

**ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP**  
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH  
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO  
BECK HALL, 3435 MAIN ST.  
BUFFALO, NEW YORK 14214-3004  
PHONE: 716-829-3777 FAX: 716-829-3776  
E-MAIL: [tkniazuk@buffalo.edu](mailto:tkniazuk@buffalo.edu)  
[www.erie.gov/enrp](http://www.erie.gov/enrp)

Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster  
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Members:

James Allen  
Meredith Andreucci  
Hon. Vince Anello  
G. Michael Brown  
Drew Cerza  
Jody Clark  
Hon. Elise Cusack  
Hon. Albert DeBenedetti  
Tim Doolittle  
Brian Eldridge  
Hon. Wright Ellis  
Matthew Enstice  
Samuel Ferraro  
Richard Geiger  
Celeste Lawson  
Maria Lehman  
Hon. Peter McMahon  
Hon. Gerald Meal  
Hal Morse  
Hon. Sean O'Connor  
Dr. Gary Praetzel  
David Rosenwasser  
Laurence Rubin  
Diane Ruzala  
Laura St. Pierre  
Hon. Mark Schroeder  
Hon. Demone Smith  
Hector Titus  
Hon. Dennis Virtuoso  
Timothy Wanamaker  
Charles Webb  
Peter Wendel

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale  
Hon. George Holt, Jr.  
Hon. William Ross  
John Sheffer, II  
Lawrence Witul

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting  
March 26, 2004

**Present:** Burmaster, Weinstein, Andreucci, Brown, Cerza, Clark, Davignon, Eldridge, Ellis, Enstice, Ferraro, Lawson, Meal, Morse, Rosenwasser, Ruzala, St. Pierre, Schroeder, Titus, Virtuoso, Webb (proxy), Wendel, Ross, Witul

**Excused:** Allen, Cusack, McMahon, O'Connor, Praetzel, Holt, Sheffer

**Absent:** DeBenedetti, Doolittle, Geiger, Lehman, Rubin, Smith, Wanamaker, Casale

The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. The Co-Chairs welcomed all, and recognized the contribution of First Niagara Bank, the site of the meeting. New members Meredith Andreucci, G. Michael Brown, Drew Cerza, Jody Clark, Hon. Albert DeBenedetti, Matthew Enstice, Dr. Gary Praetzel, Diane Ruzala, Hon. Dennis Virtuoso, Timothy Wanamaker, Hon. George Holt, Jr., and Hon. William Ross were noted.

Minutes of the December, 2003 meeting were approved. ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk detailed information on the membership and subcommittee rosters, and on the meeting dates.

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth, [www.regionalframework.com](http://www.regionalframework.com) Over the past month 11 outreach sessions were held in the two counties. The feedback from these sessions will lead to a draft in early summer and a completed document in late summer 2004. Ferraro commented that it is great to see the two counties come together on this planning document. Weinstein asked about the economic development piece of the Framework in light of the recent issues with the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS), which was to be coordinated with the Framework. Ferraro replied that this is up to the

membership. There is a REDS meeting in early April, and the Buffalo Niagara Partnership is another facet of this.

Ferraro also gave an update on power relicensing, <http://niagara.nypa.gov> Approximately 30 studies have been commissioned, and to date 11 have been released. The group is on track to have an application and settlement package complete on or before August 2005. August 2007 is the deadline for relicensing. A schedule of upcoming meetings and copies of the reports can be found on the website.

As this was the first general meeting of the year and therefore there were no subcommittees since the last general meeting of 2003, updates were prepared for all of ENRP's major projects (please see <http://www.erie.gov/enrp/pdfs/ProjectUpdates042.pdf> for the text of these presentations; detailed below will be the summary of discussions based on the updates).

Kniazuk gave the Regional Economic Development Database (REDD) update (Economic Development Subcommittee). Weinstein noted that the Buffalo Niagara Enterprise continues to stress how important the REDD is to their work.

Kniazuk gave the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) update (Economic Development Subcommittee). Weinstein invited all to come to the April 2 REDS Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) meeting. He noted that the plan is to go back to the TAC for further input, then rewrite the draft. The REDS team will present the document to the ENRP at our May 21 general meeting.

ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro stated that Niagara County continues to reiterate the point that they have combined their planning department and IDA into a Center for Economic Development, thus creating their one-stop shop. They have new signage, advertising, and a website (including a virtual tour of every available site). They have also forged a relationship with the Niagara and Lockport IDAs. Weinstein offered congratulations on these accomplishments, and affirmed that Niagara County has "gotten the jump" on Erie County in terms of streamlining and improving their economic development efforts.

ENRP Member Gerald Meal noted that things are improving, as Western New York moved up from 47 to 23 on a list of best places for

businesses to locate. Ferraro agreed, based on a spike of interest and the number of projects at the IDA.

Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus gave the Small Business Development Project update (Economic Development Subcommittee). He reinforced the need for better and easier access for the consumer based on the 230 programs and 57 agencies found to be offering small business assistance in the two counties.

ENRP Member Wright Ellis gave the Electronic Permitting (Smart Permitting) update (Government Affairs Subcommittee), calling it the "shining star" of the subcommittee. He noted that Lewiston is now interested in this, and asserted that Niagara County should undertake a concerted effort to pursue e-permitting with their municipalities.

Kniazuk gave the Cultural Tourism Directions Signage and Tourist Transportation updates (both Tourism & Culture Subcommittee).

Subcommittee Chair David Rosenwasser gave the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative (BNCTI) update (Tourism & Culture Subcommittee). He noted that the last meeting was held six to eight weeks ago, and it is now in its final design phase. Discussion is centered on the topic of structure; possibly a freestanding organization housed at the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (BNCVB) with a board made up of stakeholders from both counties. There is even some thought of making this a bi-national effort, with consideration as to how we can blend in Canadian assets and organizations. We also need to find revenue streams. There must be personnel whose focus it is every day to implement this strategy, and according to Rosenwasser this is the most critical issue. The BNCVB and Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (NTCC) do not currently have such staff.

Burmester suggested making the BNCTI tri-national by including the Seneca Nation of Indians, noting that the casino plays a part in our economic development and tourism efforts. With that, Burmaster requested an update on the casino. ENRP Member G. Michael Brown reported that they opened 1,200 new parking spaces on December 31, 2003, and 1,200 more on March 20. They are now breaking ground on a spa-hotel on the east side of the site. Phase 1 will take 14 months, with phase 2 taking 10 more. The spa-hotel will give the casino the ability to cater to overnight guests. So far in 2004, there have been over 500,000 visitors per month, and 5.6 million in 2003. The key now is to find other things for them to do while here and add

to their length of stay. Toward that end, the casino is working with the City of Niagara Falls, the NTCC, and USA Niagara Development Corporation (all of whom are represented on ENRP).

ENRP Member Meredith Andreucci added that the casino creates a tremendous opportunity to fill out the tourist season to a full 12 months. It gives resources to the city to develop tourism – signage, parking, etc.

Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse gave the Public Transportation / Jobs Access update (Transportation Subcommittee). He added that emerging jobs are more service oriented and can't rely on traditional public transportation schedules. It's not a big problem yet, but we want to get ahead of the issue.

Morse gave the Shoreline Corridor MOU update (Transportation Subcommittee), calling it an intergovernmental success story. Signage can recognize a section's name, but also the whole; for instance, "Riverwalk – Part of the Shoreline Trail". Over half the municipalities have signed on so far. The project can also work to develop visibility and improve segments of the trail to fill it in. Rosenwasser asked how this blends in with the Greenway. Morse replied that the corridor is like a spine, but the greenway is wider. They are also looking to link both up with east-west routes and with Canada, which already has a very good trail system.

Under old and new business, Weinstein asked members to brainstorm and present their ideas at either the subcommittee or general meetings. Burmaster recognized that we have a "plate full of initiatives," but that we need small victories along the way. As such, he asked the members to think of both short- and long-term projects.

ENRP Member Peter Wendel mentioned that the updates show there are a tremendous number of projects underway. He called ENRP a forum for sharing ideas, an initiator or stimulus for projects, and a coordinator of projects.

Weinstein asked about the Grand Island bridge project, to which Morse noted that it is a part of the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council's work program that begins April 1.

Under brainstorming, Morse mentioned the lack of coordination of traffic signals across municipalities; Kniazuk brought up the federal Boating Infrastructure Grant (BIG) program; and Lawson noted the

Culture Zone legislation. All of these will be discussed in their appropriate subcommittees (the first two, Transportation; the latter, Tourism & Culture). Titus suggested we attempt to get more publicity for our efforts, perhaps through public access television.

ENRP Member Drew Cerza offered that, as a new member, it is "refreshing to see a proactive approach to regionalism," and called ENRP a "true form of regionalism" that concentrates not just on the expense side, but more importantly on growing revenues in the two counties.

The Co-Chairs thanked the group for their attendance and input, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk  
May 14, 2004