



Economic Affairs Committee
March 13, 2014

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**MINUTES OF THE ECONOMIC AFFAIRS
COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
March 13, 2014**

The Economic Affairs Committee convened at 3:30 PM

Economic Affairs Committee Members Present: Leilani Ulrich (Agency Chairwoman) Arthur Lussi (Economic Affairs Committee Chair), Bradley Austin (DED), Karen Feldman, Dan Wilt and Robert Stegemann (DEC).

Other Members or Designees Present: Richard Booth, Sherman Craig, Dierdre Scozzafava (DOS), Bill Thomas.

Agency Staff Present: Terry Martino (Executive Director), Jim Townsend (Counsel), Dan Kelleher (Special Assistant-Economic Affairs)

Others Present: Gerald Delaney (Chairman, Local Government Review Board)

Chairman Lussi opened the meeting at 3:30 PM.

Special Assistant for Economic Affairs Dan Kelleher provided the following update:

Mr. Kelleher reported on Agency's response to the Governor's NY Community Rising Reconstruction Program for the Towns of Jay and Keene. Mr. Kelleher noted that the Agency is coordinating with NYSDEC and NYSDOS on the project.

Mr. Kelleher also highlighted that Essex and Hamilton Counties, the two counties wholly located within the Adirondack Park, had the State's fastest growth rates in local sales tax revenues (2012-2013) with rates of 8.8% and 8.2% respectively. Mr. Kelleher also noted that Essex County collected its highest ever amount in Occupancy Tax revenues. Mr. Kelleher stated that these improvements were reflected in North Country unemployment rate numbers where the unemployment rate dropped by 2 percentage points from December 2012 to December 2013.

Mr. Kelleher provided an overview of the recent Connect NY Broadband Grant Program announcements. Over \$3 million was awarded to projects in the North Country.

Presentation: Homeward Bound

Reverend Colonel Eric Olsen provided an overview of Homeward Bound Adirondacks' programs and initiatives. Rev. Col. Olsen explained that the organization's goal is to create resilient communities by providing veterans with peer to peer counseling and offering retreats to help reintegrate returning veterans into society. The program is also hoping to provide workforce training for people who have served.

Rev. Col. Olsen highlighted the many challenges facing returning veterans including high unemployment, changed workforce demands, and decreased real wages. Rev. Col. Olsen also articulated that returning veterans may need additional time to recuperate from their experiences during service. He explained how the Adirondack Park is the ideal landscape for such work as the forest provides the silence and nature these veterans need after combat. Executive Director Martino appreciated that the Adirondacks are viewed as a place to find solitude, healing, and recovery.

Rev. Col. Olsen thanked Mr. Lussi for hosting veterans and their families during retreats and indicated that he hopes to provide additional retreats in the near future.

Chairwoman Ulrich provided Rev. Col. Olsen with a certificate of appreciation for his contributions to the Park.

The meeting ended at 4:15 PM.