

Recruiting and Retention Task Force
Monday, April 18, 2022 - 11:00 AM

Joe Pete Wilson - Chairman

Chairman Wilson called this task force to order at 11:28 am with the following in attendance: Stephanie DeZalia, Ken Hughes, Joe Pete Wilson, Mark Wright, Linda Beers, and Chelsea Merrihew. Steve McNally, Jenn Mascarenas, and Mike Mascarenas had been previously excused. Tom Scozzafava, Terri Morse, Wendy Sayward and Jim Monty were absent.

Also present: Dina Garvey, Jim Dougan, Erica Sadowski and Donna Wotton - Ti Alliance.

News Media present: Tim Rowland - Sun Community News

WILSON: Thank you, we've got a small room today, but it's good to have everybody here and I wanted to dedicate today to hearing from Donna about what the Ti Alliance is up to and then having some discussion and some interchange about how we can tie our efforts to what you're leading the way with and maybe look at ways to spread these kind of ideas out through the college, through the work of housing, that this Committee is doing with childcare, all these things. So, I want to introduce Donna Wotton from the Ti Alliance and they're really an active, dynamic group in Ticonderoga, working on a lot of the same issues we're talking about. But, maybe we can go around the room, real quick, so you know who the audience is.

At this time introductions were made.

WILSON: So, one thing to know that, Jim, Chelsea and Erica and Linda Beers from Public Health are all departments that are always working to recruit. I mean how many opens do we have, total, right now?

SADOWSKI: Right now, we have quite a few. It varies from department to department.

BEERS: But are they open? So, sometimes they're posted. I don't have any openings. I mean I have like 4 jobs there, but there's people in them that are waiting for tests, right? I'm sorry, I do have an opening, too.

SADOWSKI: Correct, so that's a little bit different, that's not really a vacancy, that's just waiting for permanent status from the exam.

BEERS: And many people, it's hard to decipher that when you look at the ads. Like, are there people really in those jobs that have been waiting for the tests for 2-4 years and 3 years? Because, the posting will stay open, until they've taken the test and gotten the job, does that make sense?

SADOWSKI: I think about, I'd say 30 plus.

WILSON: So, like a solid 5% of our workforce is open and as you were presenting this morning, DMV can't staff its hours. We don't have enough people and Ti is going to be one the places that shows up. So, this Committee is trying to find ways to recruit employees to the County, which

really means how do we get the word out, but how do we make this a good place to work that's competitive for people looking for a job and seeing some of the work you're doing with getting young people into the workplace. So, maybe I'll turn things over to you, to talk about the initiatives. One last thing, so this Committee's working on; childcare, housing, and a broad bunch of strategies around getting, you know, it would be like through Personnel; marketing and streamlining the application process and getting the word out. So, it lines up with a lot of the things that you told me you're doing. So, I'll turn it over to you.

WOTTON: Great, thank you so much Joe Pete and thank you for inviting me here and for all of you to be here today.

You know, Joe Pete and I met a number of years ago when we were working on trying to create a trade school down in Ticonderoga and that didn't work out for a variety of reasons, probably all of which were the right reasons and when that didn't happen, one of the problems that we were solving for at that time was, less about the employers than it was about the students at that time. We were graduating almost ½ of our students, at the time it was like 30% of our students down in Ticonderoga who were not going on to college and they weren't going on to very much. You know they didn't have really great prospects there or didn't feel that they did. They were unmotivated to move their lives forward. So, we started solving for that problem and in the process the employment situation has gotten even more dire for the employers and now we're solving for both sides of that equation, both the students and the employers and making sure that we're developing a sustainable workforce development program for our area. Which when we think of Ticonderoga, we think of Hague, Putnam, Crown Point and Ti and sort of Moriah, all together in that, because that is the community that uses Ticonderoga as its commercial center and its business center. So, that's how we started to approach this and realized that we needed to start thinking a little bit differently about it and getting out of the box and solving for the issues, rather than trying to fix a system, in some way, just creating things that could start to work on this.

So, we originally started that process by engaging with our school counselors, who down in Ticonderoga we have two counselors in the high school for a couple hundred kids, they were, at the time, highly focused on two groups. The group of students that were seniors, applying for colleges that they had to help with their applications and essays and all that kind of stuff and then there's a group of kids, every single day that's in crisis of some sort and those were sort of at the two ends of the spectrum of those 200 kids and, you know, 70% of the kids that fell in the middle of that who, they just didn't have the bandwidth to help. So, we started with, we're like, how can we help you, what can we do? What would be helpful? And they just couldn't even verbalize anything, really. They were just too overwhelmed and so we started exploring, what's your day like and what are the things that you have to do? So, one of the things, at that time was that they were just, couldn't get to all of the kids that were graduating to help them with the next step of any kind and some of the kids were interested in getting into the trades or some other things that maybe they could go to one of the community colleges for. So, we created something very simple, they didn't have the time to like, some kid comes in and says, I want to be a plumber or a welder, you know, where am I going to send this kid to go get some training? So, we just took, off the internet, and all the college websites, what programs they teach, of things that, we concentrated on things that we needed in our communities, jobs that we needed to fill and who taught what and we created, something as simple as this little brochure that lists all of the 8 colleges in our region, from community college, one year and two year programs, in a variety of those different things, super simple. On the back it talks a little bit about money, half of these kids don't have any money to go to college, so they're not even thinking about it. You know, don't worry about that, go get

yourself in, go find a program and we'll figure out the rest. So, we starting out helping them figure out how to get their financial stuff done, helping the counselors a little bit with that, figuring out where all the grant stuff, you know we just went and did the sweep, figure out where the money is. Let's not make that a hurdle and then all the admissions stuff, here, so they could just go online and do the application. So, it was a, this was like a two-week project, we just did the research, printed it up, it's now online and we promote, it's online in two ways; one is anybody, it's on our website and built for mobile, so any kid, any parent, anybody can go online and see it anytime. We update it annually, we do have a version of this in a drive that's a shared drive online, that we'll give anybody access to. If you want to print it for your school, you can print it for your school, hand it out to kids and parents, whatever. So, we've made it public for anybody in the region who wants to pirate it. So, that was like a simple thing the first year, but it's so impactful to the counselors and the kids, that that was like, it turned out to be a pretty big thing.

So, after that we started tackling getting kids connected with careers and figuring out what it was that they wanted to do and we started with something called Contractors in the Classroom. We were working with the technology class in school and helping to bring people from the community into the classroom to tell kids about what it was they did for a living and we had some rules for this and we still have rules for its current version and for the employers, we want them to tell the kids, like the truth about how they got where they got. You know, everybody has sort of a route for how they got there. I am sure you all do, you didn't all start in these jobs or maybe you did in some path, but then you modified a little bit. So, people say things like, well, I went to jail for three years, you know, we want them to hear that, because that's the reality for these kids and their families and those kinds of things. There is something on the other side of that, right? Or I thought I was going be a dancer and now I, you know, do something else, you know whatever. Tell the story of how you got there and all the different things you did in-between, so they can see that career paths are just that. You know, a goal of something as nebulous as success in the end or financial independence or whatever those things are, a family or whatever those things are. You get there by following opportunities along the way. So, we tell those stories. So, Contractors in the Classroom also taught a skill. Each time somebody came in, they taught the kids how to do one thing. One of them was scribing wood railing together without any nails. Kids went home and built new railing around their porches. You know, it was just fun stuff and cool people to bring in, but COVID hit and Contractors in the Classroom went out when all the kids went out and then was restrictive coming back in. That happened in March, by the time we got around to fall we said, okay, what can we do here? And we worked with John Donahue our principal and the counselors to figure what could we do and we couldn't be bringing people into the classroom, so that morphed into something that we call, Students in the Field; which is now in its second year and really flourishing. And Students in the Field takes small numbers of kids, usually 5-6 at a time to some job site or other and we talk to those people about what they do for a living and see, first hand, how that goes. It can be out with Tony DeFranco to look at designs for a landscaping project along Lake George that has a lot of environmental issues related to it and then we go to that site and we look at the drawings again, in relation to actually seeing the site. It can be Amanda DeFranco, who his wife, who's a large animal vet, going out and doing an examination and treatment of a horse. It's contractors, like general contractors and other disciplines, it's IT, it's Hudson Headwaters, it's anything that has a job in our community that you could be training for.

So, those three things have been really instrumental, the last one is scholarships. There's two more. Scholarships; some kid decides that they want to go to some training course here, again, we want to remove the money thing. We've raised money each year to do \$25,000.00 to \$30,000.00 in scholarships. The scholarships are to remove that last barrier that they have. All

these kids are eligible for Pell Grants and things like that, but our system it set up, through the State of New York with the assumption that every kid is pretty much in commutable distance to a community college. So, aside from a couple of general ed. classes at Ticonderoga, you won't find any of these things in Ticonderoga, in campus. So, our kids have to go hour-quarter, hour-half away and that's not commutable distance, so they have another \$7,000.00, \$8,000.00, \$9,000.00 on the other end of this that nobody's going to fund for them. So, we do. We basically make a deal with the kid, we have them have some skin in the game. They've got to do summer jobs and things like that, a couple of grand together, usually their family has a small contribution, whatever's left, we'll take it and we get private donors to donate to the fund. We're really excited, we're just about to announce that we have a private donor who just donated \$100,000.00 to endow our scholarship fund. So, we're going to start there and build it. We would like to have about \$250,000.00 to be able to generate what we want to generate.

And then the last thing is, you know we spent all this time with employers in the field with kids, there's a last step, you can't leave out that last step and that last step is actually connecting those two for employment and making it as easy as possible to do that. So, we have a job fair coming up on April 28th; which we would be happy to have anybody come and participate in and, but, instead of having just put everybody in the room with a table and let the kids pass through, we want it to be a little bit more facilitated than that. So, we created a catalogue, we went to all the employers a month ago and said, what do you have open, especially for seasonal stuff, but also for graduating seniors, for full-time, what do you got open? Give us a little description, we'll put it in our catalogue, we took this to the kids, a week ago we gave them to the school, they went to every, basically homeroom group and gave them the catalogues, talked to them about this, the kids can look at all the jobs, fill out the piece on the back that says, I'd like to interview for these things and we collected those on Friday. This week, we'll work with the employers to make sure that they have all the applications of kids that wanted to interview with them. We have 87 interviews that we have scheduled and that's sort of the base of the job fair and then also, additional kids, like the sophomores and stuff and the freshmen, will be coming through the job fair. They can add more interviews, if they see something that they didn't think about before, whatever. The counselors work with them all to make sure all their working papers are in place, so everybody's ready to go to work and to get a job.

Again, with stuff like this, we'll put the original artwork up on our shared drive and you can go there and do a job fair in your town or do one for the County in a similar way. You can steal our material. We highly encourage it. You know, some of these things don't even have a logo or anything on them, so you can just steal it. Most of the, all of the photos that are in them are off of Canva, so they're in the public domain or they're our own photos that we take doing stuff.

So, our goal here, as you can see, is to really, you know, cradle the job, get them interested. One of the greatest pieces of data that we have here about this program is that in 2018, 3 years ago, in the fall, there were 8 students from Ticonderoga, which is Ti, Hague and Putnam that went to CV Tech, this year there are 41 and that doesn't include the 51 that are in the New Visions Program. I mean, you know, just in a couple of years we've really changed, not only attitude of the kids, which has really, but we even have a lot of, the counselors tell us, that there are a number of the kids that are going to CV Tech who are college bound, they just want other skills and a different way to go to school. So, we're really starting to impact how kids feel about their futures and what they want to accomplish at the high school level even to be able to go out into the world. And then, we've done a lot of promotion, we're a 2 ½ person organization. Myself, I have one person that is completely dedicated to communications, our website, our press releases, our social media, I don't know how many follow us, but Tim can tell you, we're really prolific and

shameless in self-promotion about these programs, because it has really changed how the parents view vocation education and skilled training, how our community in general has embraced it in such a big way. Our employers, our families, you know, it wasn't that long ago that they were like, those dumb kids, those 8 dumb kids go to CV Tech and now we're having trouble funding it. The first two years when we were building this, we did not have money in our school budget to pay the tuition for these kids to go to CV Tech and we got a federal grant two years in a row and that helped with about half of the tuitions that we build there, but last year when we applied for it, they turned us down, because we've been a little too successful at this and they want it to be self-sustaining. They want us to have those tuitions in some other way, you know from our tax base or something, which is not happening. So, we're in danger of being a little too successful here with this, but we'll take it, you know. Ti Alliance is an organization that is privately funded by design, but I would like us to get more municipal support, State, Federal, municipal, everything that we could get, because we could do more with it, but it gives us the opportunity to be a little out of the box on a lot of things. But, something like this, if we have, we have a really great community, especially around the lake there. We have a lot of seasonal people who have means and there are incredibly dedicated to this community, whether they live there, full time or seasonally and they're willing to support our organization. They're willing support these programs. You know, when we need money we can make a few phone calls and get, you know, a few grand here and there that we need, you know, a lot of this we haven't been able to, nothing fits into like the State funding parameters, and the Federal funding parameters. Nobody's doing programs like this, they just have it, so they have trouble figuring out how to fund us for this stuff and actually the only funding that we really have is that ½ person on our staff, Melinda Fuller, who coordinates our school program and you've just got to have a body to.

So, some of the other things that are available in our drive, if you want to do a job fair; there's a job fair spreadsheet for organizing your job fair or for organizing your students in the field trips. You know, have like, we have genericized our logs that we keep, that Melinda, her call logs and her scheduling logs and everything. Just pull them off, don't reinvent it, just start working on stuff. But, it does take a body, there are virtually, I think we spent this year, we'll probably spend, maybe a few hundred dollars on the entire year's, Student in the Field Program, with the exception of Melinda, but actually out of pocket. You get people to fund this stuff and they want to fund the project, they don't want to fund the overhead. There's nothing to fund here, it's just work, you know and that makes it a challenge. Fortunately, we have people like Adirondack Foundation and Pearsall Foundation and Cloudsplitter and some of those folks who funds us, so we can pay Melinda to do this work.

Anybody have any questions on sort of the student programs?

MERRIHEW, CHELSEA: I think that's fantastic. My husband and my brother are both contractors, carpenters and they joke that they're the youngest ones in their field, at 40 and 37.

WOTTON: Yeah, well, you guys know, here in whatever town you live in, our population, our working population is aging, I think the median age or the average age in Putnam is pushing 60. In Hague it's in the high 50's. Ticonderoga brings it down, because they have more family population there, so theirs is, but it's still well above the State average and if you look at just the working population, the average age is something like 48.

MERRIHEW, CHELSEA: And there's very few people in the trades.

WOTTON: Very few people. So, our job fair next week, we have 9 kids that are going to interview with R.A. White for jobs there and kids will go into that, if they have some mentoring and the connection. You know the kids, their parents nagging them and they're too shy to make a call and call somebody up, they don't know who to call, but they would like to work in the field.

MERRIHEW: And taking the stigma off of the trades. When I went through school, BOCES was for the troubled kids, it wasn't ever promoted to anybody else.

WOTTON: As an advantaged.

MERRIHEW, CHELSEA: Right

BEERS: My kids both went to New Visions, which was part of BOCES, but we didn't have New Visions in Essex County. I paid tuition and sent them to Glens Falls, because we didn't have a New Visions Program.

WOTTON: They're really building it here and it's getting really good and we really want them, so I sit on the Board of BOCES and started that last July and the reason why I took the position was, obviously, I'm a little interested in education, but I really wanted to understand a little bit better about how they work and stuff. So, now, I'm there advocating for my community and pushing them really hard to make sure that we get, we need childcare staffing, down in Ticonderoga and we need culinary support down there and I'm really want them to get those programs migrated from Plattsburgh down to Mineville. We've added, what have we added, 30 some kids to their enrollment in Mineville, let's give those kids the opportunities that they have in Plattsburgh. So, I can be on my education soapbox all day long.

SADOWSKI: I think another thing to add is, to the kids that are college bound, who are able to come back to here and have those internships, you know to have that. So, you're having kids, I know this because, I've had two, one just completing college, they had to go elsewhere for it. Now, my son got his two years of paid internship with IP and that's where he is right now. My daughter had to go elsewhere, because she's a business major. There's nothing here for internships that she needs to have, so she's going to be in Albany area. You want them to be able to come back here and sometimes I think, if they can see, you know, hey, I can use my degree and stay where my family is I mean a lot of kids have to go elsewhere and that's just another thing that we don't have here.

WOTTON: Well, that's another thing that I think we're going to be working a lot more, so we've built these programs over the last three years. We think there's a bunch of others here to finish out that conductivity of getting people to move here, because they can see that there is work opportunity for them in whatever their field is. You know, we've got a lot of health care jobs at Hudson Headwaters, throughout the area. You know, Ticonderoga is really expanding the Ti hospital with UVM is expanding, we have teaching opportunities, but we have a lot of other things through sort of succession. We walked about our workforce getting older, we've been working with Centers for Businesses and Transitions to, they, I don't know if you know them at all, but they have a program that helps people figure out succession for their businesses. So, we have a lot of people that are aging out and need to sell their businesses or just retire or whatever and the last thing we want is for those few service businesses that we have to go away. So, I think part of that

succession planning is helping kids come back in business capacities that can help those people, you know, do those internships with some of these businesses, help those people with their transitions or even become a part of those transitions and maybe take over some of those businesses. So, I think there's a whole other place to go here in that respect.

BEERS: Also, have, I'm on the Board of Hudson Mohawk AHEC and they do a lot of, so that pipeline building for health care systems and we've been in Ti School a lot and we do the EMT, the EMS training in the summertime and the paramedics come and all of that, but yeah. So, from a department that takes on lots of interns, which I do, I take at least 4-5 nurses a year, I am taking on kids from St. Lawrence this year, kids that are speech, OT and PT. I do say though, it's overwhelming on my end to get all these interns in. I mean there's an ask and especially if they're here, really as an intern and I have to have a program that's very specific, each one of them usually has a goal and I have to pair them with somebody. So, it's not as easy as everyone likes to think, especially the nursing.

WOTTON: No, it's a real investment.

BEERS: It's really an investment, taking on public health nurses and I would love to say they came back to me and it's disheartening, sometimes, but it's a lot of work on our end and a lot of, not that we don't enjoy it, we really always believe that we're going to get back, but I don't want anybody to think that it's an easy lift just to take on these interns and have extra staff that has their own agenda and whatever and just to be fair, they haven't always been great, right? And then you're like, oh my.

WOTTON: Right, you're sending this person out there into the world.

BEERS: Anyway, it's really great, I really do appreciate and love what you've done. I am from the Schroon Lake area and they've had several mentorship programs that we've been involved in over the years, but this one really seems great.

WOTTON: Yeah and you know, there's always more that we can do in so many respects, but I think it is sort of a number games. You know, if you have enough kids that see an opportunity in your community, you're going to have more of them coming back.

BEERS: Right

WOTTON: If you can show them where their place is here then the more that we can do that, the more that are going to take that option or you know, have some life alternating event like a global pandemic. Where we had just started creating our co-working space in Ti, we had a very generous building owner, right downtown, who, I've been talking about this for a while. My previous life was in hi-tech in California, so you know, they've been remote working for decades and you know I said, I think we should have a co-working space and my board members, said, what is that? You know and I said, you know I described it and they said, do we really need this? Yes, but they're really supportive and they were like, whatever, you know, do what you're going to do, we love you, do your thing and so for nothing, literally, I don't know, \$100.00 maybe we spent. That landlord created a space for us, we went on marketplace, Facebook Marketplace, found somebody with a bunch of cubicals, that was downsizing, put it out on our Facebook and

Instagram pages that we were looking for furnishings and we have a 10 space, co-working space with a conference room and another private room that now accommodates, is pretty much full in the summertime and it didn't really cost us more than a nickel, even the plants are donated. But, it looks really good and professional, a lot of the stuff matches. IP had a bunch of stuff in a second round, we had to expand it, last year, because we were too overwhelmed, we doubled our space. You know, you can do this for nothing, you know.

DEZALIA: Yeah, I spoke to you about that and I just was telling Ken that we're working on one of those in North Hudson.

WOTTON: Yeah and you know, you don't really have to appropriate a whole lot of money.

BEERS: Well, it's really important for us, especially for North Hudson and some spots, because not everybody still has access, so they literally have to.

DEZALIA: Well, that's why I'm doing it, because I have people sitting in my parking lot doing their work.

WOTTON: We have a lot of people in Schroon Lake, Eagle Lake, all around, you know, Ti, Hague, Putman, one of our full time, we have a full time person that commuted from Vermont for a year and they just moved to Ticonderoga, you know, everybody's got broadband issues and some little pockets and whatnot, we're not going to solve that completely for a while.

BEERS: But, you've got the solution.

DEZALIA: Right

WOTTON: And some people just want to work in a professional setting, especially in the summertime, when their houses are full of family and children and you know, really hard to have that nice quiet conference call or zoom or whatever when you've got 3 year olds.

BEERS: Do you rent the space?

WOTTON: We do, but we make it super cheap. It's \$15.00 a day, but then you can have a month for a couple hundred bucks.

DEZALIA: Yeah, Saratoga on Broadway as one, that's Saratoga Co-works and if you go to their website, what I liked also, it was a networking opportunity of small business entrepreneurs. So, you get them in a space, they'll talking and they're networking and stuff, so there's bigger benefits than just the desks there.

WOTTON: And we a have little bit more space next to us that we would like to do some sort of incubating a little bit and do that in this next door space that would be its own space, but you could put a couple little start-up things in there. If I had a little bit more time, I'd already have an engineering team making a little company in our town.

WILSON: So, to change to childcare. So, this Committee working with ARPA funds is supporting ACAP.

WOTTON: I saw that.

WILSON: Okay, good.

WOTTON: So, here's our perspective on childcare. ACAP and Childcare Council of the North Country have some really great resources now, part of the Federal stuff, part of the State stuff. It's been, you know for a decade we've been talking about the problem of childcare, but never funding it. Now, they're funding it and that's fantastic. As you guys all experience in your communities, the challenge is that in-home childcare is dwindling and that's the reason why they're focused the way they are. Last fall we went to North Country Childcare, we went to those guys and said, hey, we've got somebody who's interested in doing a public thing, here, in Ticonderoga and would like to start like a whole business doing it and it was a short conversation. They said to us, you're not doing to be able to do that and it's a matter of the legislation and restrictions and things like that and what's mandated to you that you can't make the dollars work. You have to have a certain ratio of teachers to kids in various age groups and if you pay the minimal wage, which is what the going criminal wage is, not that I would editorialize that at all, yet, we can't expect people to want to work there, if you're going to pay them minimal wage, anyway, you still can't meet that gap with what you can charge for childcare. It can't be done. So, we're like, geez, that's dismal. You know, we got somebody that wants to do this and you know we can help fund them a little bit, no can do. So, we said, okay, well, let's see what we can do to help support those guys in getting people interested and we did a lot of, some promotion on that and we can't get people to bite. In fact, I don't how many, I am sure you've all, now, read their childcare report from last fall, the Childcare Council of the North Country, Essex County has one slot for every 4.3 kids that need childcare, under the age of 5. Ticonderoga is a little bit higher than that at 4.6. So, since that report was done, Ticonderoga area has lost 2 additional providers. At the end of this school year, there will be 16 slots in Ticonderoga for childcare. This spring ACAP, so those guys have created phenomenal programs. They've got SBDC involved, where SBDC will help anybody create their business, set up all of their accounting, even do some of their accounting for them, you know, they'll help them with those services, because that's what holds a lot of people back from having a business; right? So, okay, we'll help you with the business side of things. ACAP has got all these new training things and they're doing them in the evenings and Saturday, anything they can do to get people to come to them, make them available. Just a tremendous amount of support and new programs that are coming out there. I went to one of their evening sessions, I tried to go to one of their evening sessions, earlier this spring, last month. I was the only one there. Cynthia Johnston, who's our supervisor at our school, she went to one on a Saturday morning and she was the only one there. So, as much promotion that's going into that right now and hopefully, more promotion will support that, but right now, we've got people leaving the business and not coming into the business. We do, however, have a lot of people, not a lot, about 6 people who have contacted us about our new approach to childcare here and creating a public space, because they're all providers that have done home providing before or who worked in a home providing situation, who just didn't want to do it in their house anymore or moved and they didn't have the facilities that their previous bigger home or whatever those things are that took them out of the business. Most of them just didn't want to do it in their homes anymore, they wanted to reclaim their lives a little bit, but they loved taking care of kids, they're

licensed providers, they could work in a public facility. So, we have been working, now, along with Cynthia and the school in creating a public facility. We've had a couple of different potential opportunities for where that would go, but we're currently concentrating on our school. Two or three years ago, two years ago they moved, split up our middle school so that the 5th and 6th graders we're going to the elementary school and consolidating the 7th and 8th grade to the high school. So, there's a section of our elementary school that used to be the middle school where we have three rooms, big rooms, next to each other, one of which was a Home Ec. Room, which would be ideal for infant care. It's already got all of its plumbing and its food service things, refrigerators, appliances, sinks, all of those things in it, a door to the exterior, to the outside, that has a parking lot for pick up and drop off, right outside, a lawn next to that that could be a great playground and that is in an unused section of the school and then we would have two other rooms for toddlers. We've had the Office of Child and Family Services there, along with their certified safety people, ACAP, Childcare Council folks, all coming in, working with the team of contractors and architects to figure out how to turn the two, basically ready rooms, that we currently have 100 and some odd kids in that school, already and we can't do it for less than half a million dollars. It is, we've got staff, we've got funding, we've got private funding that will step up and help us with these costs. We can access some State funding for some. We have a provider, Healthy Kids is the largest provider in New York State of childcare, outside of New York City and they have a, their closest facility is in Old Forge, they have one there, but most of their stuff is sort of Syracuse and Hudson areas. They have 22 facilities or something. They would like to come in and run this for us. They can get a desert grant, a Childcare Desert Grant to help do it and we can't figure out how to turn three school rooms, where there are children in the school into childcare for less than a half a million dollars.

BEERS: \$500,000.00 we're talking? I'm sorry, just half a million always sounds like a lot more than \$500,000.00 to me, so interesting.

WOTTON: Yeah and it relates to...

BEERS: Yeah, what's the cost?

WOTTON: The cost is in doors. Doors that cost \$36,000.00 a piece, we have to have another door. Okay, we'll give you the \$36,000.00 for the door. We don't understand that, but we'll give that to you. But, the current three rooms don't have a wall that goes all the way to the ceiling. They're built up of different, like lockets and stuff like that, so you have to close them to the top; which means that you must have a separate HVAC system just for those three rooms, even though they could be properly serviced by the existing one. You have to close them off and make its own thing. You cannot have any egress, whether it be for secondary or primary that has any other functionality whatsoever. So, we have one outside door on the side, we can put another outside door over here, but one needs to be diagonal and it cannot go into the 15-foot-wide corridor that is there, because it is shared, some other way, even if it was just an emergency exit, it is shared with other people and so the fix for that, we keep having these fix for this one thing. The fix for that is to create an L Shaped corridor, 4-foot wide, fire trap, I'm thinking, inside other the other walls so that nobody else can use their egress that they have to use.

BEERS: So, these are OCFS regs., within a public school that are different, that's why they never match up.

WOTTON: Well, so we have 2 different versions. We have to satisfy SED, the education folks, because they own the school and we have to satisfy OCFS for childcare.

BEES: Okay

WOTTON: And those two things don't mesh very well, so we're having to invent other things.

WILSON: Well, that's interesting, because we talked in the long term, if we get the school here, what a great facility it would already have built in for childcare and it sounds like they're dreaming.

WOTTON: Well, or you're looking at a half a million bucks or something, you know or whatever it happens to be for your school, you know it depends on how that's structures, but the, so the, right now we're pretty focused on the school. We don't really have another facility that would be as good as that.

BEERS: How many kids would go there? What would be the openings?

WOTTON: We did our own childcare survey, because we really wanted to understand for our community what we were solving for and often times, we're so far south here, that a lot of the data that we get on Essex County and stuff is pretty much skewed to the more northern part of the County with Placid and Saranac and some of that stuff up north, so we really wanted our own data. We had 103 people respond to our survey and ultimately the key number is that we have about 87 kids that would go here, if they could.

BEERS: Sure

WOOTON: So, you know, we're never going to solve, and we only had 103 respondents. We sent it out to all of our major employers who put it out via email to their teams. The school put it out through their parent system, teachers.

BEERS: I guess my question was, how many can it handle? Not how many would go.

WOOTON: It would handle 57, if we can build it out the way we want to build it out and the way Healthy Kids needs to build it in order to make it doable for them. They have the business proposition here, how to make it and they're a business, they have to run it profitability or at least break even or not quite break even, because, hopefully, they also run afterschool programs and so we're talking about giving them space for afterschool, as well. So, that's a more profitable endeavor. So, between those things they think they can do it and are totally onboard for this, they've already put in their initial application for desert and are working on their final app., you know, we're moving forward, one way or another here. It just doesn't have to be painful and so, you know, in talking to some folks last week on the Southern Adirondack Childcare Council and sort of talking about our plight here, they were like, yeah, we spend a couple of decades trying to put conditions in place to make our kids safe, you're probably not going to be that successful in getting them to alter that and make it to accommodate your particular situation here and I said, how many childcare, public facilities do you have down in that area? There are five or six of them and so we went through sort of each individual and I said, how do they get to be and they were

all made by private companies and they were all built from scratch and she said, you can't really take an existing facility and build what needs to be built to satisfy regulations. So, we'll do it anyway.

BEERS: Good, you can set the precedent, because it is our intention to move forward with that school.

WILSON: I think we need to end at 12:30 and I'm sorry to do that to you.

WOOTON: You know, look through some of the data that we got on our own community, again, if you want to do your survey, it's just a Survey Monkey, I'll give you all the questions.

WILSON: Yeah, I think you're laying out some good models for us to follow up with the childcare, the learning what you're doing there and I'm meeting with the college, with North Country Community College tomorrow morning and I want to really get you talking with them, because I think the things you're doing, the models you're building, the more we can spread them out into other towns doing things like this and then tie in our recruitment with it. That job fair catalogue is awesome and we should be...

WOOTON: It's worked really great, like we were not sure, like when we did this, we're never sure when we're inviting these things, like what's going to happen, you know we thought, you know, are kids really going to do this? But, we got 87 different things they want to apply for. So, the employers are really going to get their summer people out of this, you know they're going to get what they need out of it and the kids, if they want a job, they're going to get a job.

WILSON: Yeah

WOOTON: Just keep inviting, you know.

BEERS: Really love the resourcefulness.

WILSON: It is amazing what your group is doing and in such a short time, too. But, it shows that, like the issues that we're trying to address, if we don't have someone really dedicated to it, they're hard issues to affect the outcome you want.

WOOTON: And the other thing is, like, you know, when I first started doing this work a few years ago, I don't know anything about economic development at all, but I came from an industry where technology, besides, where they're inviting stuff all the time, that's the whole deal and I was so frustrated in the beginning by how structured everything was and how there was a way that you had to do things. You know, I used to be a lot more interested in applying for grants and things like that and I am getting less and less interested in that all the time, because the restrictions on those grants limited what we can actually do. Whereas, we could actually go and do it with private money, just the cycles alone of 6 months for the application, until you find out what it is and then another few months of administration and then you know the things that you have to meet along the way. I'm like, okay, I could have done this by now.

BEERS: Dan Palmer has an expression, is the juice worth the squeeze?

WOOTON: Yeah

BEERS: I would go for these little grants that bogged me down.

WILSON: You have to do the same amount of work for \$5,000.00 as you have to do for a million.

WOOTON: And nobody is going to give us a million, because all we want to do is have a couple people working on projects.

WILSON: But, you're talking about a classic, small community issue. I'm facing this with water. I need \$200,000.00 for one of my water districts. Nobody's going to grant us that money, because we're too small, but that would be an opportunity where efforts like yours, if we have it be a, you know, if we've got 3 or 4 towns together, pooling in, then the grant might be worth it, depending on whether it's childcare or whatever, But, where we're getting enough money to make all that input worth it.

WOOTON: You know, for childcare it's an opportunity for North Country to have a childcare program down in Ticonderoga and we could be training for a bunch of things. We could help ACAP in their home, this is not going to, our, the one at the school is not going to solve our full problem. We need home care providers, as well.

WILSON: And we're building a new school in Keene and same thing, you've got to start from scratch and it's going to have 20 some places, but it's still a fraction of the demand.

WOOTON: Yeah, yeah

WILSON: Thank you Donna.

WOOTON: Thank you so much and call me up, anytime.

WILSON: Well, thanks so much for coming, too.

WOOTON: Do you want to talk housing, real quick?

WILSON: Oh, yeah.

WOOTON: We have a 2-minute thing on housing. Housing, we're taking sort of a 3-prong approach to. Again, hopefully, I'd like to get some public money into our system in some way, but we're really focusing on 3 things. One is, we have a couple of people in our community that are renovating, doing creative things to renovate and create good workforce rentals that a, like a young engineer from, my criteria is like, if a young engineering from International Paper, Salvano, is coming here, you know, they're a professional person, they want to live in a decent place, would they live here? That's the criteria for it is. It's not low income housing, it's not mixed income, it's like, do you want to live here? So, we have some private individuals that are taking some multi-unit places or even things creative, like small motels and things like that, renovating those into cool little apartments. And then also working with, down, people doing downtown development,

we just, if you haven't been in Ti lately, we have a beautiful new, what used to be the Burley House, down on the corner, at the end of the street. A private investor did that and came to us and said, I really want to do something for the community with this building, you know what should I put in the upstairs? Should I put like dance studios for kids or karate studios or what should I put in the top of it? And I said we really are working on trying to get a younger population living in our downtown that can provide the basis for revitalization of all kinds down there. We need apartments for professionals.

WILSON: It's too bad Ken had to leave, because he's been working on the land bank, but I just think we just were talking about our tax foreclosure, what if we could give you a bunch of property?

WOOTON: You can.

WILSON: I know, yeah.

WOOTON: We are LDC, you can.

WILSON: It would be great to...

WOOTON: And we've had a derelict buildings program down in Ticonderoga, identifying buildings and remediating them and stabilizing them and some of those foreclosures. We're about to have, hopefully, soon, the Hacker Building, in downtown Ticonderoga, that Ti Alliance is buying for the tax arrears to be able to repurpose, where we have a waiting business waiting to go there. Could we get the half million dollars, the quarter million dollars that we need to do the roof? No, we cannot. That's the only thing keeping that from being, eight months from now, a viable, massive new attractive in our town. That's what standing between us and a major success there and we just have to get that done before the thing falls down, because then you can spend that quarter million dollars hauling it away and we have a big empty parking lot downtown. But, back to housing, so there's rentals. We do have some people, a couple that lives over in Putman that are moving up, full-time in June and going to be, they're going to bring some help with them and they're going to be buying very distressed houses to renovate and put into our housing market for, you know, things under I would say \$250,000 at the highest, but they're probably doing to be \$180,000.00-\$200,000.00 for single family homes. So, rentals, single family, we do have somebody, we have a piece of property, up behind our town community center, that has all, it was started as a development 25 years ago and got stalled. It has five double townhouses up on the north side of the property, but the rest of it is all, sewer and electrical is already in and could be developed. So, we do have somebody that is working on that, as well. So, that would be condos, maybe a couple of single family homes, similar to what they are doing in Lake Placid with that one development where they have condos and some little capes. So, we're working on those things in those three different ways, trying to concentrate a lot of effort on things that are walkable to downtown, so that we can build that young population downtown that we're looking for. So, looking for anybody who wants to work on things together and partner with that.

BEERS: I'll just tell you, I'm the Public Health Director and we have Creating Healthy Places Grants, that we, as a matter of fact, I've dumped, probably, at least \$300,000.00 into Ticonderoga in the last few years by redoing all our basketball courts, by doing, putting playgrounds in where they weren't, several years ago, actually now, but we're also interested in partnering and

supporting working with you on livable community and what it really looks like and where the sidewalks are for everybody and I do love the emphasis on young people, but the old people just live here and we need to make them wide enough and you know movable for them.

WOOTON: Absolutely, and we expect for the long-term to have a very vibrant senior community. You know, they are our life blood.

BEERS: Absolutely.

WOOTON: And they don't want to leave, you know, they want to snowbird, maybe a little, but none of them are interested in leaving Ticonderoga, because they love it.

WILSON: Well, Donna, thank you so much. It is amazing the work you're doing.

WOOTON: Thank you all, sorry, to talk your ears off.

WILSON: And I'll follow up with Joe Keegan and then we're continuing to meet and going to take some of the food for thought you gave us and see how we can build on it, support what you're doing, all those things.

WOOTON: Anyway that we can help you guys and make materials available, we're happy to share.

WILSON: Thanks so much. Thank you everybody.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS RETENTION AND RECRUITING TASK FORCE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 12:30 PM.

Respectively Submitted,

Dina L. Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board