

MEMORANDUM

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Edward Rath III

From: Economic Development Chair Samuel Ferraro

Re: October & November, 2010 Meetings

Date: December 3, 2010

Co-Chairs

Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Edward Rath III

Members

James Allen
Clinton Brown
John Cappellino
Dr. Deborah Curtis
Hon. Paul Dyster
Hon. Wright Ellis
Samuel Ferraro
Dottie Gallagher-Cohen
Hon. David Godfrey
Hon. Kevin Hardwick
Kathy Konst
David Lacki
Hon. Peter McMahon
Hon. Barbara Miller-Williams
Hal Morse
Christina Orsi
John Percy
Hon. Phillip "Russ" Rizzo
Hon. William Ross
Salvatore Sciandra
Peter Wendel
Hon. Maria Whyte

Ad Hoc

Michael Casale
Matthew Enstice
Darren Kempner
Melinda Rath Sanderson
Lawrence Witul

Executive Director

Tod A. Kniazuk

The Niagara Erie Regional Coalition Economic Development Subcommittee met October 12, 2010 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development and November 9, 2010 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency. Present for the October meeting were subcommittee members Ferraro, Burmaster, Ellis, Sciandra and Wendel. Present for the November meeting were subcommittee members Ferraro, Brown, Cappellino, Ellis, Lacki, Morse, Orsi, Percy and Sciandra.

Goals & Strategy:

The subcommittee discussed the overall goals it wants to accomplish and what issues on which it wants to focus. It was also noted that tourism & culture issues are now placed in the Economic Development Subcommittee and will need to be given time and attention.

Low Cost Power:

Currently, the allocation of low cost power to the region is approved on an annual basis, making it difficult for the businesses receiving this benefit to plan their future, and making it a less attractive benefit than it should be. The subcommittee decided that approaching the new state administration about making low cost power permanent will be a priority for the group. Last year both the governor and Senate were on board, but the Assembly did not pass the bill.

The question became just when the new administration should be approached. Subcommittee member Christina Orsi suggested that perhaps Governor-elect Cuomo could be successful in getting the Assembly to act on this matter, but that we should wait for him to appoint his commissioner of Energy.

As soon as that appointment is made, however, we should act. The group should also talk to the Assembly's chair of their energy committee and work with Empire State Development, for whom this will also be a priority. Additional partners could include the New York State Business Council and the group of IDAs working together regionally.

Niagara Falls International Airport:

The NFIA's importance to the region was an early effort of the Regional Coalition, and the subcommittee continues to monitor its progress. Additional low cost carriers are locating at the airport, and more are considering locating there. This is because of low rents and many potential customers, but also because of incentives to do so.

A marketing committee has been formed to help secure additional flight options and the people to take those flights. To that end, the committee is looking to build a fund to help market and support airlines willing to locate at the NFIA. They are also working to develop packages with Buffalo, Niagara Falls, Ontario and others to have incoming travelers extend their stay. The primary goal is to attract inbound passengers, though of course departing passengers are desired as well.

Subcommittee member Sal Sciandra asked if perhaps a travel agent could be brought in to help develop these packages. Subcommittee member John Percy replied that once the packages are developed they're being taken to targeted communities and shopped there to attract visitors.

On the topic of gaining funds for this work, Regional Coalition Executive Director Tod Kniazuk suggested using area cultural attractions as a conduit for potential grant funding by making them part of the packages and therefore a recipient of expanded capacity under the program.

The subcommittee will continue to look for places where it can work to benefit the NFIA's efforts.

Preservation Conference:

Following the presentation at the September general meeting about the upcoming National Preservation Conference, the subcommittee considered where it could be of use. It was decided that the Regional Coalition could act as a facilitator between the conference organizers and local cultural organizations, with the idea that perhaps some programming could be developed targeted at the conference attendees. Kniazuk was charged with executing this idea.

Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit

Subcommittee member Clinton Brown pointed out the potential of the state's new historic rehabilitation tax credit to the area, citing the example of the Hotel Lafayette – a project that hinged on the passage of the credit to make it feasible. Residents can also receive up to a 20 percent credit for rehabilitating historic homes.

Kniazuk noted that the likely areas in which this credit could be most widely used seem to match up well to the principles of the Framework for Regional Growth, and suggested that the credit be integrated into the Framework's message. Subcommittee Chair Ferraro stated that Brown should be invited to speak at the next meeting of the Framework steering committee.

GBNRTC Freight Study:

The final recommendations of the freight study will be presented to the Greater Buffalo Niagara Regional Transportation Council Policy Committee on December 10. The subcommittee recommends that we invite GBNRTC to present the findings at a future NERC meeting, and that we identify some elements of the study on which we can work.

Niagara Falls Airbase:

While there is no immediate threat to the Niagara Falls Airbase, the subcommittee thinks it is nonetheless a good idea to keep the item on the agenda and be ready for action if the need should arise. In the meantime, it was recommended that we begin to include the airbase when we speak of important businesses or industries in the region in order to properly convey its significance and keep it on the radar.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the auto industry group, the "Jump Start" program, the lack of Niagara County attractions invited to participate in the Inner Harbor focus groups, and the fact that manufacturing dollars are up nationally.