

Economic Development Committee Minutes
November 12, 2020 – 3:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Jack Lawler; Committee Members Ed Kinowski, Dan Pemrick, Jean Raymond, Tom Richardson, Kevin Tollisen; Supervisors Phil Barrett, Todd Kusnierz, John Lant, Mo Wright, Benny Zlotnick; and Chairman of the Board Preston Allen; Spencer Hellwig, Matt Rose, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Jennifer McCloskey, Employment & Training; Jason Kemper, Planning; Julie Stokes; Shelby Schneider, Jennifer Kelley, Saratoga County Prosperity Partnership; Annamaria Bellantoni, Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce.

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

On a motion made by Mr. Richardson, seconded by Mr. Pemrick, the minutes of the October 14, 2020 meeting were approved unanimously.

Mr. Lawler introduced Ms. Stokes who has been closely monitoring and involved in the PCB Contamination project. Ms. Stokes said that for the last 17 years while retired, she has been a member of the Community Advisory Group for the cleanup of the Hudson River. First as a representative of the Saratoga County Chamber, and then as a representative of the Schuylerville Chamber of Commerce. Ms. Stokes said that she is here today to talk about the floodplains. Ms. Stokes briefly explained the dredging process. Dredging was done under what is called a Record of Decision, ROD. A ROD requires 4 different things: First they do a remedial investigation, then they do a feasibility, which is where the EPA or DEC decide what they are going to do about it and make a recommendation and then it happens, and this is called a Record of Decision and that was the dredging of the Hudson. They go back every 5 years and test the fish to see if the PCB's are getting less. In order to do a new ROD, you need to go through these steps. Ms. Stokes said the Community Advisory Group, or the CAG, meetings are quite boring. 1 ½ hours are spent talking about fish studies and at the end of the meeting they talk about the items that really matter to us in the community. Currently the EPA, DEC and GE are beginning the floodplains. Ms. Stokes said that she has the floodplain maps showing where they extend in each of the communities along the Hudson. Ms. Stokes has asked the EPA to provide digital versions of the map which can be distributed to those who may want it. Ms. Stokes said that as an example, the floodplains go into the ballfields of the Stillwater Central School, and said that floodplains can extend beyond the first 5 or 10 feet of the river. Ms. Stokes said that there are 1,500 properties along the Hudson River between Fort Edward and Waterford. 66 of the areas have had removal action, which means that they found elevated PCB's and have covered them until they decide what to do with them. Two more have been identified late this season. These 66 properties are what are considered short term risk, which means people are already using them. It could be a boat launch, or a garden, or somebody's back yard which they might want to use in the future. They have not tested all of the properties and in the future they may want to do something there. Ms. Stokes said that once they are done with that, they are beginning to undertake the human health risk assessment, and they will go property by property, how are you going to use the property, how close are people to it, and they will begin to make decisions in the next 2-3 years on all of those properties along the Hudson. Starting in 2022 they will begin to consider the feasibility of removals, covering or something else. As the information comes in, the EPA reports to the Community Advisory Board

and they will hold public meetings. The decisions that are made must involve the community, the Supervisors and Mayors. Ms. Stokes said that when the dredging of the Hudson was decided we were not a part of it to this extent. The bottom line is that the old canal in Schuylerville was left out of that project. Now they know that there are PCBs in it, they don't rise to the level that the EPA cares about because it was below, and we were not part of the process. Ms. Stokes said that being a part of the process right now is very important and that's why she is addressing the committee today. Ms. Stokes said that there are four Supervisors and one Mayor who are members of the CAG. The meetings are traditionally held from 1-4 in the afternoon 3-4 times per year. Ms. Stokes said that during the next 5 years, decisions that impact the property owners will be made, and those Supervisors and Mayors need to be at the table. Ms. Stokes said that the EPA and DEC are willing to hold individual meetings if requested. Ms. Stokes and Mr. Kinowski met with them on a few occasions. Ms. Stokes said that she has been doing this for 17 years and is currently 77 years old and she needs to have other people, and the Supervisors and Mayors understand that this is the time we need to be at the table. Mr. Lawler thanked Ms. Stokes for her hardwork and dedication. Mr. Lawler said that he attended the meetings for the first 5 years and agreed that the meetings can be very tedious. Mr. Lawler said that his concern is that the CAG is an advisory committee that does not have authority, it makes no decisions, and it has been more of an opportunity for the EPA and DEC to come in and say what's going on and what they are going to do. Ms. Stokes said that she has relied on a lot of the other groups, such as environmentalists, but the bottom line is that they are worried about downriver and not the upper Hudson like we are. Ms. Stokes said that it's important to be willing to participate in the tedious parts of the meetings so that information regarding the fish studies can be obtained. Ms. Stokes said that the outreach should begin in February 2021, but they have been talking about floodplains for the past 2 years, and now investigations are being done, asking property owners to go on their properties, and beginning to do protective covers.

Ms. Schneider distributed two handouts. The handouts are attached to these minutes. The first item is an announcement that the SCPP has been awarded \$95K from the US Department of Agriculture through the Rural Business Development Program. This is primarily to help them with their Next Wave Communities economic development planning process and help leverage the funds that are received through the County and it also helps with the business retention and expansion efforts. Ms. Schneider said that SCPP is actively going after every potential source of funding to leverage the funds received from Saratoga County. Ms. Schneider said that a grant they applied for last month was an EPA Brownfield Assessment grant in the amount of \$300K. They have been working on this with HRP Associates and it would allow them to assess potential brownfields in Saratoga County. They hope to hear back about this in April 2021. Ms. Schneider said that if granted they would come back to the County to put together a taskforce to start identifying the sites.

Ms. Schneider said that Chairman Kevin Hedley has resigned from the SCPP. Ms. Schneider said that they are proposing a new appointment to the board, Stephen Obermeyer. Mr. Obermeyer is the CFO of BBL Construction and the President of BBL Hospitality. He is a resident of the Town of Ballston, serves on the board of Ballston Spa National Bank as well as the Capital Region Chamber, Business Council of New York State and various other organizations and affiliations. He is actively engaged on a local level as well as regional level and has an intimate understanding of not only construction development but also hospitality. Mr. Lawler said that Mr. Obermeyer has an incredibly impressive resume, and is a very strong candidate for the Board. Mr. Lawler

congratulated whomever it was that recruited Mr. Obermeyer, as having him involved in Saratoga County Economic Development is a great plus.

A motion was made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mrs. Raymond, to approve the appointment of Stephen Obermeyer to the Saratoga County Prosperity Partnership. Unanimous.

Mr. Dorsey said that the term expiration would be December 31, 2021.

Ms. Bellantoni distributed a handout and gave an update on their Annual Tourism Report. Ms. Bellantoni said that the pandemic hit tourism just as the season was beginning for the Chambers summer marketing. Ms. Bellantoni said that they had to rethink everything because the major attractions were not operating for the Summer such as SPAC and the Track. They went into this knowing what people were looking for, outdoor activities, safe activities. The campaign was entitled "Feel the Freedom". Ms. Bellantoni gave an overview of the handout which is attached to these minutes. The I Love NY Grant was not received this year and she does not believe it will be funded for 2021. The handout details the marketing overview, market segmentation performance by geography, Summer, Fall/Winter campaign overviews, and social media promotions. The Fall/Winter campaign is entitled "Ready for a Road Trip?" and is focusing on states that are bordering us. Ms. Bellantoni said that CTV ads were added this year, these are ads that you would see on a streaming service such as Hulu, these are commercials that you cannot click off of them. You will see less commercials than on Cable however people pay more attention to them. This was employed in NY City and proved to be very successful for this campaign.

Mr. Lawler inquired about the hotel occupancy rates. Ms. Bellantoni said that for the summer we were hovering around the 50% range. This is currently meeting and convention season, and groups are not gathering. Ms. Bellantoni estimated that rates would hover around 40% this fall. Ms. Bellantoni said that winter is not the best season. Mr. Barrett questioned if the 40% is a percentage of what the regular levels are. Ms. Bellantoni clarified that this is 40% occupancy, not 40% of the tax. Mr. Barrett said that the tax itself would probably be down at least that if not more, as prices are down due to less demand, and therefore less taxes being collected per hotel room. Ms. Bellantoni agreed and said that the next report is due out in December or January, the rates are way down because of lower demand, lower rates, and it was a big hit not having racing.

Mr. Lawler asked Ms. Bellantoni for her thoughts on the impact of the Governor's new restrictions on the hospitality industry. Ms. Bellantoni said because the infection rate in Saratoga County is so low, the Chamber is going to fight for a micro-pocket, to try to do something to keep the County open. Mr. Shimkus is working very hard on this. Ms. Raymond asked if the I Love NY funding was Statewide. Ms. Bellantoni said yes. Ms. Bellantoni said that she had actually done an ad. buy by March 15th, for quarter 1 and quarter 2, the State asked people to submit all of their paperwork, however they have not heard anything back on reimbursement for that. Ms. Bellantoni said that normally at this meeting they would ask for the Board's designation as the Tourism Promotion Agency so that they can apply for the grant next year however, there has been no guidance about the grant right now. Ms. Raymond said that some of the smaller counties rely solely on this funding for their tourism promotion.

A motion was made by Mr. Tollisen, seconded by Mr. Richardson, to grant an easement to the Clifton Park Water Authority to construct, operate and maintain a pump station on lands of Saratoga County adjacent to the Zim Smith Trail. Unanimous.

Mr. Kemper distributed a handout which is attached to these minutes. Mr. Kemper said that the Clifton Park Water Authority have requested an easement along the Zim Smith Trail. Mr. Kemper said that as easement was done several years ago for the Town of Ballston. Mr. Kemper said that the easement is to construct a new pump station immediately adjacent to the Town of Ballston pump station. This will be on the west side of Eastline Road behind the Stewart's Shop. Mr. Kemper said that it will not impact the trail at all. Mr. Lawler asked if the Town of Ballston and the Saratoga County Water Authority was aware and on board with this. Mr. Lawler said that this is a good idea but wants to make sure that it will not impede the Town of Ballston from accessing their own water pump station. Mr. Kemper said he was not aware as the request for the easement was directly from the Clifton Park Water Authority. Mr. Lawler said that it is reasonable to move the easement request forward but asked Mr. Kemper to follow up with the Town of Ballston and the Saratoga County Water Authority to make sure they are both aware and agreeable to the plans and report back to the Committee within the next few days.

Mr. Richardson said that a little over a year ago the SCPP and Mr. Richardson worked together on a booklet promoting different properties in Mechanicville. 18 parcels were available and they have had activity on 9 of those parcels. Empty storefronts have been filled. 3 parcels were fairly large, one being a 20-acre light industrial park in Mechanicville which was purchased by John Pickett who owns Evolution, who was at their breakfast meeting to promote the initiative. Mr. Pickett already has an approximately 8K sq. ft. building on the property and is in the process of building another one to be approximately 5-6K sq. ft.. Mr. Richardson said that Mr. Pickett has plans on the table with the Saratoga County Planning Board and Mechanicville to put approximately 8-9 additional buildings on the 20 acres. Mr. Richardson said that the booklet initiative and breakfast was a very worthwhile thing. There are some other small businesses that have located to the community just because of the time and effort they put into this successful endeavor. Mr. Richardson said that a copy of the booklet is in the BOS office and can be shared with anyone who is interested in it.

Mr. Tollisen gave a brief update from the IDA. There were 13 additional businesses that were approved for PPE reimbursement in a total approximate amount of \$78K. Of the total grant there is a balance of \$56,830 remaining. There are 13 additional applications that have been received and a few are on hold awaiting documentation, but the program has been very successful. Mr. Tollisen said that the IDA is going to consider potential additional funding at a future meeting. Mr. Tollisen said that an interview was done about this initiative and the IDA will be sending it to the Clerk of the Board for distribution to the Board of Supervisors. Mr. Lawler requested a list of the businesses that have already taken advantage of the program.

On a motion made by Mrs. Raymond, seconded by Mr. Richardson, the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board