

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

www.erie.gov/enrp

Co-Chairs:

Hon. Sean O'Connor
Hon. Barry Weinstein, MD

Members:

James Allen
Robert Blanchard
Daniel Boody
Hon. Clyde Burmaster
Hon. Elise Cusack
Hon. William Davignon
Brian Eldridge
Hon. Wright Ellis
Samuel Ferraro
Hon. Judith Fisher
Hon. Samuel Granieri
Hon. Dale Larson
Celeste Lawson
Maria Lehman
Hon. Peter McMahon
Hon. Gerald Meal
Lawrence Meckler
Hal Morse
Jo Nasoff
Laura Roberts
Laurence Rubin
Hon. Mark Schroeder
Hon. Demone Smith
Hector Titus
Peter Wendel
Lawrence Witul

Ad Hoc:

Michael Casale
Tim Doolittle
Richard Geiger
Stan Rydelek
John Sheffer, II

Administrator:

Tod A. Kniazuk

Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting
March 7, 2003

Present: O'Connor, Weinstein, Allen, Blanchard, Davignon, Eldridge,
Ellis, Ferraro, Lawson, McMahon, Morse, Nasoff, Roberts,
Rubin, Simon (proxy), Wendel, Doolittle, Geiger (proxy)

Excused: Meckler, Schroeder, Titus, Sheffer

Absent: Boody, Burmaster, Cusack, Fisher, Granieri, Larson, Lehman,
Meal, Smith, Casale, Rydelek

The meeting was called to order at 8:40 a.m. by Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Co-Chairs Sean O'Connor and Barry Weinstein, MD.

New members Hon. Judith Fisher (EC Legislature), Hon. Dale Larson (EC Legislature), Celeste Lawson (Arts Council in Buffalo & EC), Jo Nasoff (ECIDA), Laura Roberts (Buffalo Niagara Partnership), and Hon. Demone Smith (EC Legislature) were welcomed. New ad hoc member Tim Doolittle (Empire State Development) was also welcomed.

The Co-Chairs announced that the University at Buffalo Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth has been contracted to provide administration of the Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership. Former EC Legislature majority staffer and ENRP administrator Tod A. Kniazuk was hired by the UB Institute (under a grant from the EC Legislature) to continue administration of the group.

Minutes of the December, 2002 meeting were approved. ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk presented the subcommittee assignments and subcommittee chairs: Economic Development, John Simon; Government Affairs, Hon. Peter McMahon; Tourism & Culture, Robert Blanchard; and Transportation, Hal Morse. Kniazuk also thanked the group for its support in choosing him to continue administration of ENRP, and especially thanked Weinstein, the EC Legislature majority caucus, and Institute Director John Sheffer for facilitating the transfer to UB. He also noted that membership information, past minutes and subcommittee reports, current agendas,

meeting dates, and other useful information can now be found at ENRP's website, www.erie.gov/enrp

Mr. Joseph Stefko, PhD, of the Center for Governmental Research gave a presentation on the recently released Bi-National Economic Development Roundtable final report. The Roundtable was formed in 2001 with around 26-27 private and public sector members from Monroe, Erie, and Niagara Counties, as well as two provinces in Southern Ontario. The group met every three months to discuss three main issues – Knowledge Industries (colleges), Infrastructure Network, and Institutional Capacity (formal bodies that take a bi-national perspective). The initiative has arrived at the implementation phase.

On the topic of Knowledge Industries the Roundtable did an inventory, finding more than 60 institutions enrolling more than 300,000 students. The question was posed; How can we foster partnerships and help facilitate close working relationships with the private sector? The answer is to create a formal network, form an annual “knowledge summit meeting” (the first of these was held last September), expand the “smart catalog” (an interactive database with key word identification, research, and training programs), mitigate restrictive visa arrangements, and enhance fiber optic connectiveness. In addition, the Roundtable identified an implementation partner list on this subject.

On the topic of Infrastructure the central concern was the need to move toward on time delivery of product. To that end, capacity issues must be resolved, and we have to capitalize on our strengths. The Roundtable concluded that we should explore the creation of a regional agency to create a plan of the whole.

On the topic of Institutional Capacity, the question was asked; What seeds need to be planted to create bi-national institutional capacity? The answer is to network chambers of commerce (possibly with a goal of one bi-national chamber), sustain the Bi-National Leaders Forum, bring together organizations that bring research and training advances to the business sector, and to develop attraction marketing that sells the entire region.

ENRP Member Laurence Rubin noted that “Niagara Region” is more than just words. We are the second largest trade crossing between the United States and Canada. We also have the second largest concentration of auto manufacturing, and possess strength of population and services. He added that we need to build on the fact that we already operate as a regional economy to some extent. Some areas of opportunity are tourism and academics. We should be doing joint academic, tourism, and land use planning.

ENRP Co-Chair O'Connor asked if one of the recommendations was to merge the Peace Bridge and Niagara Bridge Commissions, and also the various chambers of commerce. Stefko replied that there is an interest in having a chamber that could do bi-national efforts. The first step is to work with the existing chambers, and then to eventually fill the institutional void. Rubin added that the two bridge authorities need to work together to foster better crossing and to address transportation issues; if that can't be done the maybe we should move on to "the next step." Rubin continued that the bridge authorities need a broader mandate, as they don't presently deal with railroad bridges or have a seat on the GBNRTC.

ENRP Member Peter Wendel asked if there was any talk at the Roundtable about Route 531, calling the effort "barely a flame." ENRP Member Samuel Ferraro answered that "we want to keep that flame lit," but have not yet fully addressed the issue. Some advocacy groups have looked at it, but no transportation people.

ENRP Member James Allen gave an update on the Economic Development Working Group (EDWG)/One Stop Shop. That effort found that before you create a structure, you need a strategy. To that end, the Regional Economic Development Strategy (REDS) initiative was born. Allen is the project manager for the effort, and it is being housed at the UB Institute, with support from the ECIDA and AIDA. For the last several weeks, REDS has been coordinating with other projects such as the Framework for Regional Growth, the One Stop Shop report, and Buffalo-Niagara NOW (BNP).

The four steps of REDS are creating a vision, analysis of current efforts, development of a strategy for change, and the addressing of the governance issue. The timeframe will see a Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, and Threats (SWOT) analysis done by June, using a Technical Advisory Group to assist in the effort. The vision statement from the EDWG report will be used as a basis for the effort. By August a draft strategy will be produced, which will then be taken to a broad stakeholders group and the general public for comment, questions, and revisions. By 1/1/04 the final strategy will be produced and implementation efforts will commence. ENRP Ad Hoc Member Sheffer and ENRP Administrator are also working on this initiative through the Institute.

ENRP Member Jo Nasoff asked if outside consultants will be used for the REDS. No, according to Allen, although we will be working with other initiatives and their consultants. ENRP Member Rubin added that there is a clear relationship between the Framework and the REDS. One of the first steps of the Framework is an economic development strategy, although the Framework's definition of the strategy is much narrower than the Institute's definition. Hopefully, Rubin said, the Institute will lead the Framework on this. Allen agreed.

ENRP Member Ferraro asked about the funding for the REDS. Allen replied that the ECIDA approved \$200,000 for two years. The AIDA is “forgiving” time, and the Institute is providing staff and assistance. A scope of services has been set up.

Ferraro stated that he is concerned that there are two very important initiatives underway, and that we need to be clear on the overall objectives and missions of the Framework and the REDS. We need written mission statements. There have been public announcements of both efforts, and we’ll be canvassing the same stakeholders for both, which can lead to confusion. On the Framework, some think it’s a regional land use plan. Allen totally agreed with Ferraro, adding that the Framework has a mission statement. The REDS will have one as well, and the relationship between the two will also be defined in writing.

Rubin questioned Allen as to his agreeing with both him and Ferraro when they said opposite things. Rubin continued that both efforts will start from the same point – the SWOT analysis – then diverge a bit in their focus and eventually come together again at the end of the efforts.

ENRP Co-Chair Weinstein noted that the EDWG report was well received, and resulted in the two counties, the BNP, the UB Institute, and the ECIDA coming to an agreement for development of the strategy. The expectation is a report to ENRP at our December meeting. He continued that he sees the one stop shop effort coming back into play toward the end of the effort. As to how the shop looks (one for both county or one for each county but very well coordinated), either way is fine.

Wendel noted that he feels that some in Niagara County are being very self-centered, and that some are saying that we (NC) are giving away our power to Erie County. ENRP Member Wright Ellis asked if we will see any follow-up to discussions on coordination of the two efforts. Kniazuk replied that there will be a work product.

ENRP Member Ferraro gave an update on power relicensing. The stakeholders have met, and a facilitator has been hired. There have been 10 meetings so far, with six more by April. Operational protocols have been approved, and more than 500 issues have been identified. This will be the foundation for scoping documents one and two. Work will continue in 2003 and 2004. In August, 2005 the scoping documents will be approved, the environmental review will be completed, and the issues will be settled.

Ferraro also gave an update on the Framework for Regional Growth. HOK has been hired as the consultant for the project, and are identifying a target audience for the stakeholders group.

Co-Chair Weinstein thanked the EC Legislature's leadership for allowing him to continue as co-chair, and thanked everyone for attending. He asked for members to think of new ideas and projects and to bring them to the subcommittee meetings. He also asked for volunteers for the EDWG. Co-Chair O'Connor expressed appreciation of the group's patience while we got things reorganized and running.

The next meeting will take place Friday, June 6 at 8:30 a.m. in Niagara County. The meeting was adjourned at 9:55 a.m.

Submitted by Tod A. Kniazuk
May 28, 2003