

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT Transcript

12/1/2021

SPEAKERS

Ray O'Connor, Phil Barrett, Matt Rose, Jonathan Schopf, Joe Grasso, Pete Bardunias, Kevin Tollisen, Several Supervisors, Tom Wood

Phil Barrett

Good afternoon. Welcome to the December 1 Economic Development Committee meeting. First want to entertain a motion to approve the minutes of October 6.

Tom Wood

Supervisor Wood I'll make the motion.

Phil Barrett

Thank you. Second by Mr. Tollisen. Discussion? All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed. Motion carries. Community Development program update Pete Bardunias Capital Region Chamber. Pete was scheduled to join us a little earlier in the year and he had well, you had someone else to take care of.

Pete Bardunias

Something else to take care of. Yeah. Begins with a C.

Phil Barrett

Can't imagine what that might be.

Pete Bardunias

Thank you. I'm doing very well. Thank you. Yes, I apologize. Unfortunately, was a little bit under the weather in October. And it kind of kept me away from here. But I do appreciate the support and partnership that the County of Saratoga has been giving us for, you know, it's been I think this is the 11th year that we've done this program together. And I'm really excited about that because it has paid dividends literally for Saratoga County and the business community and the community at large. And that's really something that I find very rewarding about having done it. So I think you all have the presentation of the Community Development Program. And I won't go through all of it because really, most of its self-explanatory. There's a lot of pictures and stuff in there. But just to kind of summarize

from this past year, remember what the Community Development Program is. It's you're providing us with a little bit of seed money to help us go out and identify things that need to get done. Take care of these needs but also make sure that they stay taken care of. That they get maintained that things don't change. And they get, you know, like, Lock 19 doesn't get overgrown, or the light bulbs don't all go out at the gazebo or whatever, you know, we've done a good job of keeping our eyes open. And taking care of things that we realize need to be checked out. But there was one big thing we did in 2021 that is worth talking about, because it really is something special that Saratoga County got access to Federal. County businesses rather, got access to strictly because of the fact that the Capital Region Chamber and its subsidiary the Chamber of Southern Saratoga County, were here to do something about it. And that was money. Okay, there was a total of \$1.575 million came in through the Capital Region advancement Fund, which is through the Cares Act, that supported 19 businesses in Saratoga County, that was a count as of November 10. That may have changed since but that was my last number. But you know, what's nice about that the Regional Chamber got access to dollars for the capitol region, a total of \$8 million. And the Southern Saratoga Chamber had the connections here on the ground in this county, to be able to help the community benefit from it. And so the partnership worked out really great. Like I said, \$1.575 million, there was another 1.25, I think, million dollars came into the county, I'd love to take credit for all of it, but we probably shouldn't, because it was more of a consortium of groups working on it. But another 1.25 million came in through the Small Business Recovery Grant Program through Empire State Development, we have a dedicated staff member working on that. So that all came into this county. And that's very exciting. That was 47 out of 213 applications. So what does that mean? Well, it means we were able to do some things that help preserve businesses in this county. I'll give an example of how, what made me very excited about this. So you take Mohawk Maiden Cruises in Schuylerville. They've been very vocal about this. They're in business today because we helped them period. They know that. And that's just the truth. Now, there's a multiple of issues there. Number one is they were shut down during the crisis, right? So they couldn't even run, then they finally were able to run, what does the Canal Corp, do they shorten the canal season? Right, and made it harder for them to service the boat this and that? Well, if you can't service your boat, you can't take customers and you know, all these different problems, you're not going to have much of a business? Well, A. we were able to help them get ballers to bridge the gap and B. we stood there and advocated to help them get their point across to the powers that be statewide that, hey, you've got a minimum threshold here where if you go below it, these businesses aren't going to be able to make it right? You got to be in business a certain number of days of the year, you know, in order to have any chance of success. So that was we had 10 Canal Corp representatives in my office just a couple of weeks ago. And we were able to get that point across. But it doesn't stop there. The other issue is, you know, you look at some of the nuts and bolts of this, they've got an older vessel. There aren't very many tour vessels in New York State that are quite young. Okay, we helped get one of them, unfortunately, and ended up down in Kingston, but we hope that others will end up here. But you know, that boats old, I don't know that it will ever pass the Coast Guard inspection ever again, which means that it probably never be able to carry seven or more passengers. But, you know, at least we help them bridge the gap so that they've got a chance to start looking at other options going forward. And then it's going to be up to, you know, our advocacy and other partners and whatever, to try to keep an industry like that alive, which produces tourism dollars for Saratoga County in New York State. And by comparison, they're the only tour operation on the entire Champlain Canal from Waterford to Whitehall, like that type of vessel. So that's just something to be aware of. And it's only one example. But it shows how we were able to make a

difference. And the difference was in dollars. Some other cool things, you know, just to kind of give a feel for how this program has continually found innovative ways to make a difference. We had representatives, volunteers rather, from the US Navy, help us down at historic Lock 19 this past April. And why does that matter? Well, I mean, okay, they did a volunteer project well, but they liked volunteering, they could volunteer at a soup kitchen or something. But this is the Navy. Right? So we said how cool would it be to have them volunteer and learn something about one of the earliest marine public works projects in the United States? Right. So the Navy people from Ballston Spa got a chance to do something that actually benefited them in their career in April and also helped our community. So that was, you know, a good example. It was great to see on Facebook, I think was yesterday, the memory trees inside the gazebo in Mechanicville remembering that a few years ago, we were the ones that maintained that rebuilt it. You know, those are the kinds of things that excite me seeing that we continually find good uses now for the work that we've done over the years, and that it's made a difference. And we also had a meeting very recently, still trying to push the Area 3 project in Halfmoon. And, you know, some people have resurfaced with that, if we ever get that done, that's going to be on the other end of the spectrum, you know, we're talking because gazebos and stuff, but at the high end of the spectrum, you know, we pull a giant, you know, 10s of millions of dollars company into Halfmoon, that would be really nice. So that's sort of an overview of just the things that have mattered over the years and this program continues to do its thing. One other thing, I probably should mention the rest area at Exit 9, we had that fully staffed this summer, some of our publications saw the highest ever demand, in other words, the number of magazines, whatever we've handed out. It's exciting too because it's the only place on the Northway you can do that. And we had that much demand. And, you know, I think people's interests are changing with regard to how they, what they're looking for, and how many people were coming by. So that was exciting to see. And we're hoping that that will continue next year. So looking ahead to 2022. Again, a lot of this stuff is maintenance of stuff that we've talked about in the past. So I won't go through all of that stuff. But I would like to draw attention to one that I think is interesting, which is project number 4 under 2022 is towards the end if you have that sheet, that PowerPoint. And what's interesting there is it's, we call it infrastructure review, because I couldn't think of a real glamorous title. But basically, you know, farms, marine businesses, other types of businesses, they're facing challenges from within their communities, state tax laws, generational problems, and more. You got farmers on tractors that are worried about being run over by aggressive drivers, you got efforts to dramatically alter the canal system that would impact area businesses, like literally like there's talk of cutting a hole in the canal and not having it so that the invasive species can't swim across. And then you've got this sort of interesting phenomenon lately of trucks crashing into bridges, which is obviously a concern. So what we're going to do, and I don't want to make it sound like we're the only entity that can do this stuff, I think a lot of times what we are is a catalyst, bringing together other groups that are interested stakeholders, and sort of convening things to move it forward. But we're going to work on, okay, we're going to get together with the farmers, and we want to understand what's going on with this thing with the farm tractors and the challenges that they face. And can we do some sort of educational awareness campaign to help them. We're going to look at things like what's and we've been working on this, this whole issue of trying to sever the canals and all that crazy stuff. And what that would mean for communities like Schuylerville, Mechanicville, Halfmoon, Waterford, and even Clifton Park, which once in a while remembers it's a canal town. You know, there's so many opportunities that we could have, and we don't want to lose that. I've found one interesting thing that I'm trying to do to help more and more the farmers I think, than the other side, but I think it will help both.

I'm going to try something. We're gonna try to get younger farmers together with younger marina owners. And the reason for that is because they're in similar situations, but they don't know it. In other words, the young farmers are facing challenges of switching generations, right? The old timers are getting old, can they pass it along? If they're not going to pass it along? What's the tax repercussions, blah, blah, blah. Same thing is true in the Marina business, you have a big marina on the Mohawk river, or you have a big farm in Halfmoon, let's say, um, there's going to be a developer knocking on the door, hey, I want to build, you know, townhouses or whatever. And so the question is, what synergies do we have between those two industries the same way like when a bunch of insurance people and banks would get together. So I want to do that to try to help these people know that they're not isolated, they're not alone. And it might help to build some interesting coalitions to try to address some of these challenges. And then finally, the thing about the truck strikes, you know, try to convene some conversations there. Because we just feel that these are practical steps that can help make a difference in some of these industries and communities, obviously, you know, we've all seen it in the news. And, and if there's ways that we can help kind of smooth it out a little bit, make it just even a little bit better. That'll be a positive step in the right direction. So that's something I'm excited to see what happens. Certainly unique. We haven't done something like that before. And I want to see what kind of results we're going to get over the course of the year. And certainly, we would like to have representation from this committee at some of these meetings and things if you'd like that. And we'll make sure that the minutes and notes from the meetings will be made available to this committee. So that's one that's one out of five projects, but I think that's the one that I think is the most interesting. Some of the other things is again, I want to reiterate, you know, every Town in Saratoga County can send us graphics for the rest area TVs, about events and things you've got coming up. I know in the past couple of years. Maybe we haven't wanted to because you know, not sure do we want all those people in New York City coming to our town or not. But as the COVID situation hopefully morphs into something more manageable next year, you know, fingers crossed, we hope that you'll all take advantage of that. And all you have to do is contact me on that. And then we're going to also continue to do what we do best as a Regional Chamber, you know, we want to bring those regional ideas into the county as well as we can, that whatever would help Saratoga County to be part of. Last year, it was the money, you know, that was really exciting that those dollars became available. Now, just so you know, the way that fund is going to work, in 2022, there's sort of a pause, because all that money has been lent out, now they got to start collecting some, and then in 2023, that's going to start morphing into a revolving loan fund. And again, Saratoga County businesses will be eligible for that. So that's nice. There'll be opportunities for our business community, in the long term, to take advantage of that. So that's just a quick run through. You know, like I said, there's a lot in the presentation, you're welcome to review, obviously, any questions, I'll be happy to entertain. But we appreciate what we've been, the support you guys give us. And we look forward to another productive year next year. And hopefully, we'll find some innovative things that make a difference. And we'll make sure that we report it so that you guys can see what we're doing and have some input.

Phil Barrett

Great. Well, you hit on a lot of important industries, within Saratoga County across all the municipalities. And as we get into 2022, you know, we want to continually look at new ways to promote tourism, and certainly on the historical side of things. We have some incredible opportunities coming up in the next few years to promote and attract people here to the county based on historical watershed moments that

occurred and not only our County's history, but the nation's. So if you have any ideas around that aspect of tourism, we'd appreciate that and would partner with you on any aspect in that specific area.

Pete Bardunias

Absolutely. I would welcome that. That's your right. I mean, everything from obviously, you know, the revolution and County history to canal history, a lot of other things coming up. So yeah, very good.

Phil Barrett

Very good. Thank you, Peter. Any questions for Pete at this time? All right. And as far as the budget is concerned, we have \$60,000 in the budget for the Chamber. So, you know, we appreciate your efforts through the years, like you said, this is the 11th year. Look for continued partnership in the future.

Pete Bardunias

Thank you really appreciate it. And we want to make sure that you guys think that's money well spent. So we welcome the dialogue. And hopefully we'll have some great results for you for next year. Thank you.

Phil Barrett

Thank you. All right. Next up, we have Capital Resource Corporation application. Ray O'Conor is here from the CRC. How are you doing Ray? What do you have for us?

Ray O'Conor

Well, we received an application just a couple of weeks ago. First thing I want to do is I want to thank the County Administrator, Mr. Bulger for expediting this application. Like I said, we just received it a couple of weeks ago. And in order to try and meet the timeline to get this deal closed. We had to come to this committee today and to the Board of Supervisors at its December meeting. Plus hold a public hearing. Our Chair Anita Daly was going to be here with me. But we are simultaneously doing the public hearing and the presentation to this Board. Trinity health is a multi-state health care agency, and they are undertaking an out of state bond issue and not to exceed \$405 million 20 million, or up to 20 million of which would be invested through St. Peter's Health Partners, one of their affiliates, and in order to meet the requirements of the tax code, in addition to the other agencies and the parent agency Trinity having this transaction approved, it had to be approved at the local level as well. The 20 million would constitute both refinancing of some existing debt and investments in capital projects, equipment, etc. for the Schuyler Ridge Facility in Clifton Park, that's under the ownership of St. Peters. This is not a direct debt issue of the Capital Resource Corporation. As I said, it's being done out of state. But it does require local approval. If you have any questions, I'd be more than happy to answer.

Phil Barrett

Yeah, Anita had given me the heads up that there would be those two processes, you being here today, and the public hearing would be happening at the same time, due to the timing of the application when it was submitted, and when it needed to be approved. It now that process might be a little different than normal. But that being said, I don't believe there's anything out of the ordinary as far as this particular application goes, when compared to other financing opportunities in the past. Is that

correct? Is there anything that the Committee or the Board needs to know that would be out of the ordinary? I don't think there is.

Ray O'Connor

No, we did an identical transaction for Trinity in 2017, again, for the benefit of St. Peter's Health Partners. And this is not an obligation of the County, there's no recourse against the County. So there's no risk to the County to our agency. And it's more of a procedural accomplishment.

Phil Barrett

Right. Yeah. And this Schuyler Ridge facility is a very well run facility, quality place for people to receive care. They did enlarge the facility. I don't know when they finished that might have been a couple of years ago, I remember we had to in Clifton Park, approve the expansion, which we did, because they do have a good track record and the need for that type of care continues to grow due to the demographics in our society. I think we're all aware of that. So it is an important project not only to Clifton Park, but the entire County because having an opportunity for people to get that care close to where the kids live, or other family members live, is extremely important. Are there any questions for Ray? Anybody on the committee have any questions about this application? Okay, hearing none. So we just need a resolution to approve. So I'll entertain a motion to approve this application that Ray and the CRC has submitted as part of our agenda today.

Kevin Tollisen

So moved.

Tom Wood

Second Supervisor Wood

Phil Barrett

Move by Mr. Tollisen second by Mr. Wood. Any discussion? Okay. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed? Motion carries.

Ray O'Connor

Thank you, we appreciate your support.

Phil Barrett

Thank you, is there anything else that you're working on that you want to update us while you're here or?

Ray O'Connor

You know, we, for the past I want to say almost two years now. There have been a couple of other projects that, you know, are in their infancy. But like a lot of other things because of the pandemic, those products got pushed off. So we're hoping in 2022, to get back on track with these projects. You know, for those who aren't familiar with the agency, we've been around since, it was created in 2012. We've been operating for the past nine years. And we've done over \$300 million in financing for not for profit organizations across the County. And, you know, we've been fortunate to have a lot of great organizations to be able to support with our work and certainly appreciate the support of the Economic Development Committee and the Board of Supervisors.

Phil Barrett

Right, thanks Ray. Appreciate it. OK. Next on the agenda is designating the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the County's Tourism Promotion Agency. I don't see anybody from the Chamber here today. I did see them at a ribbon cutting in Clifton Park earlier today. We had two ribbon cuttings down there today. One was a donut and chicken place. Low fat on the agenda. That's quite a combination. So basically fried chicken and I heard Chick fil A is not coming anymore. But and then we had a ribbon cutting, a liquor store with the Saratoga County Chamber. So we got doughnuts, fried chicken and liquor. So we're all set for the in case there's any more lockdowns, I guess. Alright. So I'll entertain a motion to designate the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the County's Tourism Promotion Agency. Do I have a motion?

Kevin Tollisen

I'll move it.

Phil Barrett

Was it somebody on the phone?

Joe Grasso

Yeah. I'll second it. Joe Grasso.

Phil Barrett

Joe Grasso with the second. Thank you. Mr. Tollisen with the motion. Any discussion? Okay, all in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed? Motion carries. Very good. Next, approving the third quarter to 2021 payment to Saratoga County Prosperity Partnership. We have ex-President. How are you?

Matt Rose

Doing good. Tim couldn't be here today so I'm presenting the Partnerships.

Phil Barrett

Very good. Every time you want to get out they pull you back in?

Matt Rose

Yeah, so this item is similar to the last meeting in October, where we requested the second quarter payment, this is just the third quarter payment that we need to do for two. What's the word I'm looking for? For tax law 1202. Make sure we do that.

Phil Barrett

Yeah. So there's a third quarterly payment that has been requested. Of course, there's been some concern as far as where the bed tax might end up this year, and how much money would be appropriated for the Partnership. And so that's something that we need to continue to keep in mind as we go forward. And we've had those discussions at past Economic Development Committee meetings this year. But in this case, I think going forward with this third payment makes sense. And obviously, with the increase of economic activity in the county, the state and across the country. You know, the bed tax will be much larger than it was the previous 12 month time frame. We'll see what the future brings here and the very end of 21 and going into 22. But at least as far as we know, right now, receipts will be up substantially. So with that being said, are there any questions for Matt or, Mr. Tollisen?

Kevin Tollisen

Just a quick question, what is the third quarter payment that we're making?

Phil Barrett

112,500.

Kevin Tollisen

And secondly, has the County Economic Development Committee, although I haven't seen hit, received a summary report, I know that Shelby has left, but have we received a report on updates on that at this point?

Phil Barrett

As far as apprenticeship goes? Yeah. Well, we haven't had one here recently, but the Partnership has continued to meet. Tim Dunn, who was appointed to the position of President,.

Kevin Tollisen

Maybe we can just ask for a summary report.

Phil Barrett

Oh yeah, absolutely. They continue to work on several objectives. Obviously, when Tim was appointed, we had lost the final two employees at the Partnership. So with the able, ex-president here, Matt and Tim, they've been working together over the last few months to stabilize the organization, make sure the bills are paid and everything is running appropriately. Before we get to the point of moving forward with the next stage of the organization's history. So that's where they are now. I know they're also engaging in partnerships with SEDC as well as the IDA. You know, it's important for all of our economic

development entities to work together as much as possible. That's how we will sustain success into the future. So they should all be working together. And they are. That's, I think, a change for the better. So, and I've made it very clear to Tim, and Matt, and everybody that we want to see that continue to get those further partnerships engage more and working together for the betterment of the county. So thank you. Any, any questions on this item at this time? Okay, I'll entertain a motion to approve the payment.

Tom Wood

Supervisor Wood, I'll make the motion.

Phil Barrett

Thank you.

Kevin Tollisen

Second.

Phil Barrett

Second by Mr. Tollisen. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed? Motion carries.

Jonathan Schopf

Jon Schopf oppose.

Phil Barrett

What's that John?

Jonathan Schopf

Opposed for me.

Phil Barrett

Opposed, okay. One opposed. All right. Next up approval of Economic Development Fund application for the Town of Charlton. And we do have Mr. Grasso on the phone. Is there anything you wanted to say first Supervisor Grasso?

Joe Grasso

No, this is consistent with what we put in the application investment for our Community Center, which is one of the few economic drivers in our community on the public sector. It's owned by the Town, used by many groups to facilitate different organizations that serve our community and the county as a whole. We are looking to make some capital improvements to that facility, so that continue to serve more of

these types of groups in the future, make the building more weather tight. So the first step of that is some engineering and architectural investigations to make sure that when we invest in this building, we are doing so wisely. So we are looking for some assistance to help us invest in our community.

Phil Barrett

OK, great, Matt, was there anything you wanted to add?

Matt Rose

No, I think Supervisor Grasso summed it up pretty nicely there.

Phil Barrett

All right, great. All right. Any questions for Supervisor Grasso about this application?

Kevin Tollisen

I'll make a motion we approve it.

Phil Barrett

Okay.

Tom Wood

Second Supervisor Wood

Phil Barrett

Okay second by Supervisor Wood any discussion before we move forward? Okay, all in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed? Motion carries. All right, we do have some Economic Development fund payments Town of Greenfield, Hadley, Saratoga and Town of Wilton. Matt?

Matt Rose

Yeah, so we'll start with the Town of Greenfield. They use their award on an advertising campaign aimed at driving in sales and increasing awareness for their local businesses. We were able to highlight approximately 44 businesses with their get to know us map that was placed in the Saratoga Today newspaper, and included five double page ads, one magazine ad and a full year online paper ad. On the last page of the packet in the agenda for Greenfield's item, you'll actually see a copy of that map that was placed in there. And that is their request.

Phil Barrett

Take these individually?

Matt Rose

We can do them all at once, maybe?

Phil Barrett

Alright, on to the next one.

Matt Rose

Okay, next one is Hadley. This is essentially phase two of their initial plan, which was to develop maps and marketing promotions for the walking tours. The Town depends on the tourism and the goal for these promotions was to increase patrons to the area and their business and also promote Hadley's rich history. Next one is Saratoga. They're requesting the full 7,100. The Town decided to use grant funds to update the Town's comprehensive plan. Last time the plan was updated was in 2002. The town now has both electronic and paper copies of maps, charts, surveys, and meeting results in which they can use these to promote economic development in that area. And the last one is Milton also requesting the 7,100. The Town use their grant award to make some much needed repairs at one of their local businesses which is owned by a military veteran and his family. It's Wilton Floors up on Ballard Road in Wilton. The business could not extract much attention from the road because some overgrown bushes, poor signage and the blacktop was in a state of disrepair. The blacktop specifically was creating some safety hazard hazards in regard to operating the forklifts. The business needs to unload the truck deliveries. And since then they've been removed. There's new signage and brand new blacktop. So the Town expects there to be a growth in sales with increased visibility and accessibility.

Phil Barrett

Do we have a motion to approve these applications?.

Kevin Tollisen

So moved.

Joe Grasso

So moved.

Phil Barrett

By Mr. Tollisen, was that Mr. Grasso?

Joe Grasso

Correct. I'll second.

Phil Barrett

Second by Mr. Grasso. So these Economic Development fund payments. Now that the program has been in place for a couple of rounds, I think it has been a very valuable asset to every community within the county. Very proud of where the program has come. At that time Supervisor Tollisen was the Chairman of the Board, I was Chairman of this Committee, and this program was created, and I think has made a tremendous difference in every single community. And that was the aim at the time. That we invest funds directly to the communities to help them with planning efforts and tourism, economic

development, you name it. So I think it's been used for a wide array of programs and uses that are very positive. So I believe everybody has accessed the money that they were due. Is that correct, Matt?

Matt Rose

Depending on the year, there's still a couple outstanding, but most, the vast majority of Towns have submitted reimbursement.

Phil Barrett

Good. So if you are a municipality that hasn't taken advantage of the program yet this year, I would get on that. Because again, these are funds that can be used for planning and economic development efforts within your municipality. I know in our case, or if you look at these applications that are before us, just serve as great seed money to complete initiatives important to our towns and cities and villages. All right, very good. There's no further comment. I'll say all in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

All opposed. Okay, motion carries. Any other business to come before the committee that today? Okay, I'll entertain a motion to adjourn.

Kevin Tollisen

So moved.

Phil Barrett

Old faithful Mr. Tollisen over there. Do we have a second?

Tom Wood

Supervisor Wood.

Phil Barrett

Supervisor Wood very good. All in favor?

Several Supervisors

Aye.

Phil Barrett

Opposed? Motion carries. Thank you