

NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Minutes of Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Meeting December 7, 2007

Members:

James Allen
Hon. Vince Anello
Dr. Ruth Bereson
John Cappellino
Colleen DiPirro
Hon. Wright Ellis
Andrew Eszak
Samuel Ferraro
Hon. Joel Giambra
Robert Gower
Hon. Michele Iannello
Hon. Timothy Kennedy
Hon. Kathy Konst
David Lacki
Celeste Lawson
Gregory Lewis
Hon. Peter McMahan
Hon. John Mills
Hal Morse
Hon. Jason Murgia
Hon. Sean O'Connor
John Percy
Dr. Gary Praetzel
David Roll
Hon. William Ross
Laura St. Pierre Smith
Christopher Schoepflin
Hector Titus
Timothy Wanamaker
Peter Wendel

Present: Burmaster, Weinstein, Cappellino, Ellis, Ferraro, Iannello, Konst, Lacki, Lawson, Mills, Morse (proxy), Wendel, Witul

Excused: Gower, Praetzel, Roll, Titus, Rath Sanderson

Absent: Allen, Anello, Bereson, DiPirro, Eszak, Giambra, Kennedy, Lewis, McMahan, Murgia, O'Connor, Percy, Ross, St. Pierre Smith, Schoepflin, Wanamaker, Casale, Enstice

The meeting was called to order at 8:45 a.m. by Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. The Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA) was thanked for hosting the meeting.

Departing members Hon. Vince Anello, Timothy Doolittle, Hon. Joel Giambra, Jo Nasoff-Finton, and Hon. Barry Weinstein were recognized and thanked for their service. Co-Chair Weinstein especially thanked Nasoff, who was instrumental in the arrangement that houses the Regional Coalition at the ECIDA.

New member ECIDA Director of Business Development John Cappellino was welcomed. Cappellino noted that in the early days of ENRP he would proxy for Ron Coan at times, so he goes way back with the group. Guests Patrick Walsh and Pat Whalen were also welcomed, as was presenter Kenneth Franasiak.

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale
Matthew Enstice
Melinda Rath Sanderson
Lawrence Witul

Executive Director:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of the September 2007 meeting were unanimously approved as amended (on page 5, "200 trucks" should be "2000 trucks").

Regional Coalition Executive Director Tod A. Kniazuk presented the sustainability update. The beginning balance for the period was -\$615.75 and the ending balance was -\$7346.95. Kniazuk explained that the Erie County Industrial Development Agency has agreed to advance funding pending receipt of the grant funds we received from State Senator Dale Volker. We have received 2007 membership contributions from the Amherst Industrial Development

Agency (Allen), Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County through contract work (Lawson), City of Niagara Falls (Anello), Council of Utility Contractors (Titus), Empire State Development/USA Niagara Development Corporation (Doolittle), Erie County Association of Local Governments (McMahon), Erie County Industrial Development Agency through housing and hosting (Nasoff Finton), National Electrical Contractors Organization (Roll), Niagara County Center for Economic Development through hosting (Ferraro), Niagara County Legislature, Niagara County Supervisors Association (Ellis), Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (Percy), and Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD totaling \$16,596.32 (not including contract or in-kind).

Kniazuk announced that the Niagara County Legislature is once again providing \$5,000 to the Regional Coalition in 2008, and that the Erie County Legislature approved a grant of \$20,000 for '08 – marking the first time since 2005 that money is being received from Erie County. Coalition member and Erie County Legislator Michele Iannello noted that a big factor in being able to secure the funds was the commitment of Niagara County to the group. Kniazuk explained that he spoke at the Erie County Legislature's public hearing and detailed the financial and in kind contributions from so many of our member agencies. He thanked everyone for their contributions that have led to the group's success.

Coalition member Celeste Lawson presented a proposal to contract with the Coalition through its executive director to assist the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County with advocacy efforts including candidate surveys, interviews with public officials, meetings between arts agencies and other sectors, letter writing campaigns, and related activities. In exchange for these services the Arts Council will pay the monthly health insurance premium for the executive director at his going rate. The resulting time commitment is approximately 13 hours per month, effective January 2008. The proposal was unanimously approved.

Subcommittee member Wright Ellis presented the Economic Development / Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Discussion turned to the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS). Co-Chair Weinstein noted that Coalition member Laura St. Pierre Smith said we can have the interim work being done at the Buffalo Niagara Partnership, but she hasn't yet given it to us. Weinstein continued that, as he had

promised he would do, he gave the document to Business First and clocked it in to the record at the Erie County Legislature.

Subcommittee Chair David Lacki presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Lacki noted the success of The Big Easy in Buffalo Preservation Hall Jazz Band Creole Christmas concert the previous evening, and Kniazuk added that we still need help raising money for the instrument donation portion of the project.

Subcommittee Chair Peter Wendel presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Wendel noted that after 1/31/08 you'll need NEXUS, a passport, or a birth certificate with photo identification in order to cross the border. He also mentioned that the contract has been awarded for the new terminal at the Niagara Falls International Airport. Coalition member Samuel Ferraro added that the consultant has been engaged for the Niagara County Comprehensive Plan. This will include much outreach to local governments and the public. Ellis asked how the plan will tie in to the Framework for Regional Growth. Ferraro replied that they are using the Framework as a resource guide for their work.

Pat Whalen of the World Trade Center Buffalo Niagara told the group about a trip 30 area officials took to the Hamilton Port in Ontario on December 3. Over 17,000 work at the port, and it comprises one-third of Hamilton's economy. They're looking for a partner on the US side. Short sea shipping is one possibility; they didn't know about the AES deep water port being constructed, and we learned about the commodities from around the world coming into Hamilton. Ferraro called it a great trip for picking up knowledge. Coalition member Kathy Konst asked if those who went learned anything about security at the port. Ferraro replied that they are instituting an x-ray scan for the containers. Lawson added that there is a collaboration with Hamilton on the arts related "Rust Belt Revival." She suggested that Arlene White of the Binational Tourism Alliance be a speaker at or member of the Regional Coalition, and noted that they are holding their annual conference in Buffalo on April 3-4.

Co-Chair Burmaster asked if the seaway could be an alternative to shipping goods by train between the two countries. Whalen replied that most boats are too big, and that the seaway is closed for two months in the winter in this area. Konst suggested that perhaps

we could put together a trade event to showcase all that we manufacture in the area.

A full report on Explore Buffalo Niagara 2007 will be given at the February 2008 general meeting. The next event will take place September 16-18, 2009.

The group then turned to the meeting's main topic, a Focus on Government Affairs.

Calamar President Kenneth Franasiak was introduced to speak about the "Golden Horseshoe" of Buffalo, Rochester, and Toronto. Franasiak is also the incoming president of the Niagara USA Chamber of Commerce. Calamar is a real estate company doing development, property management, and investment banking. They have offices in Wheatfield, New York City, Toronto, and Niagara-on-the-Lake.

Note: The majority of the presentation was based on a PowerPoint presentation which can be accessed at www.erie.gov/regionalcoalition in our "News" section on the right hand side of the main page. As such, the minutes below are primarily comments or questions not contained in the PowerPoint.

Franasiak noted that nationally a large percentage of CEOs will be retiring in the midst of a recession, and few will have obvious successors in place. The Federal Reserve Bank has convened a roundtable on succession planning to bring in a talent pool to help fill out the next generation of company heads. The Fed uses Western New York as a "guinea pig" because we are 15 years older than the national average.

Other interesting points about the demographics and characteristics of the Horseshoe:

- By 2015 Toronto will have an additional 2 million immigrants.
- 100 percent of Dreamworks employees were educated at Niagara College.
- The University of Waterloo is Microsoft's second largest recruitment college.
- Manufacturing is being wiped out in Ontario.
- There has been a massive migration of knowledge workers from Ontario to the west coast of Canada; these workers are being replaced by immigrants.

- The Prince of Dubai is investing \$5 billion into two Canadian ports (Halifax being one) in response to Congress blocking him from buying ports in the US.

The question Franasiak posed to the group is: How do we in Western New York benefit from all these changes in Southern Ontario? His observations included:

- Western New York is a population of growing poor and elderly. We have to deal with that.
- Outward migration or “brain drain” happens everywhere, but we don’t have corresponding inward migration.
- We need to embrace immigration; it’s what built this region in the first place, and it’s possible to get some of the immigration from Southern Ontario.

“Canada is our future,” Franasiak asserted. We have to create alliances with their companies and economic development agencies by fostering trust and being cooperative with them – we need to “leave our American flag at home.”

Kniazuk asked why, if these companies and the Canadian economy are so strong, would they want to help us. Franasiak replied that Canada is an extremely polite society. They feel they are a step behind and want to work with the US, but over time we’ve built up a high level of distrust. This can be overcome.

The Co-Chairs thanked Franasiak on behalf of the Coalition for this thought provoking presentation.

There was no old or new business.

Co-Chair Weinstein then delivered his “farewell address” to the group. As he is retiring from the Erie County Legislature, so too is he retiring from the Regional Coalition. He noted his vision ten years ago to create a bi-county organization heavy on planners to pursue collaborations and replace the defunct Erie Niagara Regional Planning Board. He urged the group to “go back to its roots” and continue to become the “premier” collaboration between Erie and Niagara Counties, and that we should be the ones to implement the Framework for Regional Growth.

Weinstein continued that hopefully a new Erie County co-chair and a new County Executive will bring increased participation from Erie County. In the future he’d like to see a one stop shop

comprised of the Coalition, Buffalo Niagara Enterprise, ECIDA, Niagara County Center for Economic Development, Empire State Development, and others. He believes that we have done a good job helping to create the tools for our economic development; the Regional Economic Development Database, e-permitting, the REDS, etc (some of which need a push).

Weinstein concluded by thanking all the members, Niagara County for being a consistent participant and for giving us a great push in sustaining the group over the life of the group, and Erie County for beginning again to give a little more. He also thanked Kniazuk for his work and for staying with the group through its leaner times. The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition, according to Weinstein, is the “best collaboration in the two counties.”

On behalf of the entire organization, Kniazuk thanked Weinstein for his vision and for being the driving – and sometimes only – force from Erie County. Co-Chair Burmaster said it was a pleasure working with Weinstein, and that the group wouldn’t be the same without him.

The next general meeting date was tentatively set for Friday, February 15 at 8:30 a.m. at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (thanks to Samuel Ferraro). The Co-Chairs thanked the group, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk
February 14, 2008