

# NIAGARA ERIE REGIONAL COALITION

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Hon. Kathy Konst

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Tod A. Kniazuk

## MEMORANDUM

**To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Kathy Konst**

**From: Economic Development Chair James Allen**

**Re: December, 2008 Meeting**

**Date: December 12, 2008**

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The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Economic Development Subcommittee met December 2, 2008 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA). Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Allen, Burmaster, Cappellino, Ferraro, Gower, Morse (proxy by Rich Guarino), Murray (proxy by Dan Barry), Orsi (proxy by Marguerite Greco), and Sciandra.

### Small Business Assistance Website:

The Regional Coalition was approached by Jerry Turcotte of MicroBiz Buffalo about a small business assistance website they are developing. They heard about our proposal and wanted to know if we were interested in a collaboration. The subcommittee reviewed their draft proposal but reserved deciding on the collaboration until Mr. Turcotte could appear before the committee to better detail the proposal, its work plan, budget, and related items.

While there are similarities between our project and theirs, there are also seemingly some differences such as theirs being funded by the small business assistance agencies and allowing greater exposure for those who fund at a higher level. As the subcommittee asserted, a key to our project is that the best matches are put forward based on the user's search. We would need to make sure this would still be the case under the MicroBiz proposal.

The subcommittee also discussed the Entrepreneurs Services Network as a model for the small business assistance website.

It will also be necessary to make sure that things such as the two counties' micro lending programs are included, and that if possible we also try to get the users in touch with someone who can help them through the process. Basically, we need to make sure as much information as possible is present, but presented in such a way as to be understandable and easily navigable by the user of the site.

The subcommittee will invite Jerry Turcotte as well as some of our project's steering committee to a January meeting to examine the MicroBiz Buffalo proposal.

#### Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS)

The subcommittee wants to make sure that our existing efforts continue to move forward, and the REDS is chief among these. At this point the Buffalo Niagara Partnership has taken responsibility for the clusters (and perhaps the entire REDS) but not everyone knows the status or content of the work. Likewise, some of the clusters seem to be changing.

The goal of the REDS is to get all the relevant agencies working on the same priorities; therefore, they all need to know of and be involved in the continued evolution of the document.

The subcommittee will ask the Buffalo Niagara Partnership to present an update on the REDS at our January subcommittee meeting.

#### Framework for Regional Growth

The Framework is another core issue the subcommittee wants to remain at the forefront of our efforts. It was agreed that good work continues to be done on the implementation of the Framework such as Niagara County's comprehensive plan, the departments of Erie County government using Framework principles and continued work on an Erie County Planning Board, and the IDAs using the Framework in their determinations for aid.

The issue here seems to be one of disseminating the information. There was a very inclusive effort to get a cross section of stakeholders to adopt or accept the Framework, but since then there seems to be a lack of information getting out to these stakeholders. As a result there have been some misguided efforts that had the best intentions borne of the idea that there was a lack of movement on the Framework.

The subcommittee will therefore take up the questions – Who should be talking about the Framework? To whom? And how?

#### Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the air travel study (which is being led by the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee), and the upcoming "Straight Talk Seminar" being held on 1/24/09 (including the possibility of making this a regional event that includes Niagara County) .