



# seCTer

Annual Board of Directors Meeting

Thursday, November 10, 2022

*Guest Speaker:*

**SCOTT ANDES**

*U.S. Economic Development Administration*

**ECONOMIC  
DEVELOPMENT**

**PROCUREMENT TECHNICAL  
ASSISTANCE CENTER**

**SMALL BUSINESS  
LENDING PROGRAMS**



**SOUTHEASTERN  
CONNECTICUT  
ENTERPRISE REGION**

# AGENDA

## Annual Board of Directors Meeting

1. Registration / Sign In / Breakfast  
7:30AM

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2. Welcome / Call to Order / Roll Call  
Mark R Oefinger / Chair

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3. Introduction of Keynote Speaker  
Paul Whitescarver / Executive Director

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4. Scott Andes / Program Lead,  
Build Back Better Regional Challenge  
(BBBRC), Economic Development  
Administration (EDA)

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5. Approval of 9/28/22  
Board Meeting Minutes\*

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6. Committee Reports
  - a. Audit Committee - Gabe Stern\*
    - i. Annual Audit Report / Auditors
  - b. Nominating Committee - Wendy Bury\*
    - i. Reappointment of Current Board Members (none)
    - ii. Farewell and Thank you to Current Board Members Leaving the Board
    - iii. Nomination and Appointment of New Board Members
    - iv. Nomination and Appointment of Board of Directors Officers

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7. Executive Director Report / Comments  
Paul Whitescarver
  - a. seCTer Programs  
The Year in Review
  - b. Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS)  
Update
  - c. Grants Update

Dear Board and Committee Members and Guests

### 2022 Year in Review

This past year seCTer has made significant strides in our mission to stimulate and support economic growth to make southeastern Connecticut stronger and more vibrant.

One of the more important roles seCTer is tasked with is the development of the regions Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). seCTer is in the final iterations of updating the CEDS. As with all communities, the pandemic demonstrated the importance of regional economic resiliency. Through our Economic Development Committee, surveys and focus groups, seCTer will put forth a strategy that is inclusive to all our regional stakeholders. Our efforts reiterated that diversifying our economic portfolio is key to resiliency. What better way to diversify our economic portfolio than with the use of existing assets such as the Port of New London's State Pier.

seCTer's participation in the Economic Development Administration's (EDA) Build Back Better Regional Challenge (BBBRC) with the forming of a coalition of partners designed to build an industry cluster around offshore wind energy proved that regional collaboration is desirable and possible. The coalition includes the University of Connecticut, Connecticut Center for Advanced Technology (CCAT), Norwich Community Development Corporation (NCDC), Southeastern Connecticut Council of Governments (SCCOG), Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB), and the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD).

The coalition developed the "Offshore Wind Industry Cluster," and in doing so stimulated a partnership and a conversation that will diversify our economy and create thousands of jobs for our region and the state. These six partners, under the leadership and coordination of seCTer, promoted the possible investment of \$60 million, both private and public funds, into the region. It has been close to 20 years (BRAC 2005) since this region last witnessed cooperation at this level. seCTer secured funding for Phase 1 that will ensure our efforts in the offshore wind arena continue through 2023.

Switching gears to small business development, seCTer's loan and grant funds supported by the EDA and the state have the ability to provide up to \$6 million in Small Business support through existing seCTer, CARES RLF Equity, and BOOST funds over the next several years. This past year alone seCTer provided over \$2 million in small business loans across the region. Couple these loans with seCTer's ability to provide \$700,000 in annual grants for small businesses over the next several years via seCTer Rise, and you can understand how seCTer becomes a vital piece to the momentum we are seeing in the region in business and economic development.

seCTer continues to host the CT Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) throughout the state. We welcome Marisol Herrera as the new State Director for the CT PTAC. Marisol brings fresh energy to an organization that is vital to our region and the state.

We also want to express gratitude to the seCTer staff. This has been a great year for seCTer and that success is due to the hard work of our staff.

We have a bright future in Southeastern Connecticut, and seCTer is proud to be a vital partner in our regions effort to make that future even brighter.

Sincerely,

Paul Whitescarver, *Executive Director*  
Mark Oefinger, *Chairman of the Board*

# THE YEAR IN REVIEW

## Build Back Better Regional Challenge

The Phase I award allowed seCTer to hire additional capacity to further the development of an offshore wind industry cluster. This work will continue through 2023, but will evolve to explore other regional competitiveness programming. seCTer will use this as an opportunity to explore other areas of competitiveness using a resiliency lens by conducting a climate and economic resilience study. Economic diversification is paramount to the region's success and has been a strategic goal in past and current CEDS.

## seCTer Loan Program Highlights

Providing loans to regional businesses for growth remains a core part of seCTer's activities. This year, seCTer was awarded additional funds by the U.S. EDA to further this important activity. Now, in-house, seCTer has a new employee who brings years of loan processing experience and will help the organization develop policies and procedures to bolster this important area of practice.

## Adding Regional Capacity

seCTer is growing by adding staffing capacity to help further the mission. The Boost Loan Fund and seCTerRise will fund positions to help businesses start, grow, and provide much needed technical assistance building toward a more diverse economy. We are also adding digital resources that will help people in and out of the region understand our economy and the region has to offer - using data and visualizations. The CEDS update will also be primarily an online resource making it a more accessible, usable tool for the region.

## seCTer Procurement Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) Highlights

This year, PTAC served 950 active clients of which 165 are new. Counseling hours totaled 2,069 supported by 55 events with 2,024 attendees. 32 videos have been added to the video library. Total contract awards of \$101,982,319 across 880 contracts were disbursed, creating 2040 jobs and generating \$5.88 million in CT State tax income.

## GUEST SPEAKER: SCOTT ANDES

*Program Lead  
Build Back Better Regional Challenge  
U.S. Economic Development  
Administration*

Scott Andes is the Program Lead for the Build Back Better Regional Challenge at the Economic Development Administration within the U.S. Department of Commerce. As the Lead, Scott is responsible for the overall management and outcomes of the \$1 billion competition. BBBRC is the largest national economic development competition in American history. On February 2nd, President Biden announced 21 regional winners of the Challenge receiving between \$25 and \$65 million to redefine their local economies. Before joining EDA, Scott served as Executive Director of the Block Center for Technology and Society at Carnegie Mellon University.



Prior to CMU, Scott created and ran the In-novation Ecosystem Program at the National League of Cities, which partnered with over 100 cities to build programs to support local entrepreneurship and STEM education. Scott was a Fellow at the Brookings Institution and the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, where he published over 100 articles and reports on U.S. innovation policy and regional economic development. He also served as Special Assistant to Senator Chuck Schumer at the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee. Scott is a graduate of the London School of Economics and Carnegie Mellon University. He lives in Pittsburgh with his wife Sasha and son Max.



## UPDATE:

# STRING THEORY

Amy and Chris Leigh founded String Theory in 2007 as a family owned and operated small business. Chris is a virtuoso guitarist/performer who has been an instructor for 30 years; in addition, he performs in Jazz Groups throughout New England. Amy is a life-long educator who teaches Social Studies at Ella Grasso Tech and manages the business operations of String Theory. Their daughter, Charlotte, works in the office and will continue to do so as she attends Connecticut College.

The music education field is crowded, but String Theory has been able to fill a niche by providing cutting edge individual instruction, with students choosing the dates of their 6 months instruction period so that there are no semesters or summer sessions; instruction, while flexible, runs year-round, ensuring much more even cash flow for the business and the instructors. Professional grade sound studios and the ability to connect with others as a team have proven to be a successful model for them. They also contract with the Hygienic, Garde and other small entertainment venues to conduct monthly coffee houses, where students and instructors can perform together and as solo performers, gaining experience and hopefully, a following.

In 2018, String Theory entered into a Lease/Purchase Agreement with the City of New London, the owners of the property, to take over what had previously been the Drop-In Learning Center at 96 Hawthorne Drive. The property was in a dilapidated state, had not been utilized by the City since 2004 and was considered surplus property. Throughout 2018 and 2019, String Theory completed significant improvements to the property, including:

- Site Clean Up
- Window and Glass Replacement
- Installation of Perimeter Lighting
- Significant Electrical Upgrades and Repair
- General Demolition of Interior and replacement of all carpeting, removal of non-load bearing interior walls to create large performance space, repainting all exterior and interior surfaces and attempted HVAC repairs.
- Handicapped Accessible bathrooms in the Hallway.

In 2020 and 2021, due to Covid related closings and changes in operations, String Theory prepared for the return of students by creating safe spaces. Plexiglass "studios" and protective devices, expanded and divergent hours and sessions, expanded private sessions, etc. were developed. Additionally, a professional recording studio and video production facility were completed. In August, 2021, String Theory approached seCTer, ready to exercise their option to purchase. They met with the SCDC/seCTer Team and developed a plan to consummate that purchase and we are please to have been a part of this small business's growth and development in the City of New London.



## SPOTLIGHT:

# JOSHUA FRIEDMAN

Joshua Friedman started his career as a wooden boat builder over 40 years ago and then realized that there was a greater challenge and reward to be had in custom furniture design and custom cabinetry. He started Joshua Friedman Woodworking and then, in 1994, he started Joshua Friedman & Company; the company quickly grew a reputation for excellent work. Today, custom designed cabinetry and built-in furniture is currently greater than 60% of their work.

Over the years, Friedman has amassed a vast collection of wood, furniture in need of repair, architectural artifacts and other raw materials for a creative woodworker/artist. Manufacturing space at 49 Jay Street had become physically limited by items in storage; there are several shipping containers and storage sheds full on the property and more elsewhere. Every year, Friedman conducts a couple of yard sales but the inventory piles up and is a source of unrealized profits for the company.

With his daughter, Margot, returning to Connecticut and joining the company, Joshua started to look for a way to expand his business and capitalize on Margot's Design/Artistic talents. Margot and Joshua developed plans to expand the business operation to include retail sales of the "Friedman Found" inventory, much of it after it has been refurbished, repurposed and/or enhanced. Joshua also plans to move his furniture restoration and repair business to the new location and has hired a new restorer to work out of this location; there is even space for Josh's work-bench! There is more than adequate space in the new facility for storage, workshops, visiting artists, business offices and retail operations all with ample parking. This frees up manufacturing space in the New London Facility and will eliminate the need for the rental of shipping containers.

With help from seCTer, Joshua found the perfect location for his new business operation in the old Wayside Furniture building at 33 Boston Post Road. This property meets all of the current needs of Friedman Found and provides ample space for expansion. Margot has ideas for expanded studio spaces for artist and crafters in an adjacent building in Phase 2 of this Project. seCTer is pleased that our CARES ACT and Regional Revolving Loan Program were able to help this small business expand not only their footprint in our region but expand the goods and services that they provide.