

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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MEMORANDUM

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

From: Government Affairs Chair Peter McMahon

Re: June, August, September, November, & December 2006 Meetings

Date: December 8, 2006

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Government Affairs Subcommittee met June 22, 2006 at the Erie County Industrial Development Agency (ECIDA), August 1, 2006 at the Niagara County Center for Economic Development (NCCED), September 25, 2006 at the ECIDA. November 8, 2006 at the NCCED, and December 1, 2006 at the ECIDA. Present for the June meeting was subcommittee member Ellis, as well as ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro, ENRP Ad Hoc Member Michael Casale, and Buffalo Niagara Enterprise (BNE) Director of Business Development Daniel Barry. Present for the August meeting were subcommittee members McMahon, Ellis, and Weinstein, as well as ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro, ENRP Ad Hoc Members Michael Casale and Lawrence Witul, ECIDA Executive Director Charles Webb, and Buffalo Niagara Enterprise CEO Thomas Kucharski. Present for the September meeting were subcommittee members McMahon, Ellis, Lewis, and Weinstein, as well as ENRP Ad Hoc Member Casale. Present for the November meeting were subcommittee members Anello, Ellis, St. Pierre Smith, and Weinstein, as well as ENRP Member Jo Nasoff and ENRP Ad Hoc Member Casale. Present for the December meeting were subcommittee members Allen and Enstice (proxy), as well as ENRP Ad Hoc Member Casale.

Economic Development Forum:

Following revision of the presentations at the June meeting and a run-through at the August meeting, the Local Governments Economic Development Forums took place on August 24 in Erie County and August 29 in Niagara County.

The Erie County presentation was part of the monthly Erie County Association of Local Governments meeting. Present were more than 40 local supervisors, mayors, and council members. Due

to space constraints, no audio-visual component was used. Rather, Weinstein, Kucharski, Webb, and Allen gave the presentation to the group. Handouts with contact information were also passed out.

The Niagara County presentation took place as a stand alone event at the Niagara County Community College. Present were representatives from six municipalities, the county planning board, and the county legislature. Again, no audio-visual was used, this time due to technical difficulties. Those present heard from Ferraro, Casale, Witul, Kucharski, and Kniazuk. The presentation was recorded and replayed on LCTV. We also have a dvd of the event. Handouts were provided, and a lengthy question and answer period ensued.

The subcommittee expressed its gratitude to all those who helped plan and execute the forums, as well as to all those in attendance. Feedback received at both was positive, and the information received by the municipalities was deemed very helpful.

At the September meeting, the subcommittee discussed possible follow-up steps to the forums. It was suggested that perhaps the subcommittee could work to promote the New York State SiteFinder by sending a letter and template to municipalities asking them to work with realtors to submit commercial properties for sale. It was noted that when an outside company is looking for land, they only look at sites that are on SiteFinder, and that realtors would not lose their commissions by listing their properties on the site. Another suggestion was to ask BNE to create a profile of what inquiries we haven't been able to meet so as to compare what's needed to what's currently available. This information could also be shared with the municipalities. Finally, when BNE does an e-mail blast to the economic development community looking for a site, could municipalities be included in that e-mail?

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Government Affairs Subcommittee is seeking feedback from the general membership on the concept of the aforementioned items.

Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS):

The subcommittee has continued its pursuit of the completion and release of the REDS. Weinstein, Allen, Casale, Lewis, and McMahon met on June 30 with University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth (ILGRG) Director Dr. Kathryn Foster on the subject. Foster gave a presentation to the group and left us with four questions – Should the presentation be “taken on the road”; what will be the geographic area for the REDS; which clusters should be included, who decides this, and how is it decided;

and who “owns” the effort (who will be responsible for moving all this forward)?

A follow-up meeting was held on August 10 to discuss these questions. In attendance were Weinstein, Allen, Casale, Ellis, McMahon, Nasoff, St. Pierre Smith, and Witul. On the ownership question, it was decided that ENRP would ask the ECIDA to “release” the document to us; ECIDA was the original signatory with the ILGRG for the project. Weinstein met later that day with Webb and Webb agreed to contact Foster and release the document to ENRP. It was mentioned that the ECIDA may have up to \$20,000 left for the project, but Webb did not commit that money to Weinstein at their meeting. On geography, it was recommended that it remain Erie and Niagara Counties, but to keep a regional context.

The group agreed that more work needs to be done on the clusters. Life science is the furthest along; the cluster itself did the work using PhD level students. Tourism is currently being developed at Niagara University through a grant from the Oishei Foundation as a part of what used to be known as the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative. Back office is also fairly complete. Advanced manufacturing and logistics are the least done, although the GBNRTC is about to commence a year-long freight study that could serve as the backbone of logistics. A sixth cluster – food processing/agriculture – could be added based on a study being conducted by the BNE.

Use of PhD students with supervision from those in the clusters would be ideal, but does depend on money being available (though not much). The ILGRG could be used to oversee the cluster work. ENRP would coordinate the entire effort, including deciding which clusters to include. Also, National Grid and LISK were identified as potential funders. Laura St. Pierre Smith is working on the National Grid request and should have something to report at the December 8 general meeting.

Further discussion refined the work needed to be done as well as the resources needed to accomplish this. Approximately \$24,000 would be needed to complete the cluster work. A similar amount would be requested to update and release the context piece.

Two schools of thought emerged at the meetings. One is to update and release the context (new economy) piece while work is ongoing on the clusters. They would be fit into the document as they are done (some will be done within a few months, others will take at least a year). The other idea is to complete all aspects of the document before it is released (but only if there is rapid movement on all the clusters). In both cases, following the decision on a course of action team leaders would be identified for each cluster

and an implementation strategy and schedule would need to be determined.

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Government Affairs Subcommittee requests that time be set aside at the December 8 general meeting for the group to discuss the REDS and decide on a course of action.

Meeting with Mayor Brown:

This item has been tabled following the recommendation by ENRP Member Timothy Wanamaker that we first meet with staff from the City of Buffalo. That meeting will be arranged.

Census Update:

The subcommittee was reminded that in the last census the region lost a congressional seat due to the decrease in population of just 50,000 people. That underscores the importance of gaining an accurate count. Between this fall and spring of 2007 municipalities will receive a letter to update their census contacts. This is the Local Update of Census Addresses (LUCA) program. All municipalities are urged to respond to this letter in a timely fashion. The Niagara County LUCA meeting took place on October 19 and the Erie County meeting occurred on October 20. Please contact Michael Casale for further information on this topic.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed include the recently completed vacant properties study for Buffalo, Cheektowaga, Amherst, and the Town of Tonawanda, as well as charter revisions in Erie County.