**Minutes of Meeting of Rural Advisory Commission’s (RAC) Subcommittee on Workforce Development and Demographics (SWDD)**

November 29, 2016

10:00-12:30

Franklin Regional Council of Governments

Greenfield, MA

**Subcommittee members present**

Linda Dunlavy, Franklin Regional Council of Governments,

Nat Karns, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission

Trish Settles, Central MA regional Planning Commission

**Subcommittee members absent**

Jay Coburn, Community Development Partnership

Donna Hamel, Nantucket

**Also present**

Rita Farrell, MA Housing Partnership .

**Welcome and Introductions**

Meeting was called to order by Mr. Karns at 10:03 am.

**Acceptance of minutes**

Trish Settles motioned to accept the 9/4/16 minutes; Linda Dunlavy seconded as edited (some typos found). Passed unanimously.

**Call/Volunteer Fire Presentation and Discussion**

Dan Nietsche, Emergency Preparedness Planner for the FRCOG, presented a power point discussion about call/volunteer fire issues in small, rural towns. Presentation attached. After the presentation members discussed what actionable item could be recommended to help rural communities with call/volunteer fire issues. Members agreed that the actionable will be to pursue legislation that:

1. Allows firefighters to leave work without penalty or prejudice
2. Provides a state income tax or local tax incentive to be a volunteer or call firefighter
3. Provides communities interested in regionalizing with legal assistance to create regional districts
4. Provides funding for expansion of Fire Science Programs in technical high schools and community colleges
5. Provides funding for marketing to receruit volunteers and for local Junior Firefighter programs

Nat also suggested that we try to map the state’s fire departments into 3 categories: all volunteer; most or partial volunteer; all paid.

**Sewer and Water Technology discussion with DEP**

If possible, members hope to have a conversation with DEP before 12/16. If such a meeting is scheduled, members suggested that the Economic Development and Infrastructure Committees be invited.

**Joint Discussion with Economic Development Committee**

The mapping previously presented to the Economic Development Committee was quickly reviewed with members. Both committees hope for some refinement to the mapping including:

* Be sure all Technical High Schools are represented on the maps
* CDC satellite locations should be added and the coverage should only include CDCs that provide economic development services
* Perhaps add entities like CISA or Berkshire Grown

Based on the mapping, members identified Service Center Communities as communities that provide a sub-region of rural communities with workforce development because the communities have all or some of the following services: community and state colleges or satellites; career centers or satellites; technical high schools; REBs. Members also identified where gaps exist across the rural community footprint and identified the communities of Great Barrington, Ware, Orange and Chesterfield as communities that have some services and could be enhanced to be a Service Center Community.

The Committees then discussed the idea of Targeted Village Centers that already are or could serve as rural commercial centers but need some kind of capacity improvement to fully flourish, be it improved sewer and water facilities, zoning changes, transportation improvements or other.

Members talked about the criteria that could be used to identify or define a Targeted Village Center community. Rita suggested that a research paper called, “Communities of Opportunity” could help in the discussion. Trish noted that criteria could include number of pre-exisiting jobs in a community or ability of an area to expand based on topology or other factors. Both committees agreed to continue thinking about possible criteria but agreed the concept has merit as an actionable item.

**Next Subcommittee Meeting**

No meeting scheduled.

Committee meeting adjourned at 12:30.