

**GREATER EGYPT REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
BOARD MEETING  
June 10, 2025**

**1. Call to Order and Roll Call**

Jeff Robinson, Chair, presided and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. A roll call was done, and a quorum was established.

<b>Members Present:</b>		<b>Members Absent:</b>	
<b>Name:</b>	<b>Represents:</b>	<b>Name:</b>	<b>Represents:</b>
Cindy Humm	Franklin Co.	Liz Allen	Franklin Co.
Kevin Weston	Franklin Co.	Neil Hargis	Franklin Co.
Abra Phillips	West Frankfort	Cody Lueker	Carbondale
Gary Williams	Rend Lake CD	Lee Messersmith	Benton
David Larkin	Jackson Co.	Brian Otten	Perry Co.
Julie Peterson	Jackson Co.	John Rendleman	Jackson Co.
Greg Legan	Kinkaid-Reeds CD	Tim Atkisson	Williamson Co.
Ryan Guthman	Murphysboro	Steve Draege	Jefferson Co.
Steve Damron	Jefferson Co.	Cliff Lindemann	Jefferson Co.
Robert Spencer	Pinckneyville	Fisher Overstreet	Jefferson Co.
Jeff Robinson	Williamson Co.	Nathan McKenna	Mt. Vernon
Josh Smith	Williamson Co.	Bruce Morgenstern	Perry Co.
Kathy Lively	Herrin	Josh Gross	Perry Co.
Glenn Clarida	Marion	Duncan Britton	Perry Co.
Jason Ashmore	ALG	Ruth Hale	Du Quoin
		George Shepard	Williamson Co.
		Mark Krones	Carterville
<b>Staff Present:</b>			
Cary Minnis	Executive Director		
Sarah O'Dell	Administrator		

**2. Recognition of Visitors**

Ron Kiser was in attendance as a guest.

**3. Consent Agenda**

A motion was made by Kathy Lively and seconded by Robert Spencer to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion was carried by unanimous vote.

The following reports were accepted:

- a) Minutes – April 8, 2025
- b) Staff Report – May 2025

**4. New Business**

a) **Approval of Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)**

The board received a highlight presentation on the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which is required every five years under the EDA planning grant. Maintaining an updated CEDS is essential for keeping the region eligible for Economic Development Administration (EDA) funding. Many of the region's successful projects over the last five years were eligible because of alignment with the CEDS. In addition to EDA requirements, having an adopted CEDS can strengthen applications for other state and federal programs, many of which use project consistency with regional strategies as part of their scoring systems.

The updated CEDS document highlights major regional developments completed or underway over the past five years. The industry analysis shows areas of workforce concentration and growth, with sectors such as educational services, public administration, and healthcare showing relative strength. However, challenges remain, particularly with continued population decline and a shrinking labor force. While unemployment rates appear low, this masks a reduction in total workforce participation over time, with the region's labor participation rate at 56.6%, trailing behind the national average of 63%.

Despite positive trends in sales tax revenue and a slight increase in SIU enrollment, wage growth has not kept pace with national averages, contributing to a widening wage disparity. The CEDS also includes a resiliency analysis, identifying portions of the population that are more vulnerable to disruptions, whether from economic shifts or natural disasters. Key goals of the plan focus on slowing the decline in labor force participation, stabilizing population trends, and narrowing the income gap over the next five years.

The CEDS was developed with guidance from a dedicated committee, supplemented by contributions from local communities and organizations. Adoption of the CEDS by the board, formalized through a resolution, is required for submission to EDA. Implementation of the CEDS will be guided by this committee over the next five years as part of the organization's EDA planning grant work. The renewal application for the three-year EDA planning grant has been submitted, and while official approval is still pending, no negative indications have been received to date.

The CEDS can be viewed at: <https://greateregypt.org/comprehensive-economic-development-strategy/>

A motion was made by Robert Spencer to adopt the resolution approving the CEDS for submission and was seconded by Jason Ashmore. The motion carried unanimously.

**b) Approval of the FY26 Budget**

The board reviewed the proposed budget for the fiscal year 2026. The facility budget remains largely unchanged from prior years. The program budget outlines expected revenue from existing grants, local membership contributions, and pending awards, including anticipated renewal of the IEPA water quality grant. The largest planned expenditure within the budget is related to IDOT planning grants, with \$484,000 allocated for contractual services primarily directed to consultant-led planning studies. Active IDOT related projects include six bike plans, a port study for the Jackson Union Port Authority, and a Safe Routes to School plan covering the region's five counties. While these are planning-focused grants, their purpose is to generate future infrastructure funding opportunities.

The organization's staffing level has been reduced to nine positions, with no current plans to add staff. Kerber, Eck & Braeckel CPAs have been retained to provide accounting services. Standard 3% step salary increases are proposed for staff, with a 1% increase for the Executive Director. The projected IMRF contribution rate for 2026 is set to decrease to 8.8%, offering additional savings in benefit costs.

The benefits rate has dropped slightly due to the IMRF reduction, and the indirect cost rate is expected to decline from 42% to 30.9%, in part due to carryforward adjustments. These changes will result in a more favorable allocation for grant budgeting purposes. Supporting documentation was presented detailing individual staff time allocations across grant programs and projects, emphasizing efforts to maintain accurate and consistent tracking of grant-funded work.

No further questions were raised, and the board acknowledged the presentation and the overall financial strength and stability of the organization.

A motion was made by Robert Spencer and seconded by Steve Damron to approve the FY26 budget. The motioned carried unanimously.

c) **Approval of FY26 Local Share**

The board reviewed the local share letter included in the meeting packet, which outlines the amounts and rates for member contributions for the coming year. It was noted that the rates remain unchanged from the prior year.

A motion was made by Glen Clarida and seconded by Cindy Humm to approve the local share contribution rates for FY26. The motion passed unanimously.

d) **Miscellaneous**

The board received an update on the Energy Transition Community Grant Program, which provides funding for communities affected by mine or power plant closures or reductions. The program offers an initial \$50,000 grant to eligible taxing bodies within a 30-mile radius of a qualifying event. Additional funding is available based on the severity of the economic impact, using a formula that accounts for factors such as lost jobs and tax revenue. In certain cases, communities may be eligible for larger grants, though in most instances related to local closures, awards are expected to remain around \$50,000 to \$60,000 per applicant.

To apply, eligible entities must first secure a letter of support from the host community—typically the affected county or municipality. For the Williamson County power plant closure, for example, the county must provide the necessary letter, though in this case, no significant multiplier benefit is anticipated. Other eligible closures in the area include events in Franklin County, though the impact and corresponding grant potential for that event remain unclear.

The grant has been used locally for projects such as equipment purchases for fire districts, park improvements like pickleball courts, and infrastructure upgrades. Uses are flexible and can include workforce development, equipment, infrastructure, or even grant-writing assistance. The first phase of the application does not require specific project details; those are submitted after the applicant receives confirmation of eligibility and an allocation amount.

Discussion included the challenges associated with requiring host counties to issue letters of support, particularly when multiple applications could reduce total available funding for significant county-level projects. While some taxing bodies are already preparing applications, outreach efforts are ongoing to ensure eligible communities are informed.

The significant economic impacts of closures were also highlighted, including the loss of approximately 130 coal mining jobs in Williamson County over the past decade and associated high-wage positions at the local power plant. These losses continue to affect the region's economy and qualify the area for additional consideration in various grant programs.

Staff offered to assist interested taxing districts in navigating the application process and will coordinate with local county officials, particularly in Franklin and Williamson counties, to support the effort.

**5. Matters from the Floor**

The SIMPO (Southern Illinois Metropolitan Planning Organization) was decommissioned one year ago, and to commemorate the occasion, a transportation forum was held with former MPO participants. The meeting provided an overview of regional transportation projects and highlighted funding opportunities, including ongoing efforts to fully utilize available Rebuild Illinois funds. The roundtable discussion provided an opportunity for attendees to share project updates, discuss upcoming initiatives, and hear about IDOT's project pipeline. The session was well-received and served as a valuable platform for exchanging information on both current developments and anticipated challenges related to transportation in the region.

As a follow-up to the previous meeting's discussion on potential study ideas, staff provided updates on ongoing efforts to advance several initiatives. Greater Egypt is currently assisting Man-Tra-Con with the preparation of a Delta Regional

Authority (DRA) grant application to fund a regional workforce study, a project that originated from those earlier discussions. Additionally, outreach efforts have been made to regional partners and agencies to gather information on available housing-related programs. Plans are underway to host a housing workshop later in the month, bringing together agencies to present on their programs, as well as inviting local communities to share their own housing efforts. The goal of the workshop is to increase awareness, engagement, and participation in available housing resources, with the potential for follow-up sessions based on community needs and interest.

Specific project needs from individual communities are also being addressed. For example, Greater Egypt is working to connect Johnson City with the Energy Transition Community Grant Program to help fund specific local initiatives. The discussion served as a reminder for community representatives to communicate their project priorities and funding needs to staff, emphasizing that continued dialogue is essential for identifying opportunities to provide assistance and pursue available resources.

#### **6. Upcoming Meetings**

Executive Committee – July 8, 2025 – time TBA

Full Board Meeting – August 12, 2025 – 6pm

#### **7. Adjournment**

A motion was made by Josh Smith and seconded by Robert Spencer to adjourn the meeting. The motion was carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 6:49 p.m.

*Copies of documents furnished to the Commission in connection with this meeting are on file at the Greater Egypt office in Marion, Illinois.*