

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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## MEMORANDUM

**To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD**

**From: Tourism & Culture Chair David Rosenwasser**

**Re: March, 2006 Meeting**

**Date: March 31, 2006**

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The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met March 16, 2006 at the Niagara Tourism & Convention Corporation (NTCC). Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Rosenwasser, Casale, Geiger (proxy), Lawson, and O'Connor.

### Seneca Casinos:

NTCC continued its outreach efforts toward the Seneca Niagara Casino Corporation. Most recently, NTCC's ad agency worked up a full campaign that was presented to the Senecas. They were asked for \$300,000 annually for their hotel to be prominently featured by the NTCC and "pushed to the front of the line." This included the Senecas having veto rights on which markets would reach. Ultimately, the proposal would need to be ratified by the Seneca Tribal Council, but first proposals are taken to President Barry Snyder. The word is that if he doesn't like a proposal, it's basically done. NTCC has yet to hear back from the Senecas, and so the casino's total investment with NTCC is limited to the ads they purchase in NTCC's publications. Subcommittee members Casale and O'Connor reaffirmed the Senecas' "closed door policy."

ENRP Administrator Tod Kniazuk noted that one of the few outside partnerships the Senecas have is with the Niagara University Hospitality Training and Research Center, which uses federal Workforce Investment Act funding to train Senecas for jobs at the casinos and hotel. Casale replied that there may be issues with federal dollars being used to train Natives.

Rosenwasser noted that in other communities there can be a harmonious relationship with a Native casino, and likewise there can be absolutely no relationship. He added that his impression is that the economic impact of the Seneca Niagara Casino is less than is

thought, especially considering the drain on resources or other entertainment options.

The Seneca golf course was also discussed, including what New York State laws would apply to shared employees between the casino or hotel and the course, which is not on sovereign land. Rosenwasser asserted that government officials will need to “hold their (the Senecas) feet to the fire” during the golf course process.

#### Tourism Signage:

The Transportation Subcommittee took ownership of the tourism signage issue to explore bundling the three distinct efforts together for possible state funding. The downtown Niagara Falls project is already funded and moving forward, and the Greenway Commission has been established and will deal with Greenway signage. That leaves the Buffalo cultural tourism signage project, which was referred back to the Tourism & Culture Subcommittee. It was noted, however, that the Government Affairs Subcommittee is planning to meet with Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, and can include this project as part of its presentation.

The subcommittee again discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Niagara Falls approach, including the fact that the high cost of the design will make it a challenge to duplicate for the entire city, let alone the region. Also, no money was set aside for maintenance, and already there has been some vandalism.

#### Arts in Economic Prosperity Project:

Subcommittee member Celeste Lawson proposed a new project for ENRP, in partnership with the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County, Americans for the Arts, and Americorps. The project is participation in “Arts in Economic Prosperity II”, a national economic impact analysis of cultural organizations.

Americans for the Arts is a national organization, and their professional economists have designed the study and the materials to be used. The organizations will be surveyed, as will a sampling of their audiences. The local component requires the assembly of a database of the organizations, the audience surveying, and follow-up with organizations based on their response to the survey.

Lawson proposed that ENRP staff act as a point person for the effort, and that the subcommittee and ENRP act as a steering committee. Americorps is providing funding as well as additional manpower. The effort will last until April, 2007 and the report will be released later that year. The scope of our effort is Niagara and Erie Counties. Normally there is a \$6,500 cost per county to participate, but Americans for the Arts has waived the fee for us.

Kniazuk noted that this is an economic development project, and one that ties in well with the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) which identifies tourism as one of our clusters.

**The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Tourism & Culture Subcommittee recommends that ENRP partner with the Arts Council in Buffalo & Erie County, Americans for the Arts, and Americorps to staff and direct Erie and Niagara County participation in the Arts in Economic Prosperity II project.**

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the impact on tourism of the border passport requirement.