

NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

275 OAK ST. SUITE 150
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14203
PHONE: 716-856-6525 x121 FAX: 856-6754
E-MAIL: tkniazuk@ecidany.com
www.erie.gov/regionalcoalition

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MEMORANDUM

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Kathy Konst

From: Tourism & Culture Chair David Lacki

Re: August, 2008 Meeting

Date: October 24, 2008

The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met August 19, 2008 at the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (BNCVB). Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Bereson (proxy by Patrick Fagan), Casale, Curtis, Lawson, Mills, Percy, Rath, and White, as well as Marguerite Greco from Empire State Development.

New York State Music Fund:

Proceeds from The Big Easy in Buffalo project still need to be transferred to Music is Art to become part of their 2008 instrument donation drive, as agreed upon at the March subcommittee and May general meetings. Music is Art is adopting the project, making it one of their core programs. There will be a 2nd Annual Mardi Gras Jam, and The Big Easy in Buffalo is also becoming a radio show on WBFO 88.7 FM. The Regional Coalition will not have to provide or raise any funds for these projects, as they are being conducted through Music is Art.

Cultural Blueprint:

The Regional Coalition will work with the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County (a member agency) to coordinate the Western New York forum for a statewide "Cultural Blueprint" initiative. Following up on Empire State Development's Regional Blueprint process, they are teaming with the New York State Council on the Arts to write an additional blueprint focused on the arts. They are using a similar process, which includes holding a series of regional forums across the state.

Our event will take place Thursday, September 18. Representatives from NYSCA and ESD will be on hand to direct the process, with the Arts Council and the Coalition responsible for assembling the list of invitees, sending the invitations, and

coordinating the logistics of the day. We do not, however, have the ability to set the agenda for the meeting or affect much in the way of the content of the day – that's all the state agencies. Still, this offers an excellent opportunity to make sure that the tourism cluster, which we have identified as a growth area in our region, gets included in the state's plans. Marguerite Greco also noted that pots of money have been established by the state for projects in the other identified sectors, so this is an important process.

Tourism Infrastructure:

Following a roundtable with NYSCA there was some hope that our tourism infrastructure projects such as signage and transportation had found a potential funding source in the upstate revitalization fund. Through subsequent conversations with them it was unfortunately discovered that this is not the case. The subcommittee still believes these are important issues, but will not keep them as "front burner projects" due to lack of potential funding sources.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included moving the air travel study up to be a front burner project in the near future, the Boundary Waters and War of 1812 commemorative events, and megabus service between Buffalo and New York City.