

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP
INSTITUTE FOR LOCAL GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL GROWTH
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Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting
July 30, 2004

Members:

James Allen
Meredith Andreucci
Hon. Vince Anello
G. Michael Brown
Drew Cerza
Jody Clark
Hon. Elise Cusack
Hon. William Davignon
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
Timothy Wanamaker
Charles Webb
Peter Wendel

Present: Burmaster, Weinstein, Allen, Cerza, Clark, Davignon, Doolittle, Lehman, Meal, Morse, Rosenwasser, Titus, Webb, Casale, Ross, Witul

Excused: Andreucci, Anello, Cusack, Ellis, Ferraro, McMahon, Praetzel, Ruzala, Schroeder, Wendel, Holt, Sheffer

Absent: Brown, DeBenedetti, Enstice, Geiger, Lawson, O'Connor, Rubin, St. Pierre, Smith, Wanamaker

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster and Barry Weinstein, MD. The Co-Chairs welcomed returning member Niagara County 9th District Legislator William Davignon. The co-chairs also thanked departing members Brian Eldridge (a founding member) and Prof. John Sheffer, II and wished them well in their future endeavors.

Minutes of the May, 2004 meeting were approved.

Ad Hoc:

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

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk detailed updates to the ENRP webpage www.erie.gov/enrp especially noting the new links page. Kniazuk asked the group to double-check their information, as well as to submit any additions to the "Other Important Links" section.

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Subcommittee Chair Hector Titus presented the Economic Development Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed. Titus noted that at the first meeting of the Small Business Assistance Steering Committee (July 26) the group endorsed ENRP's recommendations for the project. He added that the group seems very enthusiastic about the project.

ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk presented the Government Affairs Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed.

Subcommittee Chair David Rosenwasser presented the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with **approval granted to work with the Arts Council in Buffalo and Erie County, the Buffalo Niagara Convention and Visitors Bureau and the Niagara Tourism and Convention Corporation toward the goal of encouraging the cultural community to act as guest speakers at the BNCVB and NTCC's front line training sessions** (the is in lieu of developing a forum with a cross section of hotel properties to find out what they need to better implement front line training for tourism that was previously approved).

Subcommittee Chair Hal Morse presented the Transportation Subcommittee report. The report was received and filed, with **approval granted to invite representatives from the Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority to be the guest speakers at the October 1 general meeting to give an update on efforts at the Niagara Falls International Airport, and for the NFTA to receive updates from ENRP on efforts such as the Regional Economic Development Strategy, Framework for Regional Growth, and the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative and how the NFIA fits into them.**

Approval was also granted for ENRP to deliver testimony to the New York State Department of Transportation at their August 3 meeting regarding NYSDOT's restructuring and transportation priorities. That testimony was presented and approved by the group following discussion. Jo Nasoff (ECIDA) asked if these forums were essentially to build support for another bond issue. Morse replied that this was not the case. ENRP Member Maria Lehman added that the purpose is for NYSDOT to look at long-term policy and planning.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member Michael Casale gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth, www.regionalframework.com The expectation is to have a finished product by late fall of this year.

Casale also gave an update on power relicensing, <http://niagara.nypa.gov> The studies continue to come out. The formal stakeholders sessions where negotiations begin start August 10.

ENRP Members James Allen and Charles Webb gave an update on the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) and on the ECIDA cluster analysis. Allen reviewed the three portions of the

strategy – the context (new economy), cluster analysis, and implementation (tying it all together). The context is largely written. ECIDA has taken up the responsibility of providing the cluster analysis through an outside contract. The UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth will then work to sew together the context and cluster pieces into the third section.

Allen continued that a previous draft of the REDS did identify some clusters, but that ECIDA's work would confirm or revise them. That cluster analysis has not yet begun. Allen noted that the project is already seven months behind schedule and that the piece that's been done has been done for months. He said he would hope that efforts could be marshaled to have the REDS done by the end of this year, but that is largely dependent on the ECIDA's piece being completed. **ENRP voted to encourage all parties to strive toward the goal of having a completed document by the end of this year.**

Webb detailed the cluster analysis. It will focus on developing some greater detail on the previously identified clusters, but also to determine which ones should first be pursued and rank the runners-up. That runners-up list would take into account the economic balance in the two counties (for instance the importance of agri-business to Niagara County).

The analysis will work to "fill in the flesh" of the clusters through research, aggregation, and interviews. Through this process, a data set will be developed and our clusters will be compared to other regions that are stronger in those clusters. Then, the analysis will develop a target list of prospective businesses. ECIDA, Webb said, is already beginning to do the work and schedule interviews for the consulting team.

According to Webb, the reason the work was slowed was due to financial issues at the ECIDA. The funds budgeted for the consultant were diverted due to expenses outpacing revenues last year. This year they waited until mid-year to make sure they could appropriate the funds without any budgetary problems. They can, and they are.

Erie County Deputy County Executive Carl Calabrese gave a presentation on homeland security, detailing a handout entitled "Erie County, New York Readiness and Response Planning Team." The mission listed on the handout is, "To design and implement plans which train, equip, and position the emergency response Agencies and

personnel, as well as the Citizens of Erie County and the western New York region, in order to effectively respond to any natural or man-made disaster.”

The handout provided an organizational chart that includes five main areas: Public Information (headed by Calabrese), Public Health (headed by Dr. Anthony Billitier and Dr. William Dice), Emergency Services (headed by Mike Walters and Janet Vogtli), Infrastructure Protection (headed by ENRP Member Maria Lehman and Gerald Sentz), and Law Enforcement (headed by Kevin Comerford and Richard Donovan).

Calabrese explained that first responders are used to collaborating, which is important as we can't duplicate services or be uncoordinated in the face of a limited pool of resources. It is difficult to determine how much time and money to spend to prepare for something that hopefully will never happen, but if it does it could be “random, bloody, and devastating.”

First responders are already trained for other emergencies, so this program is designed to add another layer to their training.

Calabrese highlighted some features of the organizational chart such as the Regional Public Safety Building. Based on that building, Erie County has asked federal officials to consider us as a hub for training in the Northeast.

He noted improved communication between agencies, but also said that radios don't currently talk to each other. Remedying this comes with a large price tag – over \$54 million. A 10-county coalition is lobbying to secure unused funds from the state surcharge on cell phones. They received this for two years, but now it is up for reauthorization and the coalition hopes to make it permanent. Erie County received \$2 million in those two years, which in turn leveraged a \$6 million federal grant. New York is also rebuilding its system, and Erie County is working to make Western New York a pilot region, which would cut that \$54 million bill in half.

Other highlights include training in high schools, an eight county inoculation plan, and being one of only four chosen to receive a FEMA Integrated Emergency Management course. A quarterly newsletter is published; ENRP members will be added to the mailing list.

Phase II of the plan involves completion of the Public Safety Campus in the next two years, building an outdoor training facility jointly with Niagara County and the NFTA at the Niagara Falls International Airport, building a Regional Public Health / Medical Command Post, and executing a "major step-up" in public awareness and communication over the next year. On that point, Calabrese would like to see someone in every school and workplace trained to a high level. Also, the federal government will be designating 13 Centers of Excellence for training. Calabrese wants to apply for this in cooperation with UB, as no other community had linked with a college.

ENRP Member Jody Clark asked if the Seneca Nation is involved in these efforts. Calabrese replied that while they are not yet involved in the outreach efforts, they are represented on all committees.

ENRP Member William Davignon suggested including volunteer fire companies in the FEMA training. Calabrese noted that they are met with regularly.

Calabrese then detailed the situation with the Urban Area Security Initiative. Erie County attempted to partner with Niagara County, but the federal government did not include Niagara as the federal formula is based on population. Erie has supported Niagara County's efforts to have that law changed to either make them equal partners or their own area due to the many possible targets in that county – from the international bridges to the power plant. Nevertheless, Niagara County has been at the table and have identified their needs. So far they have received \$266,000. Co-Chair Burmaster answered that Niagara County didn't understand their full range of needs until after they saw Erie County's list, but that they do appreciate the support and collaboration.

There was no old or new business.

The Co-Chairs thanked the group for their attendance and input, and the meeting was adjourned at 10:05 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk
September 24, 2004