

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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## Co-Chairs:

Hon. Bradley Erck  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

## Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting June 28, 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  
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, Allen, Blanchard, Boody, Cusack, Dale, Ellis, Ferraro, Greenan, Keyes, Lehman, McMahon, Meckler (proxy), Morse (proxy), Schroeder, Schuler, Simon, Titus, Geiger (proxy), Sheffer

**Excused:** Burmaster, Davignon, Eldridge, Granieri, Meal, Rubin, Wendel, DeBenedetti,

**Absent:** Casale, Rich, Rydelek

The meeting was called to order at 8:10 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Bradley Erck and Barry Weinstein, MD. Minutes of the April, 2002 meeting were approved.

## Ad Hoc:

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

## Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Subcommittee Chair John Simon presented the Economic Development Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with approval being granted for the ENRP to go on record as supporting the Regional Economic Development Database (REDD) remaining at the University at Buffalo under the guidance of the Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth. This was in response to the Erie County Department of Environment and Planning's position that the REDD be transitioned to the DEP. The Co-Chairs added that they support the REDD remaining at UB, with a funding commitment from both counties to keep it operational in 2003 and beyond.

Another topic mentioned in the Economic Development Subcommittee report was the KPMG study on economic development and its agencies. **Co-Chair Weinstein motioned to create a subcommittee of the ENRP to study the concept of a one-stop shop for economic development in the two counties;** either one facility or one for each county working closely together. The subcommittee should provide a draft recommendation to the ENRP Economic Development Subcommittee, then solicit public input. The group should have a final recommendation ready for the full ENRP by the end of the year. Co-Chair Erck added that the task will be a heavy lift, but that it is needed. After several members gave some background on the

current situation of economic development in the two counties, **the motion to create the subcommittee was approved.**

Subcommittee Chair Peter McMahon presented the Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with approval granted to ask the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise to send out information collected during the site readiness study to the appropriate municipalities.

Subcommittee Chair John Greenan presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed.

Interim Subcommittee Chair Tim Trabold presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed.

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk gave an update on the projects approved by the ENRP at the April general meeting. All projects have been completed.

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro gave an update on power relicensing. He noted that, in addition to the Relicensing Consensus Committee (RCC), there is another group still out there. The Niagara Power Coalition have been together nine years to address issues specific to host communities such as reparations. Some of their priorities are different from those of the RCC. They have been made one of the RCC's subcommittees, but may wish to detach and go it alone. The two groups will try to resolve this before the formal scoping process is advertised later this year. ENRP Member Kevin Schuler noted that they intervened on the St. Lawrence project, which could be a negative in that now other groups may have a precedent to intervene here. Ferraro added that they probably won't even get anything out of the intervention.

NFTA Director of Aviation William Vanacek gave a presentation on the NFTA's current plans and efforts at the Niagara Falls International Airport. The airport is open and operational, and some charters (though not many) do use it. Some areas that make sense to pursue are cargo and long haul charter operations. The NFTA is developing an RFP for a cargo operator, and has hired a group to do a market evaluation for cargo. They are also reaching out to scheduled carriers. Maintenance had been mentioned as well, but limited hangar space is a problem.

The NFTA is also in the process of hiring a dedicated business and operations manager for the Niagara Falls Airport after a nationwide search, and is working with the military to renew their joint use agreement. They will interview for the manager position in July, and hope to have someone in place by the end of August. Vanacek concluded by asserting that the

NFTA is open to all proposals for the airport, and is looking forward to seeing the NCIDA's upcoming proposal.

In response to a question from ENRP Member Hector Titus about differences between the two local airports, Vanacek noted that the NFIA has cheaper landing fees. It's also less congested and has good highway access. On the air base issue, Simon added that the air base is the second largest employer in Niagara County, and that while bases are closing throughout the country we need to work to keep ours open. In response to a question from ENRP Co-Chair Erck about renovations to the terminal, Vanacek stated that the issue is included in the RFP.

ENRP Member Patrick Keyes gave a presentation on next year's Art on Wheels effort, which will run from May to October. The theme of Art on Wheels is the wheel and transportation. This follow up to the successful Herd About Buffalo will also place art at various sites, but this time they will all be at attractions in Erie and Niagara Counties to encourage a potential "double hit."

The 40 or so pieces will be linked by an "arts trail." Passports will be available that include a map and information on the artists, artwork, and host sites. Another feature will be "arts cars" – literally, moving exhibits that will show up at various sites and festivals throughout the year. Like the Herd, there will be a fundraiser at the conclusion of the exhibition, although the desire is for the public arts trails to become permanent.

This all ties in with next year's designation of the region as the official festival site for the I Love NY campaign. There is a festival every weekend next summer. Ellis and Erck noted that the materials need to add festivals in Niagara County, as well as a listing for the NFCVB.

Co-Chair Erck gave an update on casino gaming. Representatives from the two counties are attending the Indian Gaming Summit. There are concerns about land taking by the Senecas around the casino sites – "checkerboard sovereignty."

Ferraro gave a report on our recent designation as an "All America City." Basically, we won. It is noteworthy that there were only 20 in our delegation, while the average was 200-300.

Ferraro also gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth. Niagara County is contributing \$50,000 to the effort. An RFQ for consultants will be sent out soon. The next meeting of the steering committee is tentatively set for July.

There was no old business. Under new business Co-Chair Weinstein told the group that Amherst Supervisor Susan Grelick is looking for a volunteer for the Erie-Niagara Regional Trail Committee. Trabold from the GBNRTC volunteered to represent ENRP. Schuler noted that Niagara County will soon begin its own Who Does What? effort.

The next meeting will take place September 27, 2002 (later changed to October 4) in Niagara County. The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
September 27, 2002