedmont Air Quality Committee. The North Carolina Division of Air Quality (NCDAQ) has determined that the recent wildfires will have little impact on the regional Fine Particulate Matter numbers.

VI. Discussion of Regional Profile Results

Mr. Luckadoo asked committee members their thoughts on the regional profile. Committee members were concerned about:

- What the environment will be like for their young children?
- How to get younger people to want to live here and how to get the younger generation to want to move back after college. Can we change marketing and fix the branding to make it a more enticing place to live?
- Finding ways to enhance the economy and increase the attractiveness of the area.
- Education outcomes (percentage passing EOG tests versus the percentage graduating).

- The types of houses and the quality of life we want is hard to attract when there are so many vacant houses around. Builders don't want to build developments with so many vacant houses.
- Population projections are scary.

Mr. Luckadoo asked the millennials of the group what they talked about with other millennials. Some comments included:

- We stay here because of aging parents and feel the responsibility to take care of them. It is a great and safe area to raise families.
- The narrative from their parents was to go to college so you don't have to work in furniture. So, they went to college and couldn't come back here to work because there were not any jobs in that field of work.
- Some enjoy living here because it isn't too crowded, and you don't have to wait an hour to eat dinner in a restaurant. Life is a slower pace.
- The younger millennials have trouble connecting with other people their age because there isn't a young social atmosphere in the area, but we are close enough to Asheville and Charlotte to go there on weekends. They choose to live here because the cost of living is much lower than the larger metro areas.
- Friends from out of town are shocked at the nice restaurants in the area. We need to work on not making this a surprise, possibly with better branding.
- When job openings become available, how do we get people from outside the immediate area to apply?
- The values of the 23 year old millennial is much different from the 30 year old millennial because they are in different areas of their life and career.
- If people don't have a connection to the area, they'll be gone soon.
- It is hard to compete with other larger metro areas who have apartment complexes with pools and gyms.
- There are no careers here for anyone in the music or entertainment industry. No employment diversity.

VII. Progress Made Since the Adoption of the 2012 CEDS Report

Sherry Long, Assistant Executive Director, explained how the 2012 CEDS Report helped the community receive grant funding. Ms. Long stated that over 175 million dollars has been invested in the community since 2012. Ms. Long encouraged members to make goals that are obtainable, while also overreaching. She asked committee members to think of ways to move the needle with activities and any other regional possibilities.

VIII. 2017 CEDS Survey Questions

Mr. Dellinger stated that the survey questions will go live on February 13th and close on March 10th. WPCOG staff will then process and analyze the survey results. Mr. Dellinger asked that committee members promote the survey in their

community and workplace. A total of 250 responses is the minimum for compiling worthwhile data, while 500 or more survey responses would be even better.

VIV. 2017 CEDS Stakeholder Interviews

Mr. Dellinger went over the potential categories for stakeholder interviews, which included 27 people. Requests to also interview Chambers and Central Latino were made, and was thus added to the stakeholder interview list.

X. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 5th at 3:00 at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

XI. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

XII. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, April 5, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices**

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Sara Black, Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Trish Johnson, Lindsay Keisler (via phone), Zack King, Jeremy Ku, Lisa Miller, Christopher Todd, Malla Vue

Committee Members Absent: Gary Herman, Stacey Rash, Crissy Thomas

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, Taylor Dellinger, John Marshall, Wendy Johnson, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:00.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present. Committee members and WPCOG staff then introduced themselves.

III. Approval of February 1, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the February 1, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Todd and seconded by Mr. Brooks. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Continue Discussion of CEDS Regional Profile

Ms. Taylor stated that since only the millennials of the group had time to speak at the last meeting, she wanted to give the others a chance to add their opinions. Ms. Taylor asked those 40 and over to tell their thoughts on the regional profile discussed at the February meeting. Some comments included:

- Went to college at Lenoir Rhyne, which was difficult to conceive in her family since they were all factory workers.
- Being in a small town, it is easier to see a result to your efforts, unlike living or working in a larger city. Change is more noticeable in a small town.
- Loves the idea of raising a family here - lots to do, but still has the "small town feel."
- Came to this area in 40's and it was a shock because there weren't any "arts" or as many restaurants, but evolved as time went on.
- You can move things faster in a small town. You can dig in and make a difference you can see.
- Felt "connected" to the area through church, children's activities (sports, summer camps, science center).
- As someone who cares about where you live, get involved. Find progress. Make progress yourself.
- You can drive or fly to get to arts. You cannot fly or drive every day to make a difference in a community.
- Unlike living in other areas, socialization happens in the home in this area.
- Starting a business is hard no matter where it happens, but in a small town where you are well known, it makes getting established easier. People know your name and your brand more quickly.
- When recruiting employees for the area, people who already have a family are more likely to come to this area and stay.
- If you don't go to a well-known church and/or you aren't a native of the area, you are often shunned. This area needs to work on embracing all cultures and people.
- We have a symphony, minor league baseball team, decent shopping - the area is small enough that it isn't threatening and still has the small town vibe.

V. Presentation: CEDS Survey Results

Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst, presented the CEDS Survey Results to committee members. Mr. Dellinger stated that 982 people completed the 32-question survey, compared to 244 during the 2012 CEDS process.

A little less than half of the responses were from Burke County, almost a quarter were from Catawba County, about 12% from Alexander County, and close to 11% were from Caldwell County. When asked which county they worked in, 48% said Burke, 28% in Catawba, 9.4% in Alexander, and 5.3% in Caldwell. About 5.8% were retired or unemployed, while 3.7% worked outside the region. A little over a quarter of respondents were under 40 years old, 29% were between 40-49, 36% were between 50-64, and 9% were 65 and older. Possibly due to a lot of school employees taking the survey, 65% were female and 35% were male.

Almost 93% of respondents were white, 2% were mixed-race, 3.5% were African-American, 1.3% were Asian-American, and 0.6% were American Indian or Alaska Native. 98.9% were not Hispanic or Latino, while 1.1% were Hispanic or Latino.

A total of 42% of respondents worked in a public school system/community college/university, 20% worked in the government sector, 19% worked in a private industry/business sector, 11% worked for a non-profit, and 5% were retired. Less than 2% were students or those who were unemployed or seeking employment.

The highest educational attainment levels were those with a Master's degree or higher, with 38%, followed by Bachelor's degree next with 36%. About 11% had an Associate's degree, 11% had some college, but no degree and 3% had a high school degree or equivalent.

Looking at individual earnings, had the highest percentage came from persons making \$25,000-\$49,999 a year, with almost 38%, while 35% had earnings between \$50,000 and \$99,999. Less than 7% had earnings were less than \$25,000, while almost 13% made more than \$100,000 a year, (8% of people preferred not to answer the question). Mr. Dellinger stated this was typical for this type of survey.

When asked what economic opportunities exist or are developing in your county, the top five assets listed were education/training, healthcare, furniture, banking/finance, and agriculture. Mr. Dellinger stated that ~~the~~ agriculture was surprising since it was not often mentioned by survey takers.

When asked how your county can use its best resources to boost the economy, the top five topics mentioned were businesses, jobs, education, industry, and tourism. Mr. Dellinger noted the two varying opinions on education: some wanted more vocational training, while some wanted a larger 4-year state university.

When asked what adaptive capabilities people saw for the county's economy, the top five response categories were vacant buildings, manufacturing, furniture,

existing spaces, and new businesses. One notable quote was, "The schools MUST take the initiative to bring back vocational skills. Computers are great, but they cannot come to your home and repair plumbing or electrical issues."

The highest scoring existing assets were community colleges within a reasonable proximity, adequate fresh water resources, adequate cellular phone service, adequate road/highway system, and adequate local healthcare facilities. The lowest scoring existing assets were Manufacturing Solutions Center, adequate public transportation, after work social opportunities, adequate entertainment venues, and adequate programs for the aging population.

Respondents were then asked if their county currently markets its assets. Nearly 34% said yes, 18% said no, and 48% said "I don't know." For those who answered yes, they were then asked to give some examples of their county's marketing efforts. The top five response categories were general marketing, festivals and events, social media, Chamber of Commerce, and signage. One respondent mentioned wayfinding systems. Mr. Todd suggested using popular hashtags, like #nofilterneeded, so people from around the world could see your post when using this popular tag.

When asked if the community they lived in has a specific brand it uses for promotion of the area, 25% said yes, 25% said no, and 50% said, "I don't know." Mr. Dellinger stated that in this case, "I don't know" most likely means no - meaning 75% do not know the brand of their community.

High-speed internet access questions revealed that 81% of respondents have adequate high-speed internet at home, while 19% do not. At work, 88% have adequate high-speed internet, 6% do not, and 6% do not work. In public spaces, 38% have adequate high-speed internet, 35% do not, and 26% answered "I don't know."

A little over 50% of respondents believe their community just "adequately" supports affordable housing choices, while 16% stated housing choices were good and 29% stated that choices were little/poor. Only 3% felt that there were no affordable housing choices and 1.9% thought choices were excellent.

When asked if there were opportunities for minorities and low wealth individuals to engage in community planning, 52% thought opportunities were little/poor, 28% thought opportunities were only "adequate," 8% said good, 3% said excellent, and 8% said there were no opportunities.

About 38% of survey respondents felt that their community invests adequately in healthy, safe, and walkable communities. Close to 34% thought there was little investment, 19% said there is a good investment, 5% stated that investment is excellent, while 4% believed there is no investment.

The percentage of respondents who said their municipalities promote the restoration of their downtown areas equaled 57%, while 16% said they did not promote, and 26% answered "I don't know." Of those who answered yes to this question, they were then asked which town and to give examples. The top five municipalities mentioned were Morganton, Hickory, Valdese, Lenoir, and Newton.

The next question of the survey asked if their community has the resources to develop a skilled workforce. Survey results show that 59% felt that their community did, 18% felt their community did not, and 23% responded with "I don't know." When asked how well their community does working to maintain a skilled workforce, 43% felt their community did an "adequate" job, 35% said little/poor job, around 17% felt their community did a good job, 2% said excellent job, and around 3% said their community did nothing towards maintaining a skilled workforce.

Participants were then asked if they believed there are gaps in educational resources. About 47% of survey respondents said yes, 33% said no, and 20% answered "I don't know." Of those who thought there was a gap in educational resources, they were then asked to specify the gaps. The top five response categories were in gaps in high school (35%), community college (30%), 4-year university (24%), public schools (24%), and technical training (5%).

When asked their local government encourages small businesses to locate and grow in the community, 55% of respondents said yes, 17% said no, and 28% responded with "I don't know."

Next, participants were asked if they believed their community has gaps in its healthcare services. About 40% of survey takers said yes, 36% said no, and 24% answered "I don't know." Of those who answered yes to this question, they were asked to specify the gaps. The top five response categories were gaps in hospitals, services, insurance, doctors, and specialists. The lack of a hospital in Alexander County was brought up frequently, as well as unaffordable healthcare and the perception of poor quality.

Finally, when asked if there were any other thoughts about the region's economic competitiveness, the top five response categories were jobs (38% of survey

respondents), businesses (36%), miscellaneous opportunities (29%), retaining young people (9%), and entertainment (9%).

The full survey results are available for download in CEDS 2017 section of the WPCOG website.

VI. Discussion of CEDS Survey Results

Mr. Starr asked the committee what stood out to them about the survey responses. Mr. Starr wrote responses on a large board, and the committee was told that when the process was completed, they would receive three stickers to vote for the three responses that stood out most. Below are the responses received during the meeting (in the order given by committee members during the discussion), along with the number of votes received from committee members.

- Need for different education opportunities
- Surprised that the Broughton re-use project was not mentioned more
- 4-year college options lacking and their friends left and not coming back (**3 votes**)
- Mixed use spaces/recreation spaces (**3 votes**)
- Internships/apprentice but did not hear about businesses that have a role in this
- Conflict between pushing internships vs 4 year college (**1 vote**)
- Mistaken perception that we don't have a lot of internships in schools
- Living situation/lack of apartments (must rely on verbal communication to find available units) (**6 votes**)
- Lack of community brand awareness
- We are a region but we tend to look at issues on a community basis
- Inspired by desire for entertainment
- People are "down" on what they are not "up" on – awareness – the public does not know what is going on
- How do we market to people outside the community? (**2 votes**)
- Housing – lack of good housing choices – lack quality affordable apartments
- Q14 – the high % thought that there were poor opportunities for minorities to engage in community planning – outreach needed
- Recruiting/retaining college educated positions that keep young people (**3 votes**)
- Comments about incubators – links between industries (agriculture to restaurants)
- Loss of medical treatment business to places outside our region
- Perceived lack of professional jobs (**2 votes**)
- Need for breweries, farm to table
- Need for middle income housing (**3 votes**)
- Repurpose of vacant buildings is needed, especially along key corridors
- Perception that we have ability to develop the workforce but not maintain it (**2 votes**)
- Need for internal marketing
- Lack of websites/social media by businesses (**1 vote**)
- Surprised that the higher educated respondents did not know the brand of their community
- Maximize opportunities to draw people to the area with recent publicity (Our State magazine)
- Q3 – Economic opportunities in Agricultural industry

- Impact immigration changes might have on our Agricultural development
- Concern that minorities don't feel a part of community decisions (7 votes)

VII. CEDS Schedule Going Forward and Request for Additional CEDS Committee Meetings

Mr. Dellinger stated that additional meetings are needed in order to complete the CEDS process on schedule. Mr. Dellinger proposed additional meetings on Wednesday, April 26th, and Wednesday, May 31st, both at 3:00 P.M. at the WPCOG offices in Long View. A motion to approve the additional meetings on the proposed dates was made by Mr. Vue and seconded by Ms. Johnson. The motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, April 5th at 3:00 at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

VIV. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

X. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:00 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting**

Wednesday, April 26, 2017

3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Zack King, Gary Herman, Stacey Rash, Crissy Thomas, Malla Vue

Committee Members Absent: Lisa Miller, Sara Black, Jeremy Ku, Lindsay Keisler, Christopher Todd, Trish Johnson

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, Taylor Dellinger, Wendy Johnson, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:02.

II. **Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. **Approval of April 5, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 5, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. King and seconded by Ms. Taylor. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. **Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board Initiatives**

Wendy Johnson, Workforce Development Director, explained the structure that is required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Ms. Johnson stated that the Western Piedmont Jobs Training Consortium is a formal agreement among the chief elected officials (the Western Piedmont Council of Governments Policy Board) as representatives of their units of general local government. The Workforce Development Board/Chief Elected Official (CEO) Agreement is a formal agreement between the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board and the Chief Elected Official of the Western Piedmont Jobs Training Consortium (also serves as Chief Elected Official of WPCOG). The Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board (WPWDB)/Western Piedmont Council of Governments (WPCOG) Contract is a formal administrative agreement between the Policy Board of the WPCOG and the WPWDB. Both entities represent the taxpayers, who are in essence the system's owners.

Ms. Johnson explained that the Workforce Development Board is a group of community leaders appointed by local elected officials and charged with planning and oversight responsibilities for workforce programs and services in their area. In North Carolina, 23 local boards are responsible for developing local plans for the use of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds, oversight of the local One Stop service delivery system, and coordinating activities with economic development entities and employers in their local areas.

The board is responsible for ensuring the funds allocated to the WIOA workforce area are used efficiently and effectively to achieve the intended results. Each board has a responsibility to manage the funds it receives. Annually before July 1, the board develops and approves the workforce funds budget, covering the operation of that fiscal year. In overseeing these funds, the board, consistent with their strategic plan, oversight, and evaluation, uses competitive procurement to determine the best methods for disbursing funds for workforce employment and training services for adults, dislocated workers, and youth (ages 16-24).

WIOA federal funding is sent to the state for disbursement. The State allocates funding to the local boards from the Division of Workforce Solutions. The Local Workforce Boards receive allocations for Adults, Dislocated Workers, and Youth Services. Service providers (determined through competitive procurement) use WIOA funds to deliver program services as proposed to meet the Department of Labor performance measures.

The purpose of the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board is to be at the center of community and regional leadership to identify workforce challenges and to be the convener of the conversation to resolve the challenges. The Board is also the champion for workforce development, used to work in a collaborative partnership with key stakeholders, (especially economic development and education), to bring resources to bear on resolving the challenges, and to act as the accountability agent to ensure the work is completed.

The 2016 Strategic Plan consisted of three subcommittees: Talent Pipeline - Industrial Maintenance, Performance Measures - Dashboard; Center Management Report Outs, and Advocacy & Communication - Board Work, Branding, and Outreach. Through social media, the WPWDB can see how many people read and/or engage in their posts each week.

Ms. Johnson stated that the WPWDB website (www.westernpiedmontworks.org) was designed to maintain accountability, provide information, share recruitment, and labor market resources. The two main supporters for board initiatives include the Economics Indicator Newsletter (produced quarterly) and the Industry Growth Analysis (completed every 4-5 years). Other initiatives include Community Issues Forums (workforce, education, energy, healthcare, etc.) and Business Leadership Summits (Allied Health, Future Workforces Alliance).

Some challenges the board faces includes an interest gap, decreased labor force, and the low starting and experienced wages. Annual gross median wages in the four county region range from \$27,633 in Alexander County to \$31,242 in Catawba County. In 2015, Caldwell and Burke County annual gross median wages were \$29,047 and \$30,351, respectively.

V. Presentation: CEDS Stakeholder Interview Results

Taylor Dellinger, Data Analyst, presented the CEDS Stakeholder Interview Results to committee members. Mr. Dellinger stated that public input is required as part of the CEDS process. The committee presented the same 8 questions to a mix of 30 individuals and 3 group interviews. The 30 individual interviews consisted of 10 from the private sector, 8 elected officials, 4 in education, 4 EDCs, 2 Chambers of

Commerce, and 2 from community groups. The groups interviewed were the Hickory Young Professionals/Greater Hickory Jaycees, the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, and the Regional Aging Advisory Committee/Senior Tar Heel Legislators. The following responses were mentioned during the presentation from the 30 individual interviews.

Question One asked- "What is the biggest asset in the region that is not being utilized to its full potential?" The top response was a tie between geographic location and people/workforce, with 23.3% (7 votes) each. Natural resources was a close second with 20.0% (6 votes). Education and quality of life each received 3 votes (10.0%). Other topics mentioned were airports, downtowns, economic development, vacant buildings, and the Manufacturing Solutions Center.

Question Two asked- "What are our barriers for economic progress as a four-county region? (Follow-up: What is the biggest barrier?)" The topic mentioned most was workforce readiness, with 26.7% (8 people). Job mix/job wages and young people leaving the region each were discussed 7 times (23.3%). Perception of the region was talked about 6 times (20%), and infrastructure and lack of communication about the region were mentioned 5 times each (16.7%). The availability of shell buildings/business parks, education, housing, and vacant buildings were each talked about 4 times, while State policies were brought up 3 times. Lack of amenities, lack of vision, over reliance on the manufacturing industry, and the region being slow to react to problems were each mentioned twice.

Question Three asked- "Are you originally from this region? If not, what brought you to live and work here?" A total of 57% (17 people) said they were not originally from the region, while 43% (13 people) stated that they were originally from the region. The 17 people who were not from this region gave various reasons on how they ended up here. Most were for job opportunities. One stated that NC was a progressive southern state. Several chose NC for the climate and to be close to the mountains, and one chose this particular area because the morals and beliefs of this county match their families.

Question Four asked- "What Economic Opportunities are we missing out in this region?" The top response was attracting high paying/diversified jobs to the region with 26.7% (8 people). New industries/industrial parks and improving communication about the advantages of the region were each mentioned 7 times (23.7%). Investing in education/workforce was discussed 6 times (20%) and new housing development was talked about 5 times (16.7%). Other topics that came up during the interviews included agriculture, airport, attracting small businesses to

the region, community colleges, healthcare, local based philanthropy, marketing natural resources, professional sports, research facilities, retaining young people, technology, and tourism.

Question Five asked-"How do we fundamentally improve our workforce? What ideas do you have to improve our workforce?" About 43.3% (13 people) said that improving community college education/training opportunities would improve the workforce. Improving quality of K-8/high school education and improving work ethic/soft skills were each mentioned 7 times (23.3%). Showing students that a 4-year degree is not needed to get a good job was talked about 5 times (16.7%). Creating appealing workplace atmospheres and pursuing K-64 Initiative were each discussed 3 times.

Part one of Question Six asked-"Where do you think our leadership will come from?" About 43% (13 people) thought it would come from young professionals. Ten people (34%) believed it would be a mix of people inside and outside the region, 3 people (10%) said it will be from outside the region, and one person (3%) stated it would be from inside the region. About 10% (3 people) responded that they are not sure.

Part two of Question Six asked-"Will your children or grandchildren be staying here for a career after high school and college?" Half of the respondents (15 people) did not answer the question. 7 people (23%) said their children have not stayed or will not stay in the region, 5 people (17%) stated that their children have stayed or will stay in the region, and 3 people (10%) told WPCOG staff that they weren't sure if their children will stay.

Question Seven asked-"If you had a magic wand, what would you change about our community?" Five people mentioned improving the education system, 4 people said improvements to quality of life, and 3 people mentioned changing the perception of the region. Also discussed were affordable/more housing choices, improving communication, improving political leadership, increasing enthusiasm about our community, ready to move-into industrial buildings, and reducing poverty/higher incomes.

Question Eight asked-"Is there a comment or observation you would add to the discussion that we have not already covered?" Six people (20%) gave more comments about the regional economy. One quote stated, "I think we are on the brink of something really big happening here. If we could measure it over the next 10 years, it would be huge." Three people (10%) discussed housing, while two people (6.7%) mentioned natural resources.

The same 8 interview questions were also asked to the Regional Aging Advisory Committee and Senior Tar Heel Legislators, where 21 people attended. When asked "What is the biggest asset in the region that is not being utilized to its full potential?", the responses were local community colleges, church facilities, libraries, senior centers, quality affordable real estate, transportation, and the Council of Governments.

Question Two asked-"What are our barriers for economic progress as a four-county region?" The top responses were money/funding, bureaucracy, jobs (with pay that brings people back to the community after they leave), lack of a trained workforce, lack of qualified workers, and attitude (seeing more people that do not want to better themselves - complacency).

Of the 21 in attendance, 12 people (57%) were not originally from this region, while 9 people (43%) were originally from the region. Those not from the region moved here for employment, grandchildren, marriage, affordable real estate, and farmland for horses.

When asked what economic opportunities the region is missing, responses mentioned included tourism, natural resources, employment, and technological opportunities.

Some ideas for improving our workforce stated during the group interview were utilizing community colleges and high schools in the region and working with middle school students to broaden their horizon at a younger age to get them eager about the things they can do. Other ideas included providing incentives to stay in the area and starting education when children are young to show them that hard work pays off.

Question Six asked-"where the group thinks our leadership will come from, and if they think their children or grandchildren will stay here for a career after high school and college." This group felt that future leadership would come from those who have stayed in the region. Twelve people (57%) have children and/or grandchildren who have left the region. About 29% (6 people) did not answer the question, and 3 people (14%) have children and/or grandchildren who have stayed in the region.

When asked what they would change about the community if they had a magic wand, responses mentioned included: welcome/well received atmosphere for all newcomers, plenty of employment for everyone, equal opportunity of everyone (you get jobs based on your qualifications and not for who you know). Other

responses discussed were improved healthcare for seniors, large centrally located Senior Center in Catawba County, and the addition of a “Cheesecake Factory” restaurant in the region.

The group was then asked-“Is there was anything they wanted to add that had not been covered?” Attendees felt that county government needs to be more open to change and new programming or opportunities were needed to make the region a great place to age. They also believed that more attention needs to be placed on how to attract the younger generations to the region, and not so much attention on those who are already here and aging.

The next group interviewed was the Western Piedmont Workforce Development Board, where 26 people attended. This group was asked the same 8 questions. They felt the biggest assets in the region that are not being utilized to its full potential were recreation, workforce, people with some college, level of education needs to be utilized, high percentage of manufacturing jobs underutilized, manufacturing, community college, higher education opportunities, vacant buildings, diversity in all counties, and young people.

Barriers for economic progress as a four-county region were drug use, lack of mental health physicians, access to healthcare, branding and marketing of the region to attract 25+ age group, entertainment for 25+ age group, the need to get back to basics in the education system, and fixing the rail systems in the area.

Fifteen (15) people (58%) in this group interview were not originally from this area, while 11 (42%) were from the area. Those not from the region moved here for family, employment, relationships, change of environment, and because it is a good place to raise a family.

This group responded that the economic opportunities we are missing in this region include recreation, entertainment, construction and housing, marketing/branding, employers finding skilled workers, people not employable due to failing drug tests/background checks, and attracted young people to the region.

Question Five asked how to fundamentally improve our workforce. Responses mentioned by the group included attracting young people to the community (because population is going down), entrepreneurship, obtaining more resources to improve drug problems, substance abuse/mental health issues, reaching out to younger people sooner, children need to be made aware of how to earn a living, gatekeeper (a lot of manufacturing jobs available), and furniture industry (children need to see).

This group stated that future leadership would come either from the outside, or from recruiting people back who had left the region. About 19% (5 people) stated that their children and/or grandchildren left the region, 4 (12%) were split with some staying and some leaving, and 1 person (4%) have children and/or grandchildren who stayed. A total of 17 people (65%) did not answer the question.

When asked if they had a magic wand and could change anything about the community, responses said by attendees were to change LR Blvd, public transportation, the community taking more risks, making more unity for prosperity, common goals, inclusion, how people perceive manufacturing, fill vacant buildings, more energy like Lake Norman, and having a pride in community.

This group would like to see more young people involved with the decision making process with employers and community. They stated that diversity has come, and that growth in areas makes us a more diverse community. They also felt that community colleges in the area are being underutilized.

The final group interviewed was the Hickory Young Professionals and Greater Hickory Jaycees. More than 70 people attended, and there was a mix of individual and small group responses. Question One asked-"What is the biggest asset in the region that is not being utilized to its full potential?" Top responses were Lake Hickory, geographical location (proximity to Winston, Asheville, Boone, and Charlotte), Lenoir-Rhyne University, empty commercial buildings, real estate, downtown square, and climate. Some other things mentioned included the arts community, Google, natural resources, CVCC, professional groups, interchanges off of I-40, skilled manufacturing workforce, social networks (churches), leveraging big business partnerships, and Partnership University City Commission.

Question Two asked-"What are our barriers for economic progress as a four-county region? (Follow-up: What is the biggest barrier?)" Tied with 18.6% (8 mentions each) were young people moving away for college and not returning, lack of nightlife entertainment, and a drug problem. About 16.3% (7 mentions) of attendees felt the biggest barrier was the collaboration amongst counties versus competition. Lack of growth was next with 14% (6 mentions). Other topics included no public access to Lake Hickory, skills gap, lack of promoting parks and current amenities, no student discounts, LRU is too small (needs more Bachelor Degree options), lack of newer housing, lack of downtown living spaces, parking, and lack of education levels.

Out of the 43 responses collected during the group interview, 25 people (58%) were not originally from the region, while 18 people (42%) were from the region. Those not from the region moved for jobs, family, college, a good place to raise kids, ability to own land, cost of living, and easy traffic/commute.

Question Four asked what economic opportunities the region is missing. Eight responses (18.6%) said downtown/arboretum style living, 16.3% (7 responses) said entertainment, while 11.6% (5 responses each) said advertising outdoor recreational activities, more outdoor entertainment (trails, watersports, vineyards), and family friendly activities. About 9.3% (4 responses) stated the region was not utilizing its natural resources. Other responses included more diversified economy, lake related business opportunities, market location (proximity to bigger cities), downtown festivals, shopping, beer related opportunities, employment opportunities for young professionals, and revamping old buildings.

When asked how to fundamentally improve our workforce, 7 responses (16.3%) said to advertise our location. Four responses (9.3%) each were given for the following ideas: emphasizing training in specialized skills, the selling/perspective of skills labor, re-educate people who want to work and change careers, affordable local college, and flexible work schedules. Other responses said during the group interview included promoting trade school and community college, tax incentives, education (K-64 view), start younger (getting excited about growth/Chambers), learn a trade in high school, Pre-K education, solve/correct drug problem, and incentive innovation.

Twelve (12) respondents felt the region's future leadership will come from current young professionals, while 7 responses said they feel leadership will come from educated youth, 2 believed it would come from progressive employers who support economic development, 2 said it would come from outside the region, and 2 felt leadership would come from inside the region. When asked if they feel their children and/or grandchildren will stay in the region after high school and college, 42% did not answer the question, 30% said they felt their children will not stay, 12% are not sure if their children would stay, 9% said they felt they will stay in the region, and 7% are planning to move, so they won't be here long enough to find out.

The group was then asked what they would change about the community if they had a magic wand. A total of 25.6% would change downtown redevelopment/nightlife, 18.6% would change the diversity in food, thought, and mindset, 7% each would change exits 125/126 (cleanup), organized activities/events, and support small local businesses. Other responses included

less poverty/homelessness, better education, improving Lenoir Rhyne Blvd, get drugs out, newcomers group, walkability, reduce the number of mattress outlets, free Wi-Fi for all, and create new land development.

When asked for comments of observations that had not already been covered, the following ideas were discussed: job website listing all local jobs to make it easier to find a job (multiple websites, even free ones, make the search daunting), if we are wanting it to still feel small town, it will not soon, promoting current activities. One quote stated, "Invest in the future. Don't wait for them to come here. If you build it, they will come."

VI. Discussion of CEDS Stakeholder Interview Results

Mr. Starr asked the committee what stood out from the stakeholder interviews. Mr. Starr wrote responses on a large board, and the committee was told that when the process was completed, they would receive five stickers to vote for the five responses that stood out most. Below are the responses receiving during the meeting (in the order given by committee members during the discussion), along with the number of votes received from committee members.

- Conflict between 2-yr vs 4-yr education path - which is better? **(5 votes)**
- Not a single comment where they "trashed" the region
- Involvement of young adults (i.e. Greenville, SC) **(7 votes)**
- How many thought education was the cure to the solution
- Desire for recreational/entertainment opportunities **(6 votes)**
- That majority of current/future leaders are not from here
- Collaborative effort of the region **(2 votes)**
- Not enough shell buildings as businesses look at our area **(8 votes)**
- Giving people a purpose to return or stay in region excluding work **(3 votes)**
- Making this a great place to age
- Lack of concern about public safety
- That many said the young people would be our future leaders but the young people are leaving **(6 votes)**
- Diversity growing and inclusion **(4 votes)**
- Need for early childhood education **(1 vote)**
- Need to promote our regions/assets **(3 votes)**
- Misperception of what education is needed for the available jobs

VII. Identification of CEDS Regional Issues

Mr. Starr told committee members that most of the issues of the region had been presented to them over the last three meetings. He asked to hear the issues that committee members feel are most important and need to be addressed regionally. Again, responses were written on a large board and committee members were given five stickers for voting. Below are the responses collected and the number of votes given by committee members.

- Keeping our young people (7 votes)
- Improve our diversity and inclusion efforts (3 votes)
- Need for new housing options
- Resolving education attainment issue/goals (certificate, 2-yr, 4-yr) (7 votes)
- Devise short and long term plans to increase number of shell buildings (6 votes)
- Making our area a destination (1 vote)
- Attracting/retaining employers (4 votes)
- Talking to young people about what they want in general (7 votes)
- Evaluating quality of life/livability issues to see what we need to improve (2 votes)
- Marketing of our region (8 votes)
- We need to talk positively about our community
- Develop a plan to increase wages for our area

VIII. CEDS Schedule Going Forward

Mr. Dellinger stated that the next CEDS meeting will occur next Wednesday, May 3, to discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats of the region (SWOT Analysis) and to discuss the region's resiliency. At future meetings, committee members will work on the CEDS goals and objectives, CEDS performance measures and Mr. Marshall, Transportation Director, will talk about the transportation initiatives in the region.

VIV. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 3rd at 3:00 PM at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

X. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

XI. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:01 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 3, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices**

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Stacey Rash, Malla Vue, Trish Johnson, Jeremy Ku, Lisa Miller, Sara Black

Committee Members Absent: Lindsay Keisler, Christopher Todd, Zack King, Crissy Thomas

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, John Marshall, Taylor Dellinger, Wendy Johnson, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:04.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. Approval of April 26, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the April 26, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Vue and seconded by Mr. Herman. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Discussion of 2017 CEDS SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis

Mr. Starr reminded committee members of the regional issues that were discussed at the last meeting. He then asked them what they felt were the strengths of our region. Mr. Starr wrote responses on a large board, and the committee was told that when the process was completed, they would receive five stickers to vote for the five responses that stood out the most. Below are the responses received during the meeting, along with the number of votes received from committee members.

- Lower costs of living/taxes – 10 votes
- Physical assets - mountains, rivers, trails – 8 votes
- Proximity to Charlotte, Asheville, coast, mountains, etc. – 7 votes
- Educational opportunities (public education, private schools, early college, community college and Lenoir Rhyne University) – 4 votes
- Family friendly – 4 votes
- Philanthropy (private and community) – 4 votes
- Abundant water supply – 3 votes
- Diversifying community – 3 votes
- Low crime rate – 3 votes
- Strong arts community – 3 votes
- Moderate Climate – 2 votes
- Transportation (little congestion) – 2 votes
- Desire to improve – 1 vote
- Quality of Life – 1 vote
- Competent local government – no votes
- Excellent location for businesses to start and thrive – no votes
- Events and festivals – no votes
- Google/Apple facilities – no votes
- Healthcare access – no votes
- Manufacturing skilled workforce – no votes

- Number of family owned/closely held businesses engaged in community –no votes
- State, county and municipal parks –no votes
- Strong/growing brewery/distillery business – no votes
- Strong faith community – no votes
- Potential of revitalization – no votes

Mr. Starr then asked the committee for the weaknesses of the region. The same voting process occurred. Below are the responses and votes received.

- Lack of entertainment outlets for 21-40 year olds – 8 votes
- Lack of high paying jobs – 8 votes
- Lack of iconic attraction – 5 votes
- Lack of new housing – 5 votes
- Out-migration of our young people's future leaders – 5 votes
- Inadequate promotion of region – 4 votes
- Lack of shell buildings for new businesses – 4 votes
- Diverse part of community not feeling included in decision-making process – 2 votes
- Lack of regional partnerships between local governments – 2 votes
- Lower educational attainment than competing metro areas – 2 votes
- Stagnant entry pay with increasing job requirements/qualifications – 2 votes
- Lack of broadband in rural areas – 1 vote
- Lack of employable workforce – 1 vote
- Lack of high profile employees – 1 vote
- Lack of job opportunities for recent college graduates – 1 vote
- Low access to public transportation – 1 vote
- Not supporting our local businesses enough – 1 vote
- Too close to Charlotte and Asheville – 1 vote
- Unwillingness to buy into the big picture thinking – 1 vote
- Disconnect in image of who we are and who we want to be – no votes
- Lack of apartments/rental homes that are not income based (subsidized) – no votes
- Lack of downtown/walkable housing – no votes
- Limited nightlife options – no votes
- Lack of professional sporting teams – no votes

Next, Mr. Starr asked the committee to list opportunities for the region. Below are the responses with corresponding votes.

- Development of a collaborative regional marketing plan – 9 votes
- Recruit/retain employable and diverse workforce – 7 votes
- Job training to fill vacant job openings – 6 votes
- Surveying young people for what they want – 6 votes
- To construct shell buildings – 4 votes
- Business development/expansion – 4 votes
- Address educational attainment goals regionally – 3 votes
- Identify more cultural events to draw more visitors – 3 votes
- Promotional/marketing plan for the opening of the NC School of Science and Math – 3 votes
- Develop outreach plan for local leaders to engage minorities – 2 votes
- Expand infrastructure to areas of need for businesses (grants) – 2 votes

- Networking and integrating our civic efforts and groups – 2 votes
- Marketing our natural resources – 2 votes
- Getting local government/homebuilders to address need for new housing – 1 vote
- Promote our strong fiber network – 1 vote
- Ability to serve businesses that use a lot of power/water – no votes
- Address need for renovating housing – no votes
- Good place for families to relocate to – no votes

Mr. Starr then asked committee members to list the threats of the region. Below are the responses and votes.

- Region's inability to solve long-standing problems – 10 votes
- Not responding to migration of young adults – 9 votes
- The region not developing regional marketing plan for another 15 years – 9 votes
- Over reliance on manufacturing – 6 votes
- Major businesses leaving the area – 4 votes
- National trend of automation of jobs – 4 votes
- Void in skill sets for manufacturing jobs – 4 votes
- Not using opportunity with NC School of Science and Math and other projects – 3 votes
- Aging population – 2 votes
- Lack of political cooperation – 2 votes
- Competition with other small Charlotte region communities – 1 vote
- Poor perception as a region of small country towns – 1 vote
- Are we already too late to improve the region significantly? – no votes
- Competition between small businesses (saturation of markets) leading to closing of small business due to lack of support – no votes
- Complacency with status quo – no votes
- National trend of online retail affecting local retail – no votes
- National trend of unfunded mandates – no votes
- Not addressing stagnant wages – no votes
- Not having jobs for young people who may move away – no votes
- Not sharing best practices among businesses and not seeking help – no votes
- Unwillingness to agree on the identity of our region – no votes

V. **Discussion of Regional Resiliency**

Mr. Starr presented the committee with definitions of "resilience." Oxford Dictionary defines resilience as "the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness." Merriam Webster's definition says resilience is "the ability to recover or adjust easily to misfortune and change." Mr. Starr then asked the committee to think about how our area is resilient now. There was no voting on these responses.

- Aggressive EDC offices (good talent)
- Community foundation/Philanthropy work across counties
- Establish early college/high school programs
- Local governments streamline their operations in response to lower revenue and property values
- Our businesses adapted to shifts with economy

- Passed 40 million dollar bond (Hickory)
- Pull yourself up by bootstraps mentality
- There are strong efforts in protecting the natural environment
- We are re-tooling people who were laid off during recession
- We continue to seek opportunities to replace what we lose
- We diversified our types of businesses
- We have found great ways to revitalize some of our downtowns
- We repurpose our vacant buildings
- We still have manufacturing at three times national rate
- Willing of our people to get re-training

Mr. Starr then asked the committee how we can improve resiliency for our region. Responses and votes are listed below.

- Being proactive in planning – 10 votes
- Not wait another 15 years for a marketing plan – 10 votes
- Increasing availability of shell buildings – 8 votes
- Accept individual diversity – 6 votes
- More incentives to revitalize and renovate – 4 votes
- Public/private cooperation – 4 votes
- Bring in more large industries – 3 votes
- Partnerships for the greater good – 3 votes
- Make sure our broadband infrastructure stays technologically current – 2 votes

VI. CEDS Schedule Going Forward

Mr. Dellinger stated that we are over halfway through the CEDS process. The next CEDS meeting will occur on Wednesday, May 31st, where a presentation about Transportation Initiatives will occur. The goals and objectives process will begin, and will be wrapped up at the June 7th meeting, along with performance measures. A draft will be sent out to the committee by mid-to-late July. The goal is an active document for community officials, which will be 20 pages or less. Appendixes, which will be available for viewing on the WPCOG web site, will be created with additional CEDS information

VII. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, May 31st at 3:00 PM at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

VIII. Other Business

Mr. Blackwell asked committee members if we were missing any key points. He stated that to get something accomplished, you have to have the support of elected officials and big businesses. Mr. Blackwell asked how will they promote the region and work together?

Ms. Long stated that a key factor is growing businesses that are already here and help them to succeed. If they succeed, we all succeed. Ms. Wendy Johnson stated that there needs to be constant contact with marketing, not stopping after a few months. Attempts to market the area in the past have failed because it was not marketing the entire region, just small portions. Mr. Dellinger stated that our area has the most sprawl, by percentage. Everything is spread out.

The group asked what happened with the marketing plan from 15 years ago. Mr. Starr stated that there were regular meetings of tourism directors, but those stopped. Territorial issues developed, and areas slipped back into their own and stopped working as a group.

VIV. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:14 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDs)
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, May 31, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices**

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Malla Vue, Jeremy Ku, Lisa Miller, Sara Black, Christopher Todd, Zack King, Crissy Thomas, Lindsay Keisler (phone)

Committee Members Absent: Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Stacey Rash, Trish Johnson

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, John Marshall, Taylor Dellinger, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace, Aaron McMillan

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:03.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. Approval of May 3, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes

Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 3, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Todd and seconded by Mr. Vue. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Transportation Initiatives

Mr. Marshall stated that the Metropolitan Planning Organization is a federal process to conduct local transportation planning in urbanized areas. MPOs are required in urbanized areas over 50,000 in population. The MPO makes transportation decisions in urbanized areas to meet requirements established by the federal government.

Mr. Marshall informed that committee that all decisions of the MPO are made by the Transportation Advisory Committee (TAC). The TAC is the policy-making body made up of elected officials from each of the member governments, and the NC Board of Transportation. The Technical Coordinating Committee (TCC) is a staff level committee that provides recommendations to the TAC regarding transportation decisions. Functions of the TAC include transportation plan approvals and funding decisions, including grants.

Mr. Marshall also reviewed the current 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan and current projects that have been funded.

V. CEDS Vision Statement

Mr. Starr presented the CEDS vision statement to committee members and asked for input.

The CEDS will maintain and enhance vibrant, healthy, and prosperous communities in the Western Piedmont Region. The vision will be achieved by robust and aggressive economic development, desirable and affordable housing, successful marketing of regional assets, inclusive and flourishing community life, retention and recruitment of a talented workforce, and efficient and well-maintained infrastructure.

Mr. Luckadoo asked for any changes to the vision statement. No changes were offered to the CEDS Vision Statement. Mr. Herman made a motion to approve the vision statement as presented. Ms. Thomas offered a second and the motion was approved unanimously.

VI. CEDS Strategies: Introduction

Mr. Dellinger presented the committee with the proposed CEDS strategic topics.

- Infrastructure - Transportation & Water, Sewer, Broadband
- Housing
- Marketing - "Regional Recruitment and Retention"
- Community Life
- Workforce
- Economic Development

Mr. Dellinger stated that infrastructure, housing and marketing strategies would be discussed during today's meeting. Strategies in community life, workforce and economic development would be discussed at the June 7 CEDS meeting.

VII. CEDS Strategies: Infrastructure - Transportation

Mr. Marshall stated that the first strategy of Infrastructure - Transportation is to develop and expand the bicycle and pedestrian network for local governments in the region. Our region is lacking in this area. He stated that this could be completed by applying for the Surface Transportation Block Grant-Direct Attributable (STBG-DA) and Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funding, identifying opportunities to connect communities and counties to each other, and retrofitting and adding bicycle and pedestrian facilities to existing roads where feasible to allow safe travel for cyclists, pedestrians, and automobiles. The responsible parties for completion includes local governments, North Carolina Department of Transportation, Greater Hickory Metropolitan Planning Organization, and state and federal agencies.

The next strategy is to expand fixed route public transportation to the municipalities in all four counties by applying for various funding sources. Greenway Public Transportation, Greater Hickory MPO, local governments, non-profits, public/private partnerships, NCDOT and the Federal Transit Administration can achieve this by adding more public transportation services and creating a fixed route connection between counties.

The next strategy is to encourage, plan, and construct transit-oriented development that creates compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use communities centered around public transportation. This strategy involves working with developers to locate appropriate locations for mixed-use and transit-oriented developments, constructing pedestrian facilities that make it more viable for transit stops, and connecting Greenway fixed routes with transit-oriented developments. Public/private partnerships, Greenway Public Transportation, Greater Hickory MPO, the Federal Transit Administration, and local governments can work together to create a list and map of possible locations and criteria for transit-oriented developments.

Mr. King asked if anything could be added to encourage local governments to establish a regional bike and pedestrian commission. Mr. Marshall stated that can be added to the first strategy.

Mr. Luckadoo mentioned adding regional transportation projects to promote and maximize economic development. Mr. Starr stated that it would be added.

VIII. CEDS Strategies: Infrastructure - Water, Sewer, and Broadband

Ms. Long continued with Water, Sewer, and Broadband Infrastructure strategies. She stated that the first strategy is to encourage and assist local governments to develop and maintain Asset Management and Capital Improvement Plans. Plans to make this happen include developing a water and sewer asset inventory for the region, submitting Assessment Inventory and Assessment grant applications to NC Division of Environmental Quality for local governments, and utilizing the WPCOG GIS Department to map utilities for better maintenance and planned growth. WPCOG, local governments, other local utility providers, and federal and state agencies can work together to create a completed inventory and maps of water and sewer infrastructure and submit appropriate grants.

The next strategy is to explore opportunities for coordination and consolidation of utility systems. This can be achieved by convening local governments and other local utility providers to identify regional needs and issues, evaluation cost effectiveness of consolidation of smaller systems, and seeking funding to aid utility providers who are willing to consolidate systems. Responsible parties to work together on this includes WPCOG, local governments, local utility providers, and federal and state agencies.

The next strategy is to improve broadband access to rural areas and to improve broadband speed of service. WPCOG, local governments, broadband providers, EDC's, NC Information Technology Broadband Infrastructure Office, and federal and state agencies will identify coverage areas lacking service, needing faster speed, survey local businesses, and work with school systems.

Mr. Herman mentioned working with water and sewer companies at the same time that roads are being built. Mr. Marshall stated that it was not always possible, but if plans are known in advance, it could possibly be addressed to develop infrastructure before roadways are constructed.

VIV. CEDS Strategies: Housing

Mr. Starr went over the CEDS Housing strategies with the committee. The first strategy is to reduce the number of vacant and substandard homes throughout the region. To complete this strategy, local governments, WPCOG, WPCOG Vacant & Substandard Housing Task Force, building inspection departments, banks, property owners, and the NC General Assembly will work together to remove vacant homes, rehabilitate substandard homes, and create regional code enforcement staff positions at WPCOG.

The next strategy is to increase the amount of new market-rate houses, especially within and near downtowns. Local governments, WPCOG, banks, property owners, real estate brokers and developers will work together to identify strategies and incentives for downtown and infill housing construction to bolster the health of community cores. These groups will also evaluate the benefit of using the Housing Choice Voucher program to create project-based vouchers in and near downtown areas that include 25% subsidized units and 75% market-rate units. A number of workshops, training events, and meetings will be held for this issue.

The next strategy is to increase the availability of affordable homes within the region. Local governments, WPCOG, USDA, NC Housing Finance Agency, Habitat for Humanity, HOME Consortium, banks, private developers, and property owners will identify regulatory barriers to develop affordable housing in the region, and leverage federal and state programs to create new affordable housing. They will complete a regional analysis of impediments.

Mr. Todd asked if it would be relevant to identify potential state programs to address affordable housing. Mr. Starr said that can be added.

X. CEDS Strategies: Marketing

Mr. Toney reviewed the marketing and "regional recruitment and retention" strategies. The first strategy is to convene a Regional Marketing Taskforce. The Taskforce, WPCOG, local governments, federal grants, private and non-profit partnerships and tourism development resources will implement a pilot concept, quantify distribution (electronic and print) and outreach numbers (presentations), and complete targeted information for the various audiences.

The next strategy is to develop a regional approach to marketing (inclusionary marketing). Regional Marketing Taskforce, WPCOG, local governments, federal and state agencies, private and non-profit partnerships and tourism development resources will collaborate to build a web-portal and create marketing materials.

The last strategy is to identify and promote regional attractions and Natural Resources. The Regional Marketing Taskforce, WPCOG, local governments, federal grants, private and non-profit partnerships and tourism development resources will identify attractions or natural resources that each county/municipality wishes to promote and develop a platform to deliver the content (asset map).

Mr. Herman asked what could be done to keep a Taskforce going for more than a few meetings. Mr. Starr said some money would be involved to get everyone moving in the same direction, which has not happened in the past.

Mr. Luckadoo suggested developing an application with a central calendar of events in the region. Ms. Miller stated a mobile application called Macaroni Kids is an app like this, developed for children's related activities. Mr. Luckadoo suggested including trail maps, as well.

Mr. Luckadoo suggested adding the word "events" to Regional Attractions, "Events", and Natural Resources.

XI. CEDS Schedule Going Forward

Mr. Dellinger stated that the next meeting will occur next Wednesday, June 7th. The committee will conclude work on CEDS Goals and Objectives and CEDS Performance Measures. The final CEDS committee meeting will be on Wednesday, August 2nd. The meeting topics include Implementation of 2017 CEDS Goals and Objectives, critique of the CEDS process, and approval of the 2017 CEDS Report. On Tuesday, September 26th, the WPCOG Policy Board will vote to approve the 2017 CEDS Report. The CEDS Report will be sent to the Economic Development Administration by Friday, September 29th, 2017.

XII. Other Business

There was no other business at this time

XIII. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, June 7th at 3:00 PM at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

XIV. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 4:55 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting**

**Wednesday, June 7, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices**

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Malla Vue, Lisa Miller, Sara Black, Christopher Todd, Zack King

Committee Members Absent: Stacey Rash, Trish Johnson, Lindsay Keisler, Crissy Thomas, Jeremy Ku

Staff Present: Anthony Starr (phone), Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, John Marshall, Taylor Dellinger, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace

I. Call To Order

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:06.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. Approval of May 31, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes

At the start of the meeting a quorum was not present, so approval of the committee meeting minutes was postponed until after the Community Life CEDS Strategies presentation was completed and a quorum was present (4:00). Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the May 31, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Ms. Taylor and seconded by Mr. Todd. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. CEDS Strategies: Community Life

Mr. Cavanaugh stated that the first strategy of Community Life is to cultivate the next generation of community leaders. The strategy can be achieved by encouraging diversity and inclusion in the community decision making process, bolstering diversity participation by conducting sustained local government outreach to underrepresented populations, working with community group leaders to determine effective outreach methods, and determining if local governing boards need succession planning assistance. WPCOG, local governments, community groups and the private sector will need to work together to reach out to public and private sector leaders who can identify upcoming talent and create opportunities for young professionals to offer development input through "lunch and learn" meetings, forums or other on-going conversations. The responsible parties will determine the number of minorities on boards, the number of governing boards contacted and the ones who received assistance, the number of public and private leaders contacted, and the number of young professional meetings and forums.

Ms. Taylor suggested combining the metrics of the number of governing boards contacted with the number of governing boards that received assistance. The Committee agreed to make the change to the strategy.

The next strategy is to create robust downtowns throughout the region. Local governments, downtown development associations, EDC's, tourism agencies, WPCOG, private sector, and community groups can achieve this by determining available resources for downtown development programs/projects/plans (downtown housing, streetscapes, sidewalks, etc.), assisting member governments with locally-approved initiatives, and supporting community groups in the development of new cultural festivals and events. Measurable outcomes for this strategy are the number of projects and plans completed, the amount of grant funding awarded, and the number of new cultural festivals and events that occur. The Committee made no changes to the strategy.

The third strategy in Community Life is to promote regional healthy living initiatives. This strategy can be achieved by determining available resources for recreation, sidewalk, streetscape and farmers market plans/projects, assisting member governments with locally approved initiatives, and assessing potential for a regional farmers market similar to the WNC Farmers Market in Asheville. This strategy also involves developing methods to address the region's opioid and illicit drug epidemic. Support will be given to behavioral and public health initiatives to explore development of an inpatient, outpatient, or virtual behavior health facilities and by researching potential grant opportunities, providing Data/GIS Analysis and attending meetings upon request. The responsible parties include the WPCOG, local governments, nonprofits, NC Department of Agriculture, Alexander, Burke, Caldwell and Catawba County Public Health departments, local mental health agencies, local law enforcement, and state and federal DHS. Metrics include the number of projects and plans completed, the amount of grant funding awarded, assessing the need for a regional opioid epidemic task force, and a response to local health department needs for research including grant opportunities, GIS analysis and attending meetings.

Mr. King mentioned that a regional farmer's market may not be possible, as most people will "stick with what they know" and go to one of the many local markets close to them. He mentioned that a mobile farmer's market could be a better option. Mr. Starr pointed out that while the retail side is an important part of a regional farmers market, its main business is for wholesale trade of agricultural products.

Ms. Taylor suggested creating a downtown space where people want to linger. She also suggested each community creating a group to explore the opioid epidemic, but also stated there should also be a regional group, focused on "supporting" as opposed to "developing." The Committee agreed to change that part of the strategy.

Mr. Cavanaugh stated that the next strategy is to develop methods to encourage active senior citizen participation. The Area Agency on Aging, local governments, and real estate developers can work together to determine available resources for "aging in place" programs and plans and projects. They can also encourage the development of the active retiree market and assist member governments with locally approved initiatives. Measurable goals include the number of "aging in place" projects and plans completed, the number of new active retiree residential developments, and the amount of grant funding awarded.

The question was asked to Mr. Dellinger if regulatory changes are having an effect on the opioid problems of the region, and if those can be tracked. Mr. Dellinger deferred this question to Mr. King, as this is his area of expertise. Mr. King stated that local health departments, ER's, and doctor's offices track data related to overdoses, arrests, newborns exposed to substance abuse, pills per person, etc., and that Catawba County ranks pretty high in terms of prescriptions. He stated that a regional taskforce would be very helpful.

V. CEDS Strategies: Workforce

Mr. Dellinger stated that the first strategy of Workforce is to update the Western Piedmont Industry Growth Analysis (IGA) and shape it as a tool designed for business recruitment efforts. The Workforce Development Board, WPCOG Data group, and NC LEAD can work together to ensure the Workforce Development Board members and key stakeholders help shape the information that is needed in the IGA, add increased narrative with relative data sets, and add links to online tools developed by NC Commerce Labor & Economic Analysis Division (LEAD). Metrics include gaining input from private sector workforce development board members whose industries are targeted for increase or decrease, as well as preparing an IGA that is precise, focused, and digestible by the industry, agencies, and government.

Ms. Miller suggested adding the number of presentations and public outreach efforts as a metric for the strategy. The committee agreed to add the metric to the strategy.

The next Workforce strategy is to align career pathways with education and training opportunities to meet industry needs. This can be achieved by developing broader Business, Industry, and Agency (BIA) Career Pathways, identifying pathways that impact the region now and in the future (increasing intern and apprenticeship opportunities in all four counties), and involving K-12 and BIA in determining the paths from education to the workplace. The Workforce Development Board, Workforce Development Board partners, K-16 groups

(including high schools and community colleges), business and industry, and WPCOG will also identify CTE/Vocational opportunities to line up with high school and community colleges and identify educational/training opportunities for higher-level students. They will work together to continue to expand high school course offerings that give college credit or lead to industry certifications, and evaluate effectiveness of Catawba County's K-64 initiative and implement similar programs in other counties in the Western Piedmont region. Metrics for this strategy include developing career pathways, defining and developing at least four regional industry-level career pathways, assembling local and regional BIA groups, developing marketing material to advertise and demonstrate the benefits of career pathways, and increasing the number of high school classes that offer college credit or lead to industry certifications.

Ms. Taylor suggested adding 4-year colleges/universities as a responsible party in this strategy. The Committee agreed to the change.

The next strategy is to maintain consistent, coordinated, long-term marketing of workforce activities across and within the region collectively (social media, new and emerging media). This can be achieved by promoting workforce system activities via a central website and applicable social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram...and new media that may arise) and strengthening workforce partner relationships to share all job/employment related media to promote the region. WPCOG Communications, Workforce Board, and NCWorks Career Centers will collectively generate a daily/weekly/monthly post and repost of workforce labor activity (example: Hootsuite Application) as well as collect and analyze social media followers and shares of information. Metrics for this strategy are to increase social media followers 20% by December 2018 to reflect the impact of jobseeker and employer engagement, as well as to increase the advertising budget to boost posts on Facebook furthering the outreach of jobs and recruitment event opportunities not only within the region, but across the state and beyond.

The final Workforce strategy is to ensure sharing of competitive wages information (wage variances) and its impact on job recruitment and retention in the region. This can be achieved by analyzing comparable wages with other regions and making wage variances consistently available to assist the region with recruitment and retention efforts. WPCOG, NC Department of Commerce and EDC's are the responsible parties. Metrics include creating a data tool that reflects county and regional wage variances by industry and adding information on wage variances to the Economic Indicator Newsletter and focus on it in the upcoming IGA.

Mr. Brooks asked if we knew why some careers are being chosen over others. Mr. King suggested doing some research and recruiting other 4-year colleges to send graduates to our area for internships/apprenticeships. He stated that we needed to market outside of our region to attract people from outside this area. Mr. Herman noted that STEM WEST should be included somewhere in this area. The Committee agreed to make the changes to the strategy.

VI. CEDS Strategies: Economic Development

Mr. Dellinger stated that the first strategy of Economic Development was to construct additional "shell buildings" and "pad-ready sites" throughout the region. Local governments, private partners, and federal and state grant agencies can team up to educate and motivate communities to develop 50,000 to 100,000 square foot buildings and pad-ready sites, to have one shell building move-in ready at all times, one under construction, and at least one in the planning process. These groups will also identify public/private partnerships for shell building construction, as well as the number and size of needed pad-ready sites in the region. The number of NC Department of Commerce's "Certified Sites" in the region needs to be increased, and rail corridors and railroad rights-of-way for potential economic development opportunities needs to be evaluated. Metrics for this include constructing at least 10 new shell buildings in the region, creating employment by moving businesses into the new shell buildings, and identifying the number of pad-ready and "Certified Sites" available/created.

Mr. Starr stated that convincing local governments that this is where the market has moved and the direction in which they need to go could be challenging. Ms. Long stated that Alexander County is a prime example of how having a building available near a railroad and local government working together with private sponsorship is bringing jobs into the area.

It was suggested that EDC's be added as a responsible party. The Committee agreed to make the change to the strategy.

The next strategy is to create a regional site/building inventory for economic development. Mr. Dellinger stated that under this strategy a web portal could be created to use Geographic Information Systems (GIS) that shows the location and attributes of all commercial/industrial buildings and sites that are available for economic development, as well as maintaining a site to update as new inventory is available.

Mr. Starr stated that this is not as relevant as we once thought. The state has a statewide database, and while not every county updates the information as much

as they should, that is a different issue. He stated that he was not sure that spending time and money to develop a regional database makes sense.

Mr. Luckadoo asked the group if they were willing to redact this strategy. The group all agreed. Mr. Todd suggested local governments adding an easily accessible link to their website so people can get to the statewide database. Mr. Starr stated that the link could be added as part of the marketing strategy. The committee agreed to the addition to the strategy.

The next strategy is to enhance the capacity for project and grant development. This would involve hiring additional staff to increase grant-writing capacity and grant administration for the region. Local governments, federal and state grant agencies, and WPCOG would work together to hire additional grant writers and administrative staff, keep track of the number of grants awarded, as well as the amount funded and jobs created.

The next strategy is to maximize building reuse and site redevelopment opportunities. Local governments, EDC's, federal and state grant agencies, and WPCOG will combine forces to identify locations in the region that are idea targets for building reuse or site demolition grants, and prepare successful demolition/building reuse grant applications. Metrics involve listing the best building reuse/demolition sites, and keeping track of grants received and jobs created.

The final strategy in the Economic Development section is to promote, support, and develop the Manufacturing Solutions Center (MSC), Morganton Campus of the NC School of Science and Math (NCSSM), the NC Center of Engineering Technologies (NCCET) and other critical economic development assets to the region. This can be achieved by developing a marketing plan to inform the community of the importance of MSC regionally, support MSC's mission to improve, develop, and create innovative products in furniture, hosiery, and other industries by creating strategies for expansion and growth, and continuing to track the company contacts that MSC has annually. The responsible parties (MSC, NCSSM, NCCET, EDC's, local industry, local governments, chambers of commerce, NC Department of Commerce, regional community colleges, Greater Hickory MPO, Greenway Public Transportation, federal and state grant agencies) will work together to inform the community of the importance of NCSSM, develop newcomer welcome plans for students, faculty, parents, and visitors, create new economic development opportunities near campus (retail, restaurants, shopping, etc.), and support NCCET's mission to educate and train in engineering-related fields and in bringing ideas and innovation to the marketplace. Metrics include

recognizing MSC as an important regional asset, expansion of MSC, opening the Morganton Campus of NCSSM as scheduled, and assessing new housing, retail/hotels, and recreational opportunities near the NCSSM Morganton Campus.

Ms. Taylor requested that "assistance in ensuring" be added before "The Morganton Campus of NCSSM opens as scheduled," since that is not an area fully in their control. She also suggested adding 4-year colleges/universities to the responsible parties. Committee members agreed to make the changes in the strategy.

VII. CEDS Performance Measures

Mr. Dellinger stated that as part of the CEDS process, the EDA suggests a list of performance measures on the overall economic health of the region. The performance measures are obtained from a variety of federal, state, and local data sources and are updated annually as part of the yearly CEDS update sent to the EDA. The performance measures can be used as a tool to measure the impact that the CEDS strategies are having on the region.

The performance measures are divided in the six CEDS topic areas previously discussed. Mr. Dellinger stated that committee members may choose to edit the performance measure list if the data is available. The approved performance measure list will be included in the CEDS report.

The CEDS Performance Measures for Infrastructures are:

- The number of water, sewer, and broadband grants
- Total water, sewer, and broadband project totals
- The number of transportation grants
- Total transportation project totals

The CEDS Performance Measures for Housing are:

- Number of housing units
- Number of vacant housing units
- Owner-occupied housing units
- Renter-occupied housing units
- Median housing value
- Median home owner monthly costs (Housing units with a mortgage)
- Median gross rent
- Percentage of home owners whose month expenses exceed 35% of household income
- Percentage of renters whose monthly expenses exceed 35% of household income
- Civil foreclosure cases
- Number of new site-built single-family permits
- Number of new multi-family permits (units)

- Estimated construction value of site-built single-family and multi-family permits
- Number of homes addressed through WPCOG grant programs

The CEDS Performance Measures for Marketing are:

- Total population
- Total population under age 18
- Total population age 19 to 24
- Total population age 25 to 44
- Total population age 45 to 64
- Total population age 65 and over
- Tourism expenditures
- Tourism related employment
- Local tourism related tax receipts

The CEDS Performance Measures for Community Life are:

- Number of persons without health insurance coverage
- Percentage of population without health insurance coverage
- Householders age 65 and over
- Life expectancy at birth

The CEDS Performance Measures for Workforce are:

- Resident labor force
- Resident number of employed
- Resident number of unemployed
- Unemployment rate
- Total number of jobs in the region by type (manufacturing, construction, health care, education, wholesale/retail trade, other services, public administration, other employment)
- Average weekly wages
- Percentage of population 25+ with a high school diploma or equivalent
- Percentage of population 25+ with a four year degree or higher
- Percentage of students (grades 3-8) passing end of grade tests (EOG's)
- Percentage of students (grades 9-12) passing end of course tests (EOC's)
- Percentage of students graduating from high school in four years

The CEDS Performance Measures - Economic Development

- Total number of business establishments
- Taxable retail sales
- The number building reuse and IDF (Industrial Development Fund) grants
- Total building reuse and IDF grant project totals
- Jobs created through WPCOG grants
- Percentage living below poverty level - all individuals

- Percentage living below poverty level - children (ages 0-17)

A motion to approve the CEDS Performance Measures was made by Mr. Herman and seconded by Mr. King. The motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. CEDS Schedule Going Forward

Mr. Dellinger stated that the next meeting will occur next Wednesday, August 2nd. During the meeting, CEDS Committee members will vote to recommend the approval of the CEDS report to the WPCOG Policy Board. Committee members will also discuss implementation of the CEDS strategies and a critique of the CEDS process. On Tuesday, September 26th, the WPCOG Policy Board will vote to approve the 2017 CEDS Report. The CEDS Report will be sent to the Economic Development Administration by Friday, September 29th, 2017.

XIX. Announcement of the next CEDS Committee meeting

The next CEDS Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 2nd at 3:00 PM at the WPCOG offices in Long View.

X. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

XI. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 5:11 PM.

**2017 Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)
Committee Meeting
Wednesday, August 2, 2017
3:00 PM at WPCOG Offices**

Committee Members Present: Tommy Luckadoo (Chair), Nancy Taylor (Vice-Chair), Rocky Brooks, Elle Engstrom, Gary Herman, Malla Vue, Lisa Miller, Sara Black, Zack King, Stacey Rash, Lindsay Keisler, Jeremy Ku

Committee Members Absent: Trish Johnson, Crissy Thomas, Christopher Todd

Staff Present: Anthony Starr, Dee Blackwell, Sherry Long, John Marshall, Taylor Dellinger, Wendy Johnson, Jason Toney, Duncan Cavanaugh, Amanda Wallace, Erin Schotte

I. **Call To Order**

Tommy Luckadoo, CEDS Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 3:03.

II. **Welcome and Introductions**

Mr. Luckadoo welcomed everyone present.

III. **Approval of June 7, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting Minutes**

Mr. Luckadoo asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the June 7, 2017 CEDS Committee Meeting. A motion was offered by Mr. Herman and seconded by Ms. Taylor. The minutes were unanimously approved.

IV. **Discussion of 2017 CEDS Report**

Mr. Luckadoo asked the Committee to share their initial reaction and what stands out from the report. Below are their responses.

- Very well put-together and clean document.
- Showed a true picture of what the community has said.
- The voice of the Committee was heard and stated very well.
- Diversity and inclusion came through in the report.
- Data and trends stand out.
- CEDS performance measures can be easily found.
- People want to read it because it is visually appealing.
- The word "maintain" in the vision statement, reminding readers that this process does not end here.
- Included things not traditionally looked at as Economic Development, such as creating an environment where people can be healthy and thrive.
- Impressed with dialogue and emphasis on regionalism.
- Easy to present to the public. Anyone can pick up the document and understand it, yet it contains the information needed.

V. **Vote to Recommend Adoption of the 2017 CEDS Report to the WPCOG Policy Board**

A motion to recommend adoption the 2017 CEDS Report to the WPCOG Policy Board was made by Ms. Rash. A second was offered by Mr. Vue and the motion was unanimously approved.

VI. **Implementation of the CEDS**

Mr. Starr stated that intentional steps to implement CEDS are needed to maximize opportunities and develop momentum, and that this is not something that we want to "sit on a shelf." He invited the CEDS Committee Members to attend the September 26th WPCOG Policy Board Meeting, where the Board will vote to approve the report.

Mr. Starr also stated that presentations about the CEDS Report will be given to Local Governments and other groups following the adoption of the report. Mr. Starr asked the Committee to review the list provided and let us know if any pertinent groups are missing. Some suggestions included the Hickory Bond Commission, North Carolina School of Science & Math, and LiveWell Catawba Coalition. Mr. Starr said that WPCOG Staff will develop a template presentation, but encouraged Committee Members to help present the CEDS report. Mr. Starr said he would send out times, dates, and logistics of presentations and ask the willing Committee Members to help.

Mr. Starr stated that there is no requirement for CEDS Committee Members to continue serving, however, if willing, a semi-annual meeting could take place to provide progress updates and maintain momentum. All Committee Members stated their willingness to hold semi-annual meetings.

Ms. Taylor asked if quarterly reports could be given, as well. Mr. Starr said yes, as he was already planning to give the WPCOG Policy Board a quarterly report as well.

VII. Critique of the 2017 CEDS Process

Mr. Dellinger stated that in order to make the CEDS better, he would like the Committee to answer some questions about the meeting process.

The first question was "What did you learn through the CEDS process?" Answers included:

- Eye-opening that people of very different backgrounds and in different generations shared similar interests, issues, and problems. If we focused as a group instead of individual counties, the end product would be better.
- Had never had an opportunity to share ideas with the younger generation, but realized we all share the same visions for the future.
- That while it may not have been pretty or fun, a group of very diverse people can work together to come up with strategies for a better future.
- Members were forced out of their "county box," and forced to think of the region as a whole. If all counties worked together, big things could happen.
- Some members had never heard of CEDS before, so with their knowledge, they are sharing the process with others. It has been a huge learning experience.
- People from different fields were able to meet, interact, and collaborate with each other and make future contacts.
- It was nice seeing the data and trends at the beginning of the process, to know what we were up against as a Committee.

The second question was "What was the best part of the CEDS Process?" Below are responses.

- Seeing different careers and generations represented in the CEDS Committee.
- Very safe environment to express thoughts and opinions. Members could say what they wanted and feel respected, even if it was a different point of view.
- Being a part of the process and learning the data trends.
- Really liked how much say the community had in the process through surveys.
- Energized by new partnerships and excited to reach across county lines.
- Being invited to participate in this Committee was one of the best experiences of life, being involved in such a huge decision-making process was special.
- Sitting down with like-minded people.
- Perfect amount of time and facilitation of meetings.

The third question was "Would you change the day of the week or the time of day the CEDS Committee meetings occurred? If so, suggest changes." Responses included:

- We had enough notice, so the meeting dates or times were never an issue.
- WPCOG did a great job with expectations from the very beginning. Great communication.
- Date and time were fine, but would suggest a 30 minute social period sometimes, to have time to mingle with other members.
- Suggest an "ice-breaker" or get-to-know-you session before the meetings begin.

The fourth question was broken down into two parts. The first part stated "It took a total of seven Committee meetings to complete the CEDS process. Do you feel that more or less meetings were needed to complete the process?"

- Less time and less meetings is always a good thing, but WPCOG is the best judge of that.
- Plenty of advance notice was given about the two additional meetings, and they were definitely needed.
- One meeting per month was a good schedule - possibly too much time between the last two meetings, but with the things WPCOG had to put together, it was probably necessary.
- WPCOG couldn't have turned the document around any quicker than they did. Perfect.
- Couldn't have been done in any less or any more time.
- Very nice to have the timeline and objectives from the very beginning.

The second part of the question was: "The CEDS meeting occurred over seven months. Do you feel the process took too long to complete or that more time would have been better to complete the process?"

- When the work plan was laid out, the schedule felt rushed. As the process occurred, this was not the case. It couldn't have been done in less than seven months, and nine or months would have been too long.
- Timeline was great.

Question five asked "Any suggestions for how WPCOG staff can improve the 2022 CEDS Process?"

- Communication and facilitation was awesome. No improvements needed.
- Had never been on a committee before where timeline was perfect.
- It would have been nice to have had past CEDS Reports at the beginning and to have been told what happened with the progress of those.
- Present the strategies that were most effective from the last CEDS in the beginning of the meetings.
- Start thinking now about who you want on the next CEDS Committee and be picky about selections. Present it as the prestigious opportunity that it is.
- In five years, the next committee may want things presented in a different way. Perhaps digitally instead of on paper.

Question six asked "Any additional comments about the CEDS process?"

Staff Comments:

- Very organized. It was nice to have the meeting dates very early.
- Committee was urged to come to the Policy Board Meeting on September 26th. Meeting details will be emailed to them when the location is known.
- Implementation is important going forward.
- It would be great if future committee members would go out and talk with random people, to see the different ideas and perspectives of different walks of life.
- Impressed with the level of engagement. Chair and Vice-Chair have been great. Excellent group to facilitate, and it yielded a really good result.
- This was a collaborative effort. It really stood out that there is a lot of give and take and strengths were built upon.
- Appreciate the challenge of making data seem interesting.
- There is no regional leadership program, which is something for Committee Members to think about.

Committee Members Comments:

- Align this plan with other plans around the area.
- Thankful for the opportunity to serve on this Committee.
- Would love to see a copy of the last CEDS Report and know the results. Mr. Starr stated that this could be found on our website.
- It was a good idea to change the layout of this CEDS from the previous ones. Very appealing.

- Excited about the follow-up and that this Committee is not finished, and that there is an opportunity to be an ambassador for the work done in these meetings.
- So many groups want to improve, and that can be done with collaboration.
- Meetings were ran effectively and efficiently. Having the agendas and information to look at before the meeting was very helpful.

VIII. CEDS Schedule Going Forward

Mr. Dellinger stated that the WPCOG Policy Board will vote to approve the CEDS report on September 26th. Committee Members are urged to attend this meeting. The CEDS Report will be sent to the Economic Development Administration by Friday, September 29th, 2017.

VIV. Other Business

There was no other business at this time.

X. Adjournment

As there was no other business, Mr. Luckadoo adjourned the meeting at 4:43 PM upon a motion by Mr. Brooks and a second by Ms. Rash.