

ECONOMIC BLUEPRINT UPDATE DUE BY END OF 2019

By Michael P. Norton

STATE HOUSE NEWS SERVICE

STATE HOUSE, BOSTON, MAY 13, 2019...Public and private sector officials gathered Monday in a State House meeting room and took the first step toward developing a new blueprint for the evolving Massachusetts economy.

Gov. Charlie Baker swore in 40 members of the state's reconstituted [Economic Development Planning Council](#), an entity governors are required to establish at the outset of their four-year terms.

Baker touted the group's potential, saying its predecessor offered the administration's "Opportunities for All" plan that led to advancement of state policies in the areas of digital health, cybersecurity, and workforce skills capital grants. The plan served as the underpinning for two economic development laws that together delivered about \$2 billion in public support, with regional equity a guiding principle.

"It was an incredibly valuable and helpful process to the administration and to the Legislature and I think to some extent some of the consistency you saw in state policy over the last four or five years on this stuff was directly a result of the work that was done as part of that original group," Baker said.

Baker said the process, designed to produce a new blueprint by the end of 2019, requires "patient urgency."

"What I mean by that is it's important to want to see the thing move forward and to see it develop quickly and all the rest, but at the same time this is supposed to be a learning exercise and one of the hardest things to do is to listen and do at the same time and I think in some regards it's very important that people are able to do both when it comes to this," he said.

The new council, co-chaired by Lt. Gov. Karyn Polito and Economic Development Secretary Michael Kennealy, plans eight "regional engagement sessions," beginning Wednesday in Salem and ending on June 13 in North Adams. A session is planned this Thursday in Springfield, followed by sessions on May 21 in Lowell, May 23 in Dartmouth, May 28 in Roxbury, May 30 in Worcester, and June 4 in Chatham.

"This blueprint will be acted upon," Polito declared at the meeting. "It will be used as a way to inform our administration and the Legislature around how we allocate state funds and how we develop policies and statutory changes to improve opportunities for people around this Commonwealth."

Baker also said Monday that the next round of MassWorks public infrastructure grants [opened on Monday](#), calling the program "our most flexible economic development tool" and a way to support housing and commercial development and transportation needs. Applications are due by Aug. 9.

This year's MassWorks effort seeks to increase investments in projects that help advance the state's housing production goals, especially in communities that have the "housing choice" designation, and the application includes questions "to identify municipalities that have adopted or may be considering the adoption of a moratorium on any new housing or development."

Last year's MassWorks program drew 107 applications and resulted in 39 grant awards totaling more than \$80 million in 37 communities. State officials estimated the grant awards helped leverage \$2.9 billion in private investment, 4,000 units of new housing and more than 9,000 full-time jobs.

A 2018 law allocated another \$250 million for MassWorks awards.

After introductions from Baker and Polito, Kennealy announced the council's first order of business -- a group photo.

END

05/13/2019