



D R A F T

**MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
August 16, 2012**

The Economic Affairs Committee convened at 1:15 p.m.

Economic Affairs Committee Members Present: Leilani Ulrich (Agency Chairwoman) Arthur Lussi (Economic Affairs Committee Chair), Frank Mezzano, Robert Stegemann, William Thomas

Not present: Jen McCormick (DED)

Other Members or Designees Present: Richard Booth, Sherman Craig, Dierdre Scozzafava (DOS), William Valentino, Cecil Wray

Agency Staff Present: Terry Martino (Executive Director), Sarah Reynolds (Acting Council), Dan Kelleher (Special Assistant-Economic Affairs)

Others Present: Frederick Monroe (Executive Director, Local Government Review Board)

Chairman Lussi opened the meeting at 1:15 pm. Dan Kelleher provided the following update:

Mr. Kelleher provided the Board with an update on the Agency's participation in the Governor's Path through History Initiative. The initiative primarily consists of signage along major highway corridors to highlight the State's rich history while bolstering tourism and economic development. Other components include information kiosks at rest areas, improved signs on local roads, and a web interface allowing users to learn about the sites along the highways.

Mr. Kelleher noted that a North Country workgroup met in July and has since developed an inventory of major historic sites and a list of "15 Priority Sites" including seven from within the Park's boundary.

Mr. Kelleher also updated the Board about a new Adirondack Park Data Tracking project. Through the initiative of Designee McCormick, staff has been working with statisticians and demographers from NYS Empire State Development, NYS Department of Labor, and the Cornell University Program in Applied Demography to develop a best practices method for tracking 18 economic indicators within the Park. Mr. Kelleher noted that staff expects this effort to lead to regular updates about the economic and demographic conditions of the Park and its regions. Additionally, Mr. Kelleher noted that the Agency has learned that it may be possible to have the Park boundary serve as an additional unit for census data.

Bradford Gentry and Fred Monroe Presentation on the July 2012 Berkley Workshop "What Do Healthy Rural Economies Look Like In The U.S. And How Might Conservation Organizations Help Support Them?"

Mr. Kelleher introduced Mr. Fred Monroe, Executive Director, Local Government Review Board, who represented the Adirondack Park at the Berkley Workshop. He also introduced Mr. Bradford Gentry, Yale School of Forestry and Environmental Studies and President of the Adirondack League Club who participated in the Workshop.

Bradford Gentry

Mr. Gentry began by stating that there are overlapping interests between conservation groups and economic development agencies throughout the many regions of the U.S. and the Adirondacks. The goal of the workshop was to discuss ideas on how to sustain healthy rural economies through the preservation of local ecological assets. The conference attendees recognized four key strategies to be implemented including the facilitation of collaborative solutions, development of entrepreneurial associations, creation of lasting wealth, and the fostering of ownership of ideas and assets.

Mr. Gentry said there are many new initiatives involving the preservation and utilization of ecosystem assets that are amiable to both economic development and conservation communities. For example, working forests can provide energy through biomass, value for carbon sequestration markets, endangered species buffers for military training exercises, and recreational opportunities for residents and tourists alike. Agriculture uses could be preserved as a scenic resource while

producing sustainable food and creating demand for local processing facilities. Mr. Gentry stated that water is currently undervalued but can be used for energy, the health maintenance of forests and watersheds, and also for regional branding initiatives.

Chairman Lussi asked what tools would work best for encouraging economic growth in an area such as the Adirondacks? Mr. Gentry replied there are no silver bullets and that each region needs to establish a menu of options including biomass development, valuing water purity services, and approaching agriculture differently.

Mr. Booth said there are studies regarding tension over real estate taxes which pit conservationists against local governments which require higher land values for revenue. Mr. Booth also noted that there is always tension managing water and land resources.

Fred Monroe

Mr. Monroe said that there are many parallels with the Common Ground Alliance and the Berkley Workshop noting that many of the initiatives highlighted by Dave Mason and Jim Herman's scenario planning project were discussed by people from various regions during the conference. Mr. Monroe stated that there are many signs in the Adirondacks that point to a less than healthy economy such as lack of sales tax growth, decline in the number of business startups, less diversity in employment, and many vacant buildings. He said large land acquisitions by conservation groups that restrict access also limit growth.

Mr. Monroe said in summary that an approach of Share, Care, and Consult should be used by both State government as well as conservation groups when working in the Adirondacks. He noted that many local governments have the impression that conservation groups do not care about local economic development. Mr. Monroe stated that State government should do more exchanges with local planning agencies and the two should work together to identify properties that are important for use or conservation. Mr. Monroe said he did learn that many of these groups do care and he looks forward to working together.

Designee Scozzafava articulated that she was optimistic about the future of the Adirondacks. She noted that the expansion of both broadband and cell phone service is a strong starting point for economic growth in the region.

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Chairwoman Ulrich expressed her appreciation at having representation with Fred Monroe at the conference. Mr. Gentry explained that as an Adirondack landowner, Mr. Monroe provided a varied prospective that was valuable to the other attendees.

Chairwoman Ulrich and Executive Director Martino presented certificates of appreciation to Mr. Monroe and Mr. Gentry.

The meeting closed at 2:05 pm