

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Monday, March 8, 2021 - 10:30 AM

HELD VIRTUALLY

Ike Tyler, Chairperson

Roy Holzer, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Tyler called this Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Meeting to order at 10:32 am with the following Supervisors virtually in attendance: Clayton Barber, Robin DeLoria, Archie Depo, Stephanie DeZalia, Shaun Gilliland (in person), Joe Giordano, Roy Holzer, Ken Hughes, Steve McNally, Noel Merrihew, Jim Monty, Jay Rand, Tom Scozzafava, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson, and Davina Winemiller. Charles Harrington was absent. Jeff Subra was excused.

Department Heads present: Dan Palmer (in-person), Mike Mascarenas, Anna Reynolds and Jim Dougan. Dan Manning was absent.

Deputies present: Dina Garvey

Also virtually present: Aurora McCaffery - Essex County Historian, James Seeley and Carley Summers - Cornell Cooperative Extension, Jim McKenna and Mary Jane Lawrence - ROOST, and Bruce Misarski - Housing Assistance Program. Jody Olcott and Carol Calabrese - IDA were previously excused.

TYLER: Okay, everybody we'll head right into Economic Development and Planning.

The first item on the agenda was Industrial Development was Jody Olcott and Carol Calabrese having been previously excused.

The next item on the agenda was Community Resources with Anna Reynolds reporting as follows:

TYLER: Community Resources, Anna.

REYNOLDS: Hi, Hi Ike. On the Town of Essex, a referral was submitted for an area variance based on the total gross feet of a new home, due to required roof pitch. The project utilizes an existing driveway, but a final permit approval will be required from DPW to ensure stormwater controls and sewer easements are in place. So, a no impact determination should be made based on that final permit approval.

TYLER: So, we need a resolution on that?

PALMER: Yes, you need a resolution accepting that determination.

HUGHES: I'll move that resolution.

TYLER: A second? Mr. Holzer

**ACTION OF THE ESSEX COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
ON REFERRAL RECEIVED FROM THE TOWN ESSEX**

The following motion was made by Supervisor Hughes.

Where, the Essex County Planning Board has considered the following GML 239 referrals at its regular meeting on March 8, 2021.

REFERRAL

Town of Essex - Lee & Heather Maxey

PROPOSED ACTION

**zoning variance for construction
of a single family residence**

Whereas, none of the referred, proposed actions directly impacts a county road or county property.

Be it adopted by the Essex County Planning Board that final permit approval will be required from Essex County Department of Public Works to ensure stormwater controls and sewer easements are in place, and the respective referring bodies may take such final action as they deem appropriate.

This motion was seconded by Supervisor Holzer and passed on a vote of 8 in favor, 1 absent and none opposed.

TYLER: All in favor signify by saying aye? Opposed? Thank you Anna.
Anything else?

REYNOLDS: Yeah, there's a virtual municipal training, sponsored by Broome County and Planning Board Members, Zoning Board Members and any interested party can log in, March 29th at 6:30 PM for renewable energy, leasing on agricultural land and again you will get one credit hour. So, if a code enforcement officer would like to attend, you can get a credit hour for that. Dina had sent the flyer around last week and I can resend that, if anyone's interested And then a New York State Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law is coming into effect, next year. There is a public hearing on that, April 17th and I had sent around the flyer last week and I can send it again, but if anybody is interested in providing a public comment or listening into the public hearing it will be at that time.

TYLER: Anybody have any questions for Anna?

REYNOLDS: That's it.

TYLER: Thank you

REYNOLDS: Thanks

The next item on the agenda was Cornell Cooperative Extension, with James Seeley reporting as follows:

TYLER: Next up, Cooperative Extension, Mr. Seeley.

SEELEY: Good morning, Jim Seeley, Cooperative Extension. I have asked Carly Summers to join us today to give a brief report. Carly, are you on?

SUMMERS: Yes I am. Can you hear me okay?

TYLER: Yes

SUMMERS: I guess to just follow-up a little bit on what Anna Reynolds was already mentioning, that even a few months ago, before Jeff Kehoe's presentation on renewal energy came up for announcement, Anna and I drafted a letter to go out to all the town planning boards, because we think it's really important that the town planning boards create provisions in their zoning policies that allow them to have a little bit more power and guidance in what types of solar, commercial, siting projects come to docket. Currently, from working with our agricultural producers throughout the Champlain Valley, and even up into the less known agricultural towns of the county, there are a lot of solar development, in terms of commercial projects, propositions going out to farmers and that could potentially lead to a loss of some valuable farmland. So, what it would do, to work with the town planning boards to create zoning policies that would be, that you would be building solar policy guidelines within the zoning policies, that would give the town planning board a little more power. So, basically, right now, only Ticonderoga out of all the towns in the County, has anything regarding solar policies zoning in their zoning policies that give them any power at all to review or have any say in which farmland or commercial buildings or commercial zoning sites would be able to be converted to solar or not. We think it would be really important to make sure that all of our towns have that in their zoning policies. So, we'd love to work with all of the towns to make sure that we can use the Ticonderoga zoning policy as a model and also look outside our county, as well, to make sure our zoning policies are as strong as they could be. So, anybody that could be on that Ag and Markets call, that cares about the zoning policy or have any say on those, I think that'd be really great and then Anna and I definitely want to follow up and make sure that we support those towns to move forward with making sure the zoning policies can protect the towns and the farmland. Does anyone have any questions about that?

DELORIA: Yeah, I do. Carly, Robin DeLoria, Town of Newcomb. Ironically, I have a resolution that's going to be passed at my Board, tomorrow, authorizing our Code Enforcement Officer to utilize the New York State guidelines for establishing and permitting solar projects and, but I would love to see what Ticonderoga has in paper and I will forward you the information that I've just received from a company that's willing to send out RFPs and whatnot for the community solar projects and there's no commitment on the town's part, but we're going to take those steps over the next couple of weeks. So, I would absolutely include you, and maybe Anna. We're going to set up a Zoom meeting with this company and I'll just send that out to you this afternoon.

SUMMERS: Wonderful, thank you.

DELORIA: Good, thank you and send out that Ticonderoga stuff.

SUMMERS: Okay

DELORIA: Thanks Carly.

TYLER: Carly, got anything else?

GIORDANO: I don't have a question, I'm just going to comment, basically what Robin had said and thank you Carly for, for announcing this, because this is, took a while for Ticonderoga to get theirs organized, but NYSERDA was a great asset in that. NYSERDA has a guideline book, not only for the law itself, but also for establishing PILOTS, which is kind of what we're working on right now. So, I'd be happy to share that information. I think it's on our website and like I said, New York State, NYSERDA has good resources, I can even put anyone who's interested in contact with the person who has been assisting us and they're more than eager to assist in the development of that. They've got a nice template and you just kind of walk through it, based on your community and you know, it worked really well. So, I just wanted to offer that.

SUMMERS: Yeah, thank you Joe, because basically the main gist of what we're trying to make really clear is that would give the zoning boards the ability to have a say. So, it just has to be in the zoning policies. It doesn't mean that any solar projects should be rejected, necessarily, but it's definitely important to have a say, because there is a lot of farmland that could potentially be transitioned, because over 50% of farmers are currently reaching retirement age and a lot of times getting a phone call from a solar developer is a really quick and easy way to know that you can get the cash for that land. And what that could end up translating to is our county, which right now, agriculture is one of the driving economic forces for our county and agriculture is definitely a cultural driving force for our county and leading a lot of new families to come and move here and want to live here. We don't really want to lose our farmland, but we also want to make sure we support those farmers. You obviously want to make the right financial choices for themselves as individuals, and there are a lot of ways we can support those farmers, who obviously want to make the right financial choices for themselves as individuals, and there are a lot of way we can support those farmers. So, if the zoning board can have more power to say, let is work with you, because we don't want to lose our farmland, but we can help you to also make sure that you get

the best situation for yourself financially, as well. We just want to make sure that we have the ability to do that and not just lose this farmland, because it would be very easy to start losing a lot of farmland coming up.

And then an update on the Food Scraps Law, just wanted to let you guys know that we did integrate as an update for the Farmland Protection Plan, which is also a food systems plan, strategic planning process that you guys supported with \$10,000.00 match for the \$50,000.00 that Ag and Markets put in. We are currently in the survey phase, so thank you to all of you who sent out surveys to your towns and promoted them. We added a bunch of questions in for the restaurants and also with interviews for any institutions and hospitals that are food scrap generators, as well, to see where they're at. That way we can get some information that will be useful moving forward with any type of action needed for this new food scrap law and we also, asked farmers about their composting and what they're open to accepting from generators, in case that might be a viable option, because Jim Dougan asked about if farms may be an option in terms of accepting compost or processing compost. So, we're just trying to get any information that might be useful for ending up with action items for dealing with the new law.

TYLER: Thank you Carly. Mr. Seeley?

SEELEY: That's it, thank you. Great job Carly.

The next item on the agenda was the Historian, Aurora McCaffrey reporting as follows:

TYLER: Aurora, I'm going back., as they say in the Presidential campaign, circle back to you.

MCCAFFREY: Hi, good morning. You have my report, I don't have anything to add this month, but I'm happy to answer any questions.

TYLER: Anything for Aurora? Thank you.

MCCAFFREY: Thanks

TYLER: Have a good day

HOLZER: Ike?

TYLER: Yes

HOLZER: Weren't we supposed to do a resolution for Cooperative Extension?

TYLER: About what?

HLOZER: Proclaiming March as Agricultural Month?

PALMER: Yes

HOLZER: It's on our agenda.

GILLILLAND: Yup

HOLZER: So, I'll move that.

MONTY: I'll second

TYLER: Thank you

RESOLUTION PROCLAIMING MARCH AS AGRICULTURE MONTH

Holzer, Monty

TYLER: All in favor? Opposed? Very good. Moving on to Mr. McKenna

The next item was the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST), with James McKenna and Mary Jane Lawrence reporting as follows:

LAWRENCE: Good morning.

MCKENNA: I'm going to turn it over to MJ to start our marketing review.

LAWRENCE: Good morning everybody.

TYLER: Hi MJ

LAWRENCE: Hello, so I have a couple of updates this month. We are working with the Lake Champlain Region on rebranding that region. We have created a community group; I believe it's about 18 to 20 community members. We sent out a survey, not only to community members, but to travelers to get their feedback on what they thought of the Lake Champlain region. What the strengths are. What the weaknesses are considered to be and we got some great feedback. And we did go over that survey with the branding committee. And so our next steps will be to draft a branding statement to review with the committee.

We're sending out this very similar survey to the Whiteface Region, because we're also going to be doing a brand update for the Whiteface Region. So, those are two pretty large initiatives that

we're working on in our region.

We rebuilt the Town of Keene's website and that should be launching on March 17th. So, thank you Supervisor Wilson for all your assistance with that.

We're working with Carly on the distribution of the Ag survey and I believe, actually, Carly, did you get results of that survey? Are you still on?

SUMMERS: Yes, I did. Actually, you guys boosted the restaurant participation by many fold. So, we have about 20 responses and we had previously only had one or two, so that was excellent.

LAWRENCE: Oh good.

SUMMERS: Thank you, I think we're up to about 300 resident responses and I think we only had maybe 200 before that, so I know you guys' emails are definitely helping, so thank you.

LAWRENCE: Oh, you're very welcome. We're glad to hear that.

The Community Tourism Enhancement Funds; the checks went out to all the towns for the 2020 balance payments. So, everybody should have received that and Jim if you want to speak to what we're looking for going into 2021, as far as occupancy tax collections. I mean, obviously, January is the month that we have right now, but we're up significantly. Jim, do you want to speak to that or do you want me to?

MCKENNA: Yeah, so, occupancy tax collections for January '21, was actually a record for January, prior to that our record January was 2020. So, far exceeded our expectations, we actually, numbers were up 38% over 2020 and that was pre-COVID. What we saw was about a 20% increase in traditional lodging collections and about 100% increase in AirBnB collections, during that period. So, that's where we are, starting the year off strong. You know, what we anticipate is that the year is going to continue to build like this. I think with vaccines coming on now, that we have anticipate travelers will be coming to our region, probably greater than the levels last year, the projections. We won't know until that actually happens, but long haul travel, European travel, people from the northeast traveling out west, we think is still going to be guarded, so we are positioned well for this coming year.

LAWRENCE: And then speaking to that, we are hosting a community call, and the email to everybody will be going out tomorrow. The community call will be Thursday, March 18th at 10:30 and that will be to discuss 2021 events of all sizes; large, you know larger and then of course, some of the smaller ones and get the feedback from the communities to get an idea on how we should proceed in 2021.

TYLER: Thank you MJ.

LAWRENCE: You're welcome. I think that was it for my list.

Oh, one more thing. As all of you may already know, Main Street in Lake Placid will be going under some major construction starting in the spring of '21, this Spring 2021, with the plan of, hopefully, completing it in the fall of 2023, prior to the World University Games. They'll be replacing

some of the water and sewer underneath the ground and then diverting water to reduce the salt into Mirror Lake and then doing some esthetic work on the top. So, that's going to start in April. We are doing a campaign, too. It's called Perfecting Placid and that is to speak to travelers, so that they have an understanding of what they'll be coming into, not wanting to discourage them from coming, and not, also at the same time, wanting them to be blindsided when they get here and there's construction on Main Street. So, we're really trying to promote Main Street, that the businesses are open, where the detours are, where the parking is. Then again, the construction will pause for July and August and then it will start again in September, until as long as the weather permits.

TYLER: Thank you, any questions?

HOLZER: I just want to remind everyone, while Lake Placid is torn apart, Wilmington will be open for business.

MCKENNA: I have a couple of quick points that I'll go through if that's okay, Mr. Chairman? You know, over the last months we've identified a new industry that has some legs and has some potential for our county and that is the result of the relocation survey that we participated in with Warren County EDZ and I think you all have received a copy of it and what's of note is that the remote workers are a real thing. Approximately 40% of the respondents now have the ability to either work full time remotely or a majority of the time. You know, what that does for our region is that we with the outdoor recreation is certainly identified, is a very high attribute, safety is, as well and you know, we have to look at that moving forward and I've talked to Carol, we've had a quick conversation, or quick email on this. It is a new industry and it is, it's an industry that we don't have to build facilities for, per se, for their work, they bring their job with them and what's also good to understand is that it's not necessarily a, a minimum wage type job that comes with them. So, I guess the point is, there is an industry out there that we can, we can adapt to quite easily. We offer a lot of the assets that some of these individuals will be potentially looking for, they bring new jobs with them, they're year around, so the economy they bring with them is a year around economy. Our biggest challenge is going to be housing and it's not looking at housing that is considered affordable or subsidized. It's housing for the middle income markets, where this is. So, I'm just saying, we don't, we haven't figured out the next steps, but our first goal was to really identify; is there a market out there? There certainly is and the response was, you know just under 7,000, I think it was 6,700 and something, but when you look at the regional marketing area which are the states surrounding us, the potential is there. How we tap into it, we have to figure out, because it can change the paradigm on year around residents for us. So, that's where we're approaching to look at that. So, I just want to mention that.

Also, very quickly, the Lieutenant Governor has requested that we host a budget update, you know, how they do it annually. I'm sure we've all heard that already, but, she's going to do one on Thursday, this coming Thursday at 1:00, you will all get an invite. I'm sure you've already heard the budget updates, but it's an opportunity for general public and smaller business to hear it, so we said we would host that.

And then finally with the World University Games, very close, so we should know the next month, there will be a National and Canadian broadcaster that the organization feels they'll bring to the

table. So, that should be, hopefully, we'll know next month who that is and that's all I have Mr. Chairman.

TYLER: Thank you, sir, any questions for Mr. McKenna?
Not seeing any, I'll move onto Bruce Misarski.

The next item was the Housing Assistance Program with Bruce Misarski reporting as follows:

MISARSKI: Good morning, the Housing Assistance Program, Essex County is, we'll be hosting a Public Hearing, next week for the submission of a Community Development Block Grant funding for housing. The funding announcement happened about 30 days ago and it was a short announcement, with an application period of about 60 days. So, we're scrambling to put some housing applications in for this round's CDBG program.

And the Housing Assistance Program's interested in doing a Rental Rehab Rehabilitation Program this year that would assist small landlords with repair assistance within, in the tune of somewhere, around \$20,000.00 per unit and, and rehab assistance to landlords that rent to low and moderate income families.

So, we have a public hearing, next Monday at 11:30 at this forum for the county meeting and we'll be putting in an application in on April 9th.

So, that's all I've got to report.

TYLER: Thank you Bruce, any questions for Bruce? Anything else to come before this committee?
We are adjourned.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:54 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board