

Economic Development Committee Minutes  
June 5, 2013 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Lawler; Supervisors Daly, Kinowski, Richardson, and Sausville; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator; Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Jason Kemper, Planning; Todd Shimkus, Saratoga Chamber; N. Koolik, Hampton Inn, Clifton Park; Mary Caroline Powers, SUNY Empire State College; Brian Straughter, Matt Jones, Saratoga Chamber; Tom Garafano, Saratoga Convention Bureau; Press.

Chairman Lawler called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

**On a motion made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Kinowski the minutes of the May 1, 2013 meeting were approved unanimously.**

Mr. Shimkus gave a brief presentation on the 2013 Advertising and Marketing Activity from the Saratoga Chamber of Commerce as follows: He said the occupancy tax collection for December through February totaled \$90,586, the second highest amount ever collected. What this did was it created 682 new jobs in the leisure and hospitality industry, which was an increase of 7.5%.

The one key factor that tells you how your tourism industry is doing, particularly the hotels, is the RevPAR, he said. The running RevPAR average for the past 12 months was up 3.8%, which indicates that we are doing well.

The Marketing Partnership total dollars available is \$461,643 plus, with Saratoga County contributing \$346,500. The I LOVE NY Grant matching funds came in at \$57,143, which is up from the \$38,000 of last year, and after soliciting a number of private industries a \$58,000 contribution was received. Mr. Shimkus said none of the funds are used for the staff that manages and creates the program, as they are paid through membership dues and sponsorships.

Mr. Shimkus said if the digital campaign is successful over the summer they would like to extend it into the fall with new ads.

Mr. Shimkus said this year's electronic advertising is specifically designed to find the target customer wherever they go on the web. He said last year when they may have advertised on specific web sites, this time they are advertising for specific people. Mr. Shimkus said they will not be abandoning traditional marketing, as they will still be doing some print, radio and TV, but they will be spending \$117,647 on this new effort. He said last year on line ads generated 16 million impressions, and they are being told that they will see a 50% increase of up to 24 million impressions by doing the advertising in a targeted fashion by following the people and not placing it on specific websites.

Mr. Shimkus said the Saratoga 150 is an all- volunteer effort with well over 200 events planned. The events pages that are approved on Saratoga 150 are also being put on to Saratoga.org. The Chamber is then doing the social media, where the director of marketing is handling all the social media pushes of those events. Mr. Lawler asked if Saratoga 150 had its own website. Mr. Shimkus said, yes. Mr. Lawler suggested that the county should link to that, as it is promotion of the event and it draws people to the county and let people experience Saratoga County. Mr. Lawler asked that Mr. Kemper work on getting the county linked to the Saratoga 150 website.

Mr. Lawler commended Mr. Shimkus and his staff for giving the information that the committee is looking for. He said not only is the decision and plan good, but the fact that the Chamber is tracking the results, managing the process and sharing the end result with the committee, is exactly the kind of reporting and the kind of communication that the committee wishes they had with all of their partners.

Mr. Lawler introduced Ms. Mary Caroline Powers, Vice President of Communications and Government Relations for Empire State College. Ms. Powers gave a brief presentation on Tax Free NY as follows:

She said the Tax Free Communities will include all SUNY campuses outside of New York City and designated private colleges north of Westchester County. The employees who work for these incubator companies and move into these tax free zones will not pay any income taxes for a decade. There are provisions for adjacent space up to 200,000 sq. ft. that can either be owned by the institution or leased by the institution. The communities include the SUNY 64 colleges, a handpicked group of private colleges, and specialty designated sites, of which there will be twenty across the state that are owned by the State of New York and will be eligible.

The following items are under consideration as bill language is refined:

- While the twenty “strategically located: state owned sties that could be designated as tax free zones have not been identified, an example of that type of site could be a closed prison.
- There may be provisions that would allow off campus facilities owned by SUNY colleges to be included in the tax free zones. Off campus sites operated by a SUNY school that fall outside that one mile radius will be able to apply for an exemption from Empire State Development officials to have the tax-free designation applied to those outlying locations.
- While the plan allows for as much as 200,000 sq. ft. of adjacent space outside each SUNY campus to be designated as part of the tax free zone, those off campus properties still may be required to pay a portion of their property taxes through a payment in lieu of taxes agreement.

- Companies that locate within the tax-free zones will be subject to claw back provisions that would allow the state to recover some of the tax benefits that were granted to businesses that failed to meet their job creation or investment promises.
- While companies locating in tax free zones must pledge to create new jobs, administration officials have not yet set a threshold for the minimum number of new positions that would be needed to qualify. The benchmark is likely to be fairly low because of the program's focus on startup companies and smaller businesses.
- The proposal would give SUNY presidents an expanded role in determining which projects and which companies are eligible to be part of the tax-free zones on their campuses. "The college presidents are going to play a huge role here" along with Empire State Development officials.

Retail projects, such as stores, hotels and restaurants will not be eligible for the tax free zones.

Mr. Lawler said since the Governor and the Legislature are still putting this together it is too early to judge it good or bad. He said until the details are finalized, it is incumbent on people who want to see economic growth in upstate New York, and as the Economic Development Committee for Saratoga County that is something that we want to be a part of and find ways to participate. We don't want to participate at the expense of employers and companies and investors who have helped make Saratoga County an exception to the economic doldrums of upstate New York, he said.

Mr. Lawler asked if this is about incubators. Ms. Powers said the incubators are the SUNY connections. SUNY has the intellectual property that results in bright ideas that turn into businesses, but they need to be incubated first.

Ms. Powers said that if out of state companies relocate in New York State to one of the zones they will be granted these benefits.

Mr. Kemper gave the following update on the County Forest Lands, stating that they have finished a parcel in the Town of Moreau with revenue slightly better than what was projected.

Mr. Kemper said there was a little bit of storm damage on the Zim Smith trail that DPW is taking care of. He said DPW is researching the possibility of expanding the trail parking lot in the Village of Round Lake.

**A motion was made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Kinowski to request an easement from the City of Mechanicville and the Town of Waterford for the construction and temporary maintenance of approximately a one mile section of the Champlain Canalway Trail in the town of Waterford, and to authorize the Chairman of the Board to**

**sign any instruments to record the deed in the Saratoga County Clerk's office. Unanimous.**

Mr. Richardson said the CFA grants were looking like they were going to come out this past Monday; however, after a meeting with the Historic Hoosick/Hudson Partnership it was noted that they will likely be coming out June 12<sup>th</sup>.

**A motion was made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Kinowski requesting a resolution authorizing application for the CFA grants. Unanimous**

Mr. Richardson suggested that the Town of Waterford and the City of Mechanicville pass a resolution as well.

**On a motion made by Mr. Kinowski, seconded by Mr. Richardson the meeting was adjourned unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,  
Chris Sansom