

## WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**COMMITTEE: ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT**

**DATE: JULY 27, 2011**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR  
CONOVER  
GOODSPEED

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SUPERVISORS MONROE  
CHAMPAGNE

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

VICKI PRATT-GERBINO, PRESIDENT EDC, WARREN COUNTY  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
SUPERVISORS THOMAS  
SOKOL  
STRAINER  
MCCOY  
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Economic Growth and Development Committee to order at 11:11 a.m.

Mr. Taylor said he was impressed with the EDC's recent email updates and noted that Ms. Gerbino's efforts to improve information distribution were evident.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Vicki Pratt-Gerbino, President of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), Warren County, who distributed copies of the EDC summary of activities to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She advised of the EDC Board retreat held on July 19<sup>th</sup> which included a dedicated group of private sector business professionals who were committed to developing the economic vibrancy of Warren County and offered their skills and experience to that end. Ms. Gerbino stated she planned to create a working committee schedule to be chaired by private sector leadership. Also of importance, she said, was transparency in terms of reporting Committee activities and the impact of expenditures.

Addressing the summary sheets, Ms. Gerbino stated that the EDC would lead economic development initiatives which created private sector investments, making it desirable for private sector businesses to place capital at risk in our community which would ultimately create and sustain jobs. She reviewed the need for a well planned customer retention plan to engage private sector businesses. She apprised that meetings with upper level management were underway and noted the importance of obtaining key information from businesses to enable the EDC to develop the necessary tools to bring about growth. The tools, she said, included knowledge of each business, future goals, and specific tools for new businesses. She added that the EDC could prove instrumental in handling regulatory matters by channeling aggregate information to the State.

Ms. Gerbino advised that a formal business visit program had been launched to collect data for the development of a database. Additionally, she said, a list of upstream retention opportunities would be compiled as many local plants were branch operations of larger organizations. Eventually, she noted, the EDC would schedule visits with corporate headquarters to include Chief Elected Officials. Ms. Gerbino explained that when corporations evaluated productivity nationwide, the local branch operations were not personally known to them; thereby creating an opportunity for the EDC to make that connection.

Pertaining to the EDC's pool of resources, Ms. Gerbino said the pool included various local agencies and she reiterated the importance of identifying the needs of private sector customers. She said

the economic development infrastructure was in place, and coordination would be necessary in terms of delivering world class customer service. She said it was the responsibility of the EDC to carry out project management, remain responsive and credible, and to convey the valuable role of private sector partners on EDC efforts.

Mr. McCoy asked Ms. Gerbino if any tools were missing in Warren County, and Ms. Gerbino stated that discretionary funds for closing deals as well as pre-permitted, shovel-ready property were important tools which were not available in Warren County. She explained that many communities had created a dedicated discretionary fund using Occupancy Tax revenue. Ms. Gerbino said she observed that New York State lacked a strong presence at both national and international marketing shows, and noted Plattsburgh's attendance at aviation shows. She advised that \$10.5 million in State funding was earmarked by the Governor for business advertising and said she would like to apply her experience and familiarity with the network of site selection consultants and real estate managers to carry out the necessary follow-up work.

Mr. Goodspeed conveyed his confidence in Ms. Gerbino and the EDC's initiatives and recommended that alternative uses for Occupancy Tax funds be discussed in the future. He cited the example of a county in Florida which used Occupancy Tax collections to fund infrastructure projects, where public and private partnerships managed the entire occupancy tax loan program. He further stated that rural northern communities also referred to as upstream communities, such as the Towns of Stony Creek and Johnsbury, struggled as they faced an entirely different set of regulatory challenges unlike any other municipalities in the entire Country.

Mr. Sokol stated he had met with Ms. Gerbino and acknowledged that communication was a key factor for economic development. Mr. Conover underscored the importance of infrastructure viability, such as sewer and water. He noted the Asian Clam infestation removal issue presented a threat to Lake George and asked if the project could be made eligible for funding through the Small Cities Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program. Ms. Gerbino asked if there was an agency in Warren County which addressed issues on Lake George and Mr. Conover advised the lead agency for such matters was the Lake George Park Commission. Ms. Gerbino agreed the Asian Clam issue was critical for the region; however, she stated, the project was outside of the role of the EDC and that involvement would compromise her primary focus of providing customer services to private sector businesses who ultimately create jobs. The two components of Economic Development, she said, were product development (infrastructure) and sales/business development.

In terms of infrastructure and jobs, Mr. Goodspeed stated that often the largest employers in upstream towns were government entities and schools. He said retention in small communities required an effort on the part of the County to urge the Governor to abandon the strategy to merge smaller schools (enrollments under 1,000). He asserted the impact of such action would be devastating. In essence, he said, upstream retention must include the public sector. Ms. Gerbino noted that members of the Capital Region EDC would be announced by the Governor's Office this week.

Mr. Conover expressed his agreement with retention initiatives which, he opined, should be supported by local government. He also expressed agreement with Mr. Goodspeed's statement regarding the critical role of the public sector in upstream communities.

Motion was made by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Conover and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

There being no further business to come before the Economic Growth & Development Committee, on motion made by Mr. Goodspeed and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist