

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

25 DELAWARE AVENUE, SEVENTH FLOOR

BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14202

PHONE: 716-858-8859 FAX: 716-858-8895

E-MAIL: kniazukt@erie.gov

## Co-Chairs:

Hon. Bradley Erck  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

## Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting March 1, 2002

## Members:

James Allen  
Robert Blanchard  
Daniel Boody  
Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. David Dale  
Hon. William Davignon  
Brian Eldridge  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Samuel Ferraro  
Hon. Samuel Granieri  
Hon. John Greenan  
Patrick Keyes  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Lawrence Meckler  
Hal Morse  
Laurence Rubin  
Hon. Mark Schroeder  
Kevin Schuler  
John Simon  
Hector Titus  
Peter Wendel

**Present:** Erck, Weinstein, Boody, Burmaster, Cusack, Dale, Davignon, Eldridge, Ellis, Ferraro, Granieri, Keyes, Meal, Meckler (proxy), Morse, Schroeder, Simon (proxy), Titus, Wendel, Rich, Rydelek (proxy), Sheffer

**Excused:** Lehman, McMahon, Rubin, Schuler, DeBenedetti

**Absent:** Allen, Greenan, Casale, Geiger

The meeting was called to order at 8:20 a.m. by new Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Bradley Erck and Barry Weinstein, MD. Returning members were welcomed back, and the following new members were introduced: Daniel Boody, Hon. Elise Cusack, Hon. David Dale, Hon. William Davignon, Hon. Wright Ellis, Hon. Samuel Granieri, Patrick Keyes, Lawrence Meckler, Hon. Mark Schroeder, and Hector Titus. Michael Casale and Prof. John Sheffer, II were welcomed as new ad-hoc members.

## Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Hon. Albert DeBenedetti  
Richard Geiger  
Luke Rich  
Stan Rydelek  
John Sheffer, II

Co-Chair Weinstein detailed past ENRP successes such as the produce quick-cool project and the Regional Economic Development Database (REDD). Co-Chairs Weinstein and Erck mentioned video arraignment, record keeping, electronic permitting, and regional planning as just some of the topics to be addressed this year by the group.

## Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of the December, 2001 meeting were approved.

ENRP Administrator Tod Kniazuk outlined the structure of the group. General meetings will occur every two months, with the four subcommittees meeting monthly. The Economic Development Subcommittee will be chaired by John Simon, Government Affairs by Hon. Peter McMahon, Tourism & Culture by Hon. John Greenan, and Transportation by Hal Morse. Meeting notices, agendas, and minutes will be delivered via e-mail.

The dates for the general meetings were set as follows:

MARCH 1	ERIE COUNTY
APRIL 26	NIAGARA COUNTY
JUNE 28	ERIE COUNTY
SEPTEMBER 27	NIAGARA COUNTY
DECEMBER 6	ERIE COUNTY

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro gave the group an update on power relicensing, a standing agenda item. Mr. Ferraro called relicensing “the single most important economic development issue” for the region. The Relicensing Consensus Committee (RCC) has a web site up, and subcommittees formed. All are welcomed to become involved. The goal is to have a settlement package in the New York State Power Corporation’s hands well in advance of the 2007 expiration date.

Another standing agenda item, sprawl, was covered by ENRP Member Hal Morse. An effort is underway to come up with a coordinated approach to “get where we want to be” in terms of regional planning. Mr. Ferraro added that he and ENRP Member Laurence Rubin are leading an effort to bring regional planning back to the two counties. A mission statement is currently being developed, followed by determining membership and goals for the effort. ENRP Member Peter Wendel restated his concern that the effort not be “top-down,” but rather be a grassroots effort that includes the municipalities right from the beginning. Mr. Ferraro responded that the supervisors’ associations have been involved, as have faster-growing towns in the region.

Under New Business, ENRP Ad Hoc Member Luke Rich notified the group that 17 megawatts of replacement power have become available from the hydropower allocations that are dispensed to businesses throughout the area. He mentioned that it was possible not all of the power would be absorbed in Western New York. A marketing plan is being put together to use the replacement power to attract manufacturing companies to our area.

Also under New Business, Mr. Rich told the group that portions of the waterfront Inner Harbor project are moving forward, including the relocation of the Naval and Servicemen’s Park. Two aspects of the project, however, are being re-bid by Empire State Development.

ENRP Member Clyde Burmaster asked Mr. Rich what funding Empire State Development will have in light of 9-11. Mr. Rich replied that the state will be funding ESD this year, but will be looking to infuse the organization with casino revenue in the future for new programs. The funding should be steady, although something needs to be done for training resources.

Mr. Kniazuk noted that media efforts for the group will be increased, but the comfort level of the meetings will not be compromised to do so.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member John Sheffer, II and Dr. Hugh Calkins (chair of the Geography Department at UB) presented an update on the Regional Economic Development Database (REDD), a major ENRP initiative. REDD is a shared base of economic development data presented professionally through a single gateway – the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE). It includes firm data, demographic data, infrastructure data, workforce data, and customized services. It was developed under a contract with the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, and is currently housed at UB.

Dr. Calkins noted that originally the REDD was intended to be available to the world, but the BNE asked UB to be careful so the information is coordinated and of good quality, and so that we know who is accessing the site. The site is being used to do customized mapping for the BNE, which it then sends out to businesses and site selectors to answer specific questions where you wouldn't be able to easily find a map. The minimum response time is 45 minutes, the average is one day, and the maximum is one week.

Prof. Sheffer addressed transition issues that need to be dealt with this year. The two counties and the BNE need to decide on the level of accessibility for the general public. From the beginning of the project, a goal was to transition the REDD out of UB to the BNE. It needs to be decided when this should happen, and the resulting set up for updating the site and for funding the project (Erie County and the ECIDA provided the funding for 2002, with UB and the BNE providing in-kind services). UB has a contract to house the site through the end of 2002. One staffing issue is that at UB grad students do a significant portion of the work; without them the cost of updating the site could go up.

Legislator Burmaster asked whether the other six counties of Western New York could be added to the REDD, as previously discussed. Prof. Sheffer replied that the firm portion of the site already includes all eight counties, but reinforced that the sponsors are Erie and Niagara Counties. The other six could certainly be approached to be included, and that that could be another transition issue.

Legislator Burmaster also asked if there were any similar sites like this in New York State. Prof. Sheffer noted that the quality of this site exceeds that of places like Charlotte, which are noted for their economic development efforts.

Mr. Kniazuk reinforced the issue of grad students in the maintenance of REDD. Prof. Sheffer added that it is “hard to beat the picture at UB,” as updating the REDD is labor intensive. The availability of grad students helps, as does the expertise of the professors at UB. From a budget and personnel picture, if the REDD is moved out of UB we need to calculate the costs early so they are not a surprise. If the site goes dormant and the data gets stale, the costs really go up, so we have to make provisions to keep the site running smoothly.

ENRP Member Mark Schroeder asked if the Buffalo Economic Renaissance Corporation and the various Chambers of Commerce are involved in the project. Prof. Sheffer replied that the BNE site where REDD is housed includes the city, and that city data is on the REDD. A BEREC representative is on the advisory committee. Direct data has not yet been solicited from the Chambers.

Legislator Weinstein thanked UB for its considerable in-kind services on this project, and thanked Prof. Sheffer and Dr. Calkins for all their work. He also noted his opinion that the REDD should go to the BNE to maintain a neutral site.

Legislator Weinstein also mentioned that he would like to see the UB Institute involved in our next project, electronic and standardized permitting. Mr. Ferraro noted that the Erie and Niagara County Planning Departments filed a joint application for state funding for a pilot project on this, but did not receive any funding. Both counties, however, still intend to pursue this. Prof. Sheffer added that UB was also involved in that state application, and that Andrew Eszak from the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning also asked UB to become involved. The Institute would indeed like to become involved in the project.

All were thanked for coming. The meeting was adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
April 22, 2002