

# ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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## Co-Chairs:

Hon. Clyde Burmaster

Hon. William A. Pauly

## Minutes of Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Meeting September 28, 2001

**Present:** Burmaster, Ferraro, Johnston (proxy), Meal, Morse, Simon, Wendel

**Excused:** Pauly, McMahon

**Absent:** Connolly, DeBenedetti, Dziejdzic, Eldridge, Erck, Greenan, Kucharski, Lehman, O'Connor, Peoples, Rubin, Rutecki, Schuler, Villani, Weinstein

Co-Chair Burmaster called the meeting to order at 8:20 a.m. The Co-Chair commented that in light of the September 11 tragedy the term "partnership" takes on a whole new meaning, and that we need to do everything we can to make our counties seamless, especially for tourism. This also holds true of our efforts to provide a seamless border between the US and Canada. Minutes of the June, 2001 meeting were approved.

There was some discussion regarding the lack of attendance at the meetings, especially at the general meeting. ENRP Administrator Tod Kniazuk explained that some positions are included on the group under its enabling resolutions, and therefore even if the individual in that position is not attending meetings they would not be replaced. This is especially problematic at the subcommittee level, as that is where ideas are generated and projects initiated. ENRP Ad Hoc Member Luke Rich noted that when projects are near fruition people are more likely to show up for the meetings, as evidenced by the above average attendance at the June meeting where the Buffalo-Niagara Tourist Express was unveiled.

The Transportation Subcommittee report was received and filed.

ENRP Member John Simon initiated a discussion of rail and its role in economic development and tourism efforts in our region. Co-Chair Burmaster asked if rail would become more important in light of September 11. ENRP Ad Hoc Member Stan Rydelek responded that it already has taken a more prominent role in tourism. ENRP Member Hal Morse added that some studies are underway that look at linking Toronto, Niagara Falls, Buffalo, and perhaps Cleveland by rail.

On the topic of power relicensing, ENRP Member Sam Ferraro reported that there are now only two groups working on relicensing, the RCC and the Niagara Power Coalition. The two groups will most likely remain separate, but will collaborate and attend each other's meetings. The RCC has formed six subcommittees. For more information, the RCC's website is [www.wnyrelicensing.com](http://www.wnyrelicensing.com)

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**Members:** Hon. John Connolly \* Hon. Albert DeBenedetti \* Mr. Thomas Dziejdzic \* Mr. Brian Eldridge \* Hon. Bradley Erck \* Mr. Samuel Ferraro \* Hon. John Greenan \* Mr. Clyde Johnston \* Mr. Thomas Kucharski \* Ms. Maria Lehman \* Hon. Peter McMahon \* Hon. Gerald Meal \* Mr. Hal Morse \* Hon. Sean O'Connor \* Hon. Crystal Peoples \* Mr. Lawrence Rubin \* Mr. David Rutecki \* Mr. Kevin Schuler \* Mr. John Simon \* Hon. Robert Villani \* Hon. Barry Weinstein, M.D. \* Mr. Peter Wendel \* Ad Hoc: Ms. Cyd Bennett, Mr. Richard Geiger, Mr. Luke Rich, Mr. Stan Rydelek

Sprawl was the next topic of discussion. Co-Chair Burmaster noted that it is still receiving a fair amount of press. Simon reported that the NCIDA is participating in some towns' planning efforts. Rich added that there are two sprawl issues; residential and industrial / commercial. ENRP Member Peter Wendel stressed that sprawl is something that really needs to be talked about, and ENRP is one of the places that discussion should happen.

ENRP Ad Hoc Member Rydelek gave a report on the Buffalo-Niagara Tourist Express. The Express ran from June 9 to September 3, seven days a week. It had a total of 2,357 riders, and was considered quite a success. Due to its quick start there was not enough promotion for the service, but that is a goal for the second year of the pilot. A survey of riders showed that 85 percent of the users originated in Buffalo, but the fact that one of the Buffalo hotels was actively promoting it accounts for some of that disparity. Riders were satisfied with the service. Rydelek concluded by saying that tourism agencies have wanted this for a long time, and that the ENRP is a big reason why it finally happened.

At the June meeting ENRP Member Morse was asked to convene a group of volunteers to work on the concept of regional planning. Morse reported that he held off on that so as not to duplicate efforts that had already begun, especially an effort involving the two counties' planning directors. That group is talking about commissioning a consultant to help with the concept, which would include land use and government services. The group would then reach out to municipalities to become involved. Morse feels that said effort could be a key role for ENRP. Ferraro added that he and ENRP Member Laurence Rubin (Erie County Commissioner of Environment & Planning) are working to move this effort forward, regardless of funding for a consultant, as this hasn't been around for 10 years. Ferraro also noted that there has been significant progress in e-permitting and standardizing the building permit forms.

Other topics discussed were the quick cool project and a "fast ferry" service between Toronto and Niagara County.

The next meeting was announced for Friday, December 7 in Erie County. The meeting was adjourned at 9:45 a.m.