

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: ECONOMIC GROWTH & DEVELOPMENT

DATE: JULY 3, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TAYLOR
MONROE
BEATY
STROUGH

OTHERS PRESENT:

ED BARTHOLOMEW, PRESIDENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR WOOD

SUPERVISORS BROCK

SEEBER

SIMPSON

WESTCOTT

THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*

SARAH MCLENITHAN, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD

Mr. Taylor called the meeting of the Economic Growth & Development Committee to order at 11:14 a.m.

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

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ed Bartholomew, President of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), who distributed copies of various handouts to the Committee members; *copies of same are on file with the minutes*. He also distributed flash drives containing video from the May 16, 2014 EDC Annual Luncheon to the Committee members.

Mr. Bartholomew pointed out the handouts reflected surveys ranking school districts for items such as SAT (Scholastic Aptitude Test) Scores, and counties for items such as unemployment rates; he said these were a good indication of how Warren County compared to the rest of New York State. Referring to the www.nytimes.com article entitled "Where are the Hardest Places to Live in the U.S.", he said Warren County had ranked 628 out of 3,135 United States Counties. He noted the rankings had been based on the following criteria: education; median household income; unemployment rate; disability rate; life expectancy; and obesity rate. He stated Warren County's median income was \$54,909; the percentage of college educated residents was 27.4%; the unemployment rate was 8.6%; the disability rate was 1.3%; the life expectancy was 79.8 years; and the obesity rate was 33%. Mr. Bartholomew pointed out the handout contained the ranking criteria for Clinton, Essex and Washington Counties, as well and in comparison, Warren County had ranked higher than all three counties.

Concerning the handout from the Albany Business Review website entitled "Which Albany Area Schools Have the Highest SAT Scores?", Mr. Bartholomew announced that out of the 93 schools districts, Warrensburg Junior-Senior High School ranked in first place with a Reading Mean Score of 565; a Math Mean Score of 580; a Writing Mean Score of 545; and a Total Mean Score of 1690. He congratulated Chairman Geraghty on the achievement of the students at Warrensburg Junior-Senior High School.

Regarding the handout from the Albany Business Review website entitled "Best High Schools in the Albany Region", Mr. Bartholomew said out of the top 25 schools, 6 were within Warren County, ranking as follows:

- ▶ Queensbury Union Free School District ranked #11 for 2014 which was up 2 spots from their 2013 ranking of #13;
- ▶ Lake George Central School District ranked #12 for both 2013 and 2014;
- ▶ Bolton Central School District ranked #18 for 2014 which was up one spot from their 2013 ranking of #19;
- ▶ Johnsbury Central School District ranked #19 for 2014 which was up 18 spots from their 2013 ranking of #37;
- ▶ Glens Falls City School District ranked #21 for 2014 which was up 4 spots from their 2013 ranking of #25; and
- ▶ North Warren Central School District ranked #24 for 2014 which was down 6 spots from their 2013 ranking of #18.

Mr. Bartholomew stated these were the types of economic development indicators which potential businesses looked at when selecting a location. He pointed out that Hadley-Luzerne Central School District had ranked #59 in 2013 but had jumped 20 spots to #39 for 2014. Concerning the handout from the Albany Business Review website entitled "What Albany Area Students Plan to Do After High School Graduation", Mr. Bartholomew announced Johnsbury Central School placed third with 94.1% of the graduating class planning on attending college. He noted this was another positive indicator for companies looking to relocate or grow an existing business in the area. Pertaining to the handout from the Albany Business Review website entitled "Best Science Schools in the Albany, New York Region", he listed the following Warren County school districts and their rankings out of 85 schools: Queensbury-#12; Bolton-#13; Johnsbury-#20; Lake George-#23; Glens Falls-#27; Warrensburg-#41; North Warren-#45; and Hadley-Luzerne-#52. Mr. Beaty asked why only 85 school districts had been ranked for science when there were 93 school districts in New York State and Mr. Bartholomew replied that some school districts did not supply sufficient data to be included in the rankings. Mr. Bartholomew noted one of the key questions asked by potential businesses pertained to the quality of the educational system in the area.

Regarding the handout which was a press release from the New York State Department of Labor entitled "State Labor Department Releases Preliminary May 2014 Area Unemployment Rates", Mr. Bartholomew informed the Glens Falls MSA (Metropolitan Statistical Area) had an unemployment rate of 5.7% as of May 2014 which was decreased compared to 6.8% for May of 2013. He listed the following unemployment rates for comparison purposes: United States-6.1%; New York State-6.4%; Glens Falls MSA-5.7%; Warren County-5.7%; and Washington County-5.8%.

Concerning the map which was distributed, Mr. Bartholomew indicated this reflected the railroad system in New York State for 2012. He explained that in order for Saratoga & North Creek Railway to commence freight operations to the Port of Albany, it would be necessary to negotiate between four separate existing rail companies: Saratoga & North Creek Railway; Canadian Pacific Railway; CSX (Chessie Seaboard Multiplied) Transportation; and Albany Port Railroad Corporation. He explained that Finch Pruyn and Irving Tissue would deliver more paper by rail if there was sufficient rolling stock (equipment/cars) available from Canadian Pacific Railway. He said Canadian Pacific Railway admitted they did not have sufficient rolling stock in the area to accommodate the needs of Finch Pruyn and Irving Tissue. He mentioned Canadian Pacific Railway had indicated that if those companies wanted to include freight operations, they would need to lease or purchase the necessary railcars. Chairman Geraghty stated he had met with representatives from Saratoga & North Creek Railway a few weeks prior and had found it surprising how difficult it had been to work with Canadian Pacific Railway towards freight operations.

Mr. Bartholomew informed that Wayne LaMothe, County Planner, had been studying the feasibility of increased passenger rail and freight operations as part of the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor

Project. He said the study had been expanded into Washington County and following a meeting with representatives from Washington County, they had approved financial contributions towards the study. He added Iowa Pacific Railway had approved a contribution of up to \$10,000 towards the study and the EDC and Saratoga Industrial Development Corporation had each approved up to \$1,000 in contributions. He noted that freight operations for Finch Pruyn and Irving Tissue would include rail lines in Glens Falls and Fort Edward. He added that also included would be short lines of the Battenkill Railroad running through Shushan in Rensselaer County. He said they wanted corporations to look at freight operations as a viable alternative to trucking transportation but currently it was not. Mr. Bartholomew mentioned that Governor Cuomo's Office had been contacted and requested to examine the interconnecting rail lines. He indicated the EDC was in discussions with a wood pellet manufacturing company that was looking to relocate to the Warrensburg/Chester area and wanted to deliver their products to the Port of Albany and New York City via rail. He explained there was a new port being developed privately in Coeymans, New York which representatives from the EDC would visit within the next couple of weeks to determine if it was possible to make the connection of the tailings and the aggregate products. He noted he would request Mr. Taylor to accompany him as the Chairman of the Warren-Washington Industrial Development Agency. He stated there would be a great benefit to being able to ship agricultural products from Washington County to New York City by rail. He commented that freight operations were just as important to the economy as passenger service.

Mr. Bartholomew stated the Federal Government was looking to provide some assistance to upgrade the rail system. He noted there was the technical issue of the lack of rail line between Saratoga and Rensselaer. Chairman Geraghty commented each rail car could carry five truckloads of product. He said it was his understanding that Canadian Pacific Railway did not want to become involved in the freight operations. Mr. Bartholomew stated the EDC would continue to work with State and Federal officials in order to resolve this issue. Mr. Strough asked if the addition of freight operations would be beneficial to Barton Mines and Mr. Bartholomew replied affirmatively. Mr. Bartholomew stated the immediate problem was the lack of rolling stock and companies could solve this issue by leasing the cars. He added the greater issue was the various rules and regulations of CSX Transportation and Canadian Pacific Railway and that was where the assistance of the Federal Government would be necessary. He advised the EDC had applied for a Consolidated Funding Application Grant to fund the study and if the application was denied they would look into alternative funding sources.

Mr. Monroe asked if freight operations were a critical factor for wood pellet manufacturers in selecting a base of operations and Mr. Bartholomew replied affirmatively. Mr. Strough opined improved railroad and freight operations could lead to other economic opportunities and Mr. Bartholomew agreed. Mr. Monroe said if companies could negotiate long term contracts it could make it feasible for them to lease rail cars. A brief discussion ensued.

There being no further business to come before the Economic Growth & Development Committee, on motion made by Mr. Beaty and seconded by Mr. Strough, Mr. Taylor adjourned the meeting at 11:38 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McLenithan, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board
(As typed by Charlene DiResta, Senior Legislative Office Specialist)