

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Monday, February 9, 2026 - 10:00 AM

Matthew Stanley, Chairperson
Kenneth Hughes, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Stanley called this Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Meeting to order at 10:22 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matt Brassard, Chris Clark, Timothy Follos, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Steve McNally, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathleen Reusser, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson, and Margaret Wood.

Department Heads present: Mike Mascarenas and Anna Reynolds.

Deputy present: Dina Garvey

Also Present: Dan Kelleher - ROOST, Carol Calabrese - IDA, Elizabeth Lee & Cole Trager - Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Nicole Justice-Green - Essex County Land Bank, and Caitlyn Wargo - Adirondack Roots. Aurora McCaffrey - Essex County Historian was absent.

The first item on the agenda was the Industrial Development Committee with Carol Calabrese reporting as follows:

STANLEY: Alright just after 10:00 o'clock. We'll get the Economic Development Committee meeting called to order the Essex County IDA Carol is here, so if you want to come up.

CALABRESE: Good morning, my apologies last week got away from us, we did not submit a report, but I do have a couple updates and of course I'm here to answer any questions you may have as well.

So, we are in full swing operating three micros right now, this, I'll say spring, but it's still winter. So, the town of Ti we are, we've held a training class of which we had about a dozen businesses attend, and the applications are due on February 17th. So, we give them 3 weeks upon completion of the training class just so that their applications.

The Moriah micro, we held a training class last Monday. We had about 5 businesses participate. Their applications are due the 23rd of February, and we are going into Round 2 of the Town of Jay's micro. That the public meeting is tomorrow night. The training class is scheduled for February 24th, and the applications will be due, March 17th.

STANLEY: Great, any questions for the Essex County IDA? Alright, thank you very much.

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

REYNOLDS: Good morning, today I have a resolution. A resolution accepting the Zero Emission Vehicle Grant which is the EV chargers, 2 EV chargers. So, 4 with 4 hookups and in the amount of \$55,008.00 and then authorizing the County Chairman or County Manager to execute the agreement.

STANLEY: Can I have a motion for that resolution? Ms. Reusser, and Ms. Wood

RESOLUTION THE COMMUNITY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT TO ACCEPT AN ZEV (ZERO EMISSION VEHICLE) GRANT THROUGH THE NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION IN THE AMOUNT OF \$55,008.00, AND FURTHER AUTHORIZING THE COUNTY CHAIRMAN OR COUNTY MANAGER TO EXECUTE SAID AGREEMENT.

Reusser, Wood

STANLEY: Any discussion? Being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye. Anybody opposed? Motion carries.

REYNOLDS: Thank you, so hopefully next month we can get the account set up as we are still waiting for contract execution documents.

MASCARENAS: Yeah, the timing of these couldn't be better our other ones are getting a little expensive to keep fixing and, in all reality, the, they're the only ones I know of in the area is what I've been told. So, Town of Elizabethtown, I think there might be the only ones here.

REUSSER: My House.

MASCARENAS: Well, yeah people like personal ones but for public use, I think there's only ones in the immediate area, so they're critical.

MENSER: Yeah, Crown Point has some.

REYNOLDS: We do have two referrals, today. One is for the Town of Wilmington, amending the Land Use Code. The documents have been submitted and I've reviewed. There are no countywide or intermunicipal impacts, so therefore a letter of no comment may be issued.

STANLEY: Can I have somebody support a resolution for those referrals. Mr. Wilson and a second, Mr. Tyler.

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

The following motion was made by Supervisor Wilson.

Whereas, the Essex County Planning Board has considered the following GML 239 referrals at its regular meeting on February 9, 2026.

REFERRAL
Town of Wilmington

PROPOSED ACTION
Amendments to Land Use Code

And 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 no recommendation or comment on said referral shall be or hereby is made, and the respective referring bodies may take such final action as they deem appropriate.

This motion was seconded by Supervisor Tyler and passed on a vote of 9 in favor, and none opposed.

STANLEY: Any discussion? Being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye. Anybody opposed? Motion carries.

MASCARENAS: Yep, quick explanation for new Board Members, this Committee acts as the Planning Committee. You won't see these referrals at Full Board Meeting. Whatever comes out of this Committee is the recommendation in terms of planning. What is there a 30 day response time frame from time of receipt to time of getting it out?

REYNOLDS: Correct.

MASCARENAS: So, what this Committee says in terms of those referrals is what happens.

REYNOLDS: And Judy will issue the letter as soon as she can get to it. It is usually about a week after and I know a lot of Planning Boards and Town Boards do rely on that letter in hand, so if you need it immediately, she's very nice and Dina, too, to get it out to you as quickly as possible, so decisions can be made.

The second one, in the Town of Willsboro, 3647 Essex Road for site plan review and again this is a State road, that's 500 feet within a state road so that's why it qualifies for County Referral. There are no intermunicipal or countywide impacts so a letter of no comment may be issued.

STANLEY: Can I have a resolution for that referral? Ms. Reusser, second by Ms. Wood.

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

The following motion was made by Supervisor Reusser.

Whereas, the Essex County Planning Board has considered the following GML 239

referrals at its regular meeting on February 9, 2026.

REFERRAL
Town of Willsboro, 3647 Essex Rd.

PROPOSED ACTION
Site Plan Review

And 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 no recommendation or comment on said referral shall be or hereby is made, and the respective referring bodies may take such final action as they deem appropriate.

This motion was seconded by Supervisor Wood and passed on a vote of 9 in favor, and none opposed.

STANLEY: Any discussion? Being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye? Anybody opposed? Motion carries.

REYNOLDS: That is all I had today. I don't know if anyone has any questions?

HUGHES: I'm late to the game, I'm sorry. The EV charging station, I know we just passed that in committee, they're being added to the parking lot and are we are we supplanting or supplementing what's already existing on our property?

MASCARENAS: Yep, yeah what we're doing is looking at our current plan. Jim and I had a brief meeting, on this last week. I would really love to get the fast chargers.

HUGHES: Right

MASCARENAS: And use this money to get the fast chargers. I'm not sure we have enough electricity to support them. I think they need a 400 amp service in order to support those charges. I'm not sure we Have that amount of power.

HUGHES: Right.

MASCARENAS: So, on the ones that are broke we probably look for replacement, on the ones that are good we probably look for supplementing, but it all depends on available electricity and what we can actually handle.

HUGHES: Once we have are broke?

MASCARENAS: We had one that's broke up at the Public Safety Building, currently.

HUGHES: Ok

MASCARENAS: So, we have repaired there out here, and we've kept up with that. Recently, we

had one go down up at the Public Safety Building. I've been holding off knowing that, on repair, knowing that we have this grant fund we don't get a lot of revenue in terms of usage on that.

HUGHES: Right.

MASCARENAS: The expense outweighs the revenue for having these stations but it's kind of an important location for individuals that may have Interstate access coming off the Public Safety. So, we will get a full report to the board once we get the contract from the State and our investigation on what we can put in, where we can put them in. We're certainly going to utilize all \$55,000.00; I can promise you that so whatever that turns into in terms of charging stations, we'll do.

HUGHES: Thank you

STANLEY: Now I know the Town of Jay just won a fast charger in last year 's round. We had to go to NYSEG to make sure there was enough power grid didn't do it. So, it's a process to make sure it can happen.

Any other questions for Community Resources?

WOOD: Yeah, I just want to thank Anna and Jessica for coming to Schroon Lake on Friday to meet with 6-8 DEC members. We're in the 7th year of trying to get a permit for a 300' sewer main. And it was almost a happy meeting, and I just want to thank him publicly for coming down and being there face to face and only 2 of all those DEC members were on a screen, the rest actually came to town.

STANLEY: It's a great time to remind all the new Supervisors, if you have any infrastructure, water, sewer needs, Community Resources is a great resource for you to use.

WOOD: A great resource.

MENSER: Along the lines I'd like to thank Anna and Hannah both who came to see for well over an hour last Thursday, to talk about future projects that Crown Point is going to have to do and how to lay things out from the beginning to make it more successful.

CLARK: I am not on this Committee, I wanted to thank Anna, personally for all the help. We received a grant for our salt shed and she did all the work really and I want to thank you very much.

REYNOLDS: Thank you.

STANLEY: Now, anybody have anything bad to say? (laughter)

FOLLOS: I would like to thank Anna, for all your patience and all your help explaining the bureaucratic maze that Wilmington is going through to amend our land use code, thank you.

REYNOLDS: You're welcome.

STANLEY: Anybody else? Perfect, I'll let you go.

REYNOLDS: Ok, thank you.

The next item on the agenda was the Essex County Historian, with Aurora McCaffrey absent.

STANLEY: Up next we have a historian who has a monthly report but is not here today.

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

LEE: Good morning, everyone. I would like to start by thanking Jim and Andrew from Department of Public works, because we're almost moved in, we're getting closer, we're nearing in on that. The staff has walked around and it's looking great, we're really, really excited. I hope you all have seen it and if you have it, we'll see you shortly after we're moved in.

There are many of you that I have not gotten to meet you yet, attend a meeting with you in your office. I'm trying to get around, and I will do that soon and if you have any questions, we are happy to give you information that we have about your towns in the food system in your town and happy to talk to you about that as well as our senior programs and our youth development programs. With that I want to turn the meeting over to Cole Trager, who has an update on the Ag District.

TRAGLER: Good morning, everyone, for context, for any of the new Supervisors our office manages the Agricultural District for the County. So, What the agricultural district is our statewide program for our farm inclusion so that farmers are guaranteed the benefits of the Right to Farm Law And what the Right to Farm Law does is that it sort of protects them from baseless complaints that are not, it's sort of a foundation of legal insulation that protects them from baseless complaints that aren't grounded in best agricultural practices. So, if there are neighbors that have issues with smells and sounds that are kind of normally associated with agricultural production, what it does is, it protects farmers from individuals and also from development pressure at the local level. So, as per Article 25AA Section 303-b of the NYS Agricultural and Markets Law, the Farmland Protection Board met last month to review the applications for inclusion. Our letter of recommendation is included in the packet, but just for reference, I'll briefly touch on the parcels and applicants. These are Robert Alexander from the Town of Lewis, Timothy Brearton from the Town of Elizabethtown, John Peck from town of Wilmington, Cory Weidenbach from Town of Essex and Casey Galligan, also from the Town of Wilmington. What we do is, we meet and go over the through the through the parcels with satellite imagery. I conducted site visits for all

operations in December and beginning of January and as a Board, we determined that these parcels do consist primarily of predominantly viable agricultural land and that the inclusion of these parcels to the Agricultural Districts would support the future viability of their operation. Most of these properties are actually already engaged in agricultural production so it's a little bit of a formality it's not just not really any changes in land use that are happening, but there is one unique parcel that we want to highlight which is Timothy Brearton, this parcel in Elizabethtown is unique in that it is technically within the hamlet and just want to be clear that this is not that's not a precedent that we're trying to set with the Agricultural District and you know we're not, the purpose of the Agricultural District is not to protect land that's inside the hamlet but, this is a unique circumstance and that this production is all above ground in tunnels, essentially in raised beds. So, one, there's no environmental impact and two, this farmer is contracted with some of the other farms in the local area. So, he actually grows greens and other crops to supplement some of the other community supported agricultural firms in the area. So, the reason why we have approved this one is not because it's someone's blown up backyard production, but because it's actually a part of the agricultural economy here. So that's the only really unique situation of these five applicants but we did just want to highlight that to make it clear that we're not setting a precedent about inclusion of claims in inside the hamlet. I had a couple other points, but I just wanted to pause if anybody had questions about those five applicants.

STANLEY: Can we first get a motion to move the resolution authorizing the inclusion of it's only the five?

TRAGER: Five applicants, six parcels, yeah.

STANLEY: Ok, six parcels to the Essex County Agricultural District. A motion by Mr. Hughes, a second by Ms. Wood.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE INCLUSION OF SIX (6) PARCELS TO THE ESSEX COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT

HUGHES, WOOD

STANLEY: Discussion?

HUGHES: Cole, can you just remind us of that how often this process happens? Is there a timeline, is there like a deadline that this has to be done by in a certain year?

TRAGER: The inclusion process happens annually and so this would have been the open enrollment period that ran from through October and November of last year. So, this was the 2025 applications and our goal, the reason why it's set up this way is that we ideally get this process done before people are getting into tax season, so that they have clarity on their agricultural district status before going to their assessor and potentially, because you're supposed to apply for agricultural district inclusion before you move forward with your agricultural assessment process like the agricultural asset is just distinct like it's completely separate from this. So, there's no tax implications for the agricultural district but technically you're supposed to do it before you do your

agricultural assessment and if you are you get out of a little bit of extra paperwork like if you jump the gun and go straight to agricultural assessment without being the agricultural district there's some additional paperwork that you have to do. It's not a deal breaker but that's the sort of appropriate order. So, the goal is to get this done by, the next steps are for me to file the short environmental assessment forms and submit a request for resolution for the following, for next month 's meetings and then ideally, we would have that solidified before people would be going to their assessor.

HUGHES: So, assessors have, I think, a March 1st deadline for exemptions. So, is that kind of is that the deadline you're kind of working towards by moving this through?

TRAGER: Ideally, but we do run into a situation every year where we're pinched for time and so like this year, we're not going to get that done before this happens. So, we have had discussions about changing the open enrollment period or moving the open enrollment period. What we want to do is move the open enrollment period to actually to the spring because we've had a bunch of problems, we're doing farm visits in December and January to determine agricultural viability and there's 20 inches of snow on the ground in Wilmington.

HUGHES: That's the point I was going to bring up. I think when you originally brought this to our attention just as an FYI and it aha moment for me, like that makes sense, as you said. We really want to wait till the snow melts and so we can actually see what different soils are like, what the grounds are like, but obviously everybody knows what the soils are like, because you have that data so you didn't have to wait for the snow to melt in order for this Board to make an educated and informed decision.

TRAGER: Yeah, I mean we, to be blunt, we are using a little bit of imagination when we're looking at a field that's covered in you know 2 feet of snow in Wilmington and trying to determine its agricultural viability would definitely be better to do that in the spring, but changing that time frame would require us submitting a separate resolution. So, right now we just don't have the bandwidth to get that done at this point, but that's something we're probably looking to do moving forward so that in the future years we can have a timeline that works a little bit better for the farmers.

HUGHES: Agreed

STANLEY: Any other discussion about this resolution?

FOLLOS: Can you reiterate what the benefit is to the property owner of being classified this way?

TRAGER: Yeah, so it's kind of the first layer of legal defense for farmers. So, if they are driving tractors early in the morning, they have roosters crowing early in the morning, they're spreading fertilizer, they're spreading manure, like they're doing things that are very much grounded in good agricultural practices, but you know perhaps their neighbor doesn't enjoy having the tractor running at 5:00 in the morning. What it does is, it sort of protects the farmer from that kind of basic level of complaint. So, there's really like not as long as they're kind of following good agricultural

practices and there's no environmental concerns and things like that then there's really no avenue for those kinds of complaints to move forward and then the other situation where it's really important is with municipalities and kind of developmental pressure it's a little different here. But, if you think about other areas of the State, where the sprawl and kind of suburban sprawl is really pushing into farmland, one of the other points in the letter of recommendation is about solar development, that's another great example. Like we want to make sure that those agricultural resources are protected and so what happens a lot of the time is you'll see farmland that gets completely bought up and developed around it and then all of a sudden there's sort of different, local expectations for that farmland because now it's surrounded by suburban communities on all sides of the property and what the Right to Farm Law does is, you know if those individuals or those towns sort of want to have different aims for that property long term then agriculture, it protects the farmer from that and so the farmer isn't going to get priced out or they're not going to be forced out for the through development pressure.

TYLER: By doing this is this help in the tax exemption process?

TRAGER: They do, there's a little bit of extra paperwork in the assessment process if you're not in the agricultural district, but you can still, a lot of people actually apply for the agricultural assessment without being in the agricultural district. Like you are supposed to be in the agricultural district as a precursor before starting your assessment, but you can go right to the assessment process and then there's just a little bit of extra paperwork to fill out but, it's not it doesn't necessarily, being in the agricultural district streamlines your assessment process but it doesn't have any implications per se for whether you're going to be approved or not.

TYLER: Thank you for that, because we need a lot more tax exempt property in the Adirondacks

STANLEY: Any other discussion about this resolution? Being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye. Anybody opposed? Motion carries.

TRAGER: There's two other details that I wanted to point out from our meeting with the County Agriculture and Farmland Protection Board; that's one, there is increasing, I don't know what the long term implications are but, there's obviously more conversations about solar development in Essex County. There's a couple different projects that are at various stages of completion and planning, etc. and we do. Many of these properties are, many of these developments are targeting properties that are in the agricultural districts because they're you know pieces of farmland that are either kind of coming out of production or haven't been aggressively farmed. You know we want to be clear that there's a way that solar development can really damage the long term agricultural viability of those properties and there's a way that solar development can also really contribute to the long term agricultural viability of those properties. We are working closely with Community Power Group which is the development that's going on the town of Essex and that developer in particular has been extremely accommodating of, well there's a bunch of local interest that the developer has been accommodating of, but specifically because that property is in the agricultural district there are some ecological changes that they're making to the property in terms of reseeded, putting in beneficial species, working with contract grazers to graze the

vegetative cover instead of blowing fossil fuels to mow that off for the next 30 years and so if you are if there are solar developments that are happening in your town, please let us know. We're happy to work with the developer and submit some recommendations that help us all achieve the best land use outcomes.

WOOD: I am woefully ignorant for someone who supports solar development, but in your planning and in your agreements do you include stipulations for decommissioning or whatever the proper word would be so that things that are replaced or just, there is no longer a profit for a company to be made that location and lifespan of these things is expired, do you work that into your contracts?

TRAGER: Yeah, I mean that's pretty, I would think that would be pretty standard. It's not something that we do, like we're not in contract, that like the town is, you know, would be in contract, so we're not mandating, but I think you would certainly want to have decommissioned included in your in your approach, but the decommission doesn't have as much to do with like the long term agricultural viability or we're you know we're more concerned about the vegetative cover and soil quality and things like that, but yeah I would think that it would be wildly remiss to not have decommissioned at the front of that conversation.

WOOD: Thank you

MENSER: I can kind of respond to that, Crown Point has had basically three new solar farms put in recently and there's a decommissioning bond that is put in place, from the very beginning to take care of it.

WOOD: Thank you

STANLEY: Any other questions for Cooperative Extension? Alright, thank you very much.

TRAGER: Well, yeah sorry I had one more final thing and I'll let you go. I just wanted to point out, next year 2027 is the five year anniversary of the Farmland Protection and Food System Plan, that was approved by this body in 2022. So, one, that's something incredible to celebrate we've had a lot of wins that came out of that document and that document is also helped our office and a handful of other offices generate millions of dollars of funding that ultimately helps the the farmers, farmers markets, retail businesses and so it's been extremely impactful in terms of generating funding that comes to this County from the State and from the USDA. But I just wanted to put it on everyone's radar that will be looking to elevate our reporting for that progress, plan progress next year, so keep an eye out for more information there. Thank you so much.

STANLEY: Thank you very much.

The next item was the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism with Dan Kelleher reporting

as follows:

KELLEHER: Good morning, everyone, terrific to see you all. Today we have with us our Annual Report for 2025 activities. On Page five of the report, we have some of the highlight figures for the year. We welcome roughly 3,036,000 overnight visitors during the course of 2025, who cumulatively spent roughly \$411,000,000.00 in the County. I want to stress that these are just overnight visitors. We don't get the final numbers on total visitors spend until August, when New York State puts out the total visitor spending in Essex County. Right below those figures are data on what percentage of spending in the County comes from people who don't live here. So, overall, in 2025, 35% of every dollar spent in Essex County was spent by someone who doesn't live here. Some different sectors performed differently; our local businesses, you know when people come up and travel, they want to support authentic experiences. So, our local business expenditure is actually slightly higher at 42%. Below that, you can see data on how much visitor spending contributes to each of the five regions in Essex County, as well as other regions that we serve. On Page 7, you can see some of the highlights of our program of work we sent out roughly 1,400 or just under 1,500 unique emails last year to our 330,000 person e-mail list. These include newly created emails that are kind of on top of funnel, but then as we see people clicking around on our websites, we can retarget them. So, if someone really likes ice fishing in the Lake Champlain region, we can follow up with them on an e-mail specific to ice fishing in that region. We also posted 2000 unique posts on Facebook, 1400 unique posts on Instagram, and 2700 posts on YouTube which generated 134 minutes of people watching our YouTube channel. So, we're pretty excited about these metrics.

One of the key data points that I just wanted to talk about for a minute was our website traffic. Last year we had roughly 3.2 million unique visitors to our website. I am actually going to highlight a stat that you're going to think is a little weird for me to highlight, last year we had 3.7 so we were down roughly half a million unique visitors to our website and what's happening is that's being driven by AI. So, people aren't going to websites anymore, they're getting their data from ChatGPT which is giving them an itinerary or getting it from Gemini, who is giving an itinerary. And so, this is really changing how we do work. Just 2 years ago you would be focused solely on search engine optimization which means you and ought to have really robust content, you would want people scrolling around on your website. So, Google was measuring your engagement and then you would want links from other websites and news organizations to your website and that's how you showed up in search. Today you still have to do all of that, but to integrate with AI you also have to be the fastest data reaching that AI. So, if someone searches where are the top 5 places to go bass fishing in the northeast, to make sure we show up, we have to make sure we're on the five fastest websites to get that information to the AI bots. We're happy to say that we.

WILSON: Sorry, technical question, when you say fastest website do mean actual operational speed or that it's appearing higher in the AI search?

KELLEHER: Operational speed, so behind all the content that you will see when you visit our websites is data that you will never see called structured data that is optimized specifically to reach those bots that are scrolling our websites and pulling information and then that structured

data is not enough just to have it, it has to be put on the fastest servers that are integrating and optimized for AI that are connected to the fastest fiber optics to get it into those places and so that's where we're spending a lot of our time is on that back end that human beings will never see.

WILSON: So, that means infrastructure capacity then, if you need speed, which means you're going to be putting, investing in this to keep competitive right?

KELLEHER: Yeah absolutely.

WILSON: That makes sense.

KELLER: So, since this went to print, I told you we were down 500,000 unique website viewers, since this went to print, we've actually identified a way to see how often AI is scraping our websites and providing information and last year we saw 1,040,000. Instances where AI was scraping data off our website and providing it to consumers. So, lost visit, lost eyeballs, on the websites themselves but, the information is still getting out to consumers on that information that Gemini and ChatGPT are giving to people.

So, that's really a high level look at our year, last year. The report just kind of talks you through all the different mileposts we hit last year from working on our Adirondack USA website which will launch launch next month, to the rebrand the Lake Champlain Region Website, all of that is covered in this report and with that I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Speaker 5

STANLEY: Before we get to questions, I need a resolution to adopt the 2025 ROOST End of the Year Report. Motion by Mr. Wilson and second by Mr. Hughes

RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 ROOST END OF THE YEAR REPORT

Wilson, Hughes

STANLEY: Discussion? Being none, all those in favor signify by saying aye. Anybody opposed? Motion carries.

Now are there any other questions for Mr. Keller? Alright, thank you very much.

KELLEHER: Thank you all.

The next item was the Essex County Land Bank with Nicole Justice-Green reporting as follows:

JUSTICE-GREEN: Good morning, everybody, I submitted my report which should be in your packet. I know we've had a bit of a long meeting and so I just wanted to give one quick update you see if there's any questions in my report. In particular, we are now in the process of

closing on all of our Land Bank properties. We're in a Government shutdown which means the offer we just got on our new home on 175 at Portage, that we had a ribbon cutting for is paused until we get out of our shutdown. So, it's just something I wanted to let all of you know as our elected officials that when a home buyer has a USDA or VA Loan or an FHA Loan, in particular USDA, Government shutdowns means that these clients cannot close on their homes. So, this is an issue that we had with actually, the home in Lewis, with our last Government shutdown, but that did close and so, hopefully in the next few weeks we have a really exciting announcement that these folks are able to move into this new home. But, with that being said all of our Land Bank homes are completed under contract. We're in the process of working with the Town of Minerva, the Town of Ticonderoga and then the County Manager's and Attorney's office to determine the properties that we're actually pulled off that were not from the auction, the proceeds, so we can move to formally acquire those properties and while we were at the auction which was as Nikki, has expressed, because our Program Manager was able to attend a wild experience, we did get one property from the Town of Jay, which we're excited to work on, but it did mean that while we had hopes of being able to acquire multiple properties that was not feasible, given the amount of money that these homes were going for. So, we're going to circle back with our colleagues and kind of brainstorm again. So, we can continue to do some of these really wonderful gut rehabilitations of existing properties.

We have land from the Town of Chesterfield and Westport and also existing land in the Land Bank to undertake the placement of the new homes, through the Move in New York. We're actually averaging the homes that will be placing, after our last talk with the State, at 41 homes across the County. So, the number has increased. So, we have plenty of work, but we would like to do both and it's that time of year, if we're going to get any completed this year, that we need to really line them up, given how weather is.

So, with that said and if you haven't had a chance Nikki can you please, raise your hand. This is Nikki teReille. She's our Land Bank Program Manager. She's also Nicole, sometimes you guys e-mail me or her and you think that we might be one another. So, we're a team, we clearly hire the same names in our office, but eventually the message will get to us. So, if you get an e-mail from Nikki, please know that she is emailing you from the Land Bank and from all of us and we're really fortunate to have her and we're going to be hiring her some help this year with all those homes that we're gonna be building.

STANLEY: So, we'll go to questions and comments, Mr. Tyler.

TYLER: Good morning, I see Westport has been removed application and I must be I didn't get an email on that.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Westport, isn't removed from the application, but the State, submitted their elevation levels, that entire lot is only buildable on one far corner, through a private person's property and that private person is not cooperating with the Land Bank. So, we still are proceeding with the subdivision and exploration, but it probably will not get approved given the fact that none of the land that we had hoped for, that we don't have to go through somebody's property, like the land near the neighborhood and the land near the fairgrounds, it's just not buildable. So, before we fully pivot and use a different pot of funding to place those homes, we have a lot of work to do

with this private property owner. So, we didn't want to officially pull it from all development until we had clarity, and this individual is not the most responsive or open to any of our conversation.

TYLER: Let me know maybe I can help you with that.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Absolutely, Labella can't fully confirm all of the elevations and the soil testing until the until the thaw which has been, we've had a very rough winter this year for any of our testing. So, there may be an opportunity for one or two homes, but right now that looks like the most developable piece. We have a number of; we're actually working with County Planning Department to see if there's any other work arounds or easements that we could use to possibly avoid or continue to use that land because it's a shame because it's a large piece of land.

TYLER: Thank you.

HUGHES: Good morning, it was my understanding of the Federal shutdown that ended on February 3rd. Just curious once that is all finalized and figured out, what is the timeline to get the Portage, moving along again because that's a great it's a great property.

JUSTICE-GREEN: So, it's still a partial shutdown which is unfortunately affecting the USDA, specifically and so it in a full shutdown it affects everybody, in a partial shutdown it affects specific agencies that use the money tied to the shutdown for their, you know whatever their programs are. So, USDA is unfortunately one of them. What is basically, from what the mortgage brokers explained to us, is their position in line. So, when you first go into the shutdown the USDA has a number of closings and underwriting that have been sent to them and then when they reopen, they start ticking down the list and so, we are I believe like 8th on the list for Essex County. So, when the last shutdown came, everything came back online it took about three more weeks to get the clear to close.

HUGHES: Ok.

JUSTICE-GREEN: Once they review it and it's approved and the funding is obligated, if they shut down again the closing can still happen. So, we have to kind of get the underwriting done in between those phases.

HUGHES: Thank you

STANLEY: Any other questions or comments? Alright, thank you very much.

The next item was Adirondack Roots with Caitlyn Wargo reporting as follows:

WARGO: Good morning, everyone, you have our report and just one thing to bring to your attention before the meeting closes that is not in the report. In response to the Section 8 freeze

that was enacted just about two years ago, the State came up with a plan for State funded vouchers, the Housing Assistance Voucher Pilot Program, Adirondack Roots, applied for that on behalf of Essex and Clinton counties last fall. There are two vouchers in Essex County, it's based on population, so there's two vouchers of Essex County. We will be working with DSS, those I believe, prioritize people facing homelessness, which is something that the Section 8 Program, before the wait list was frozen someone who was facing homelessness, their application went to the top of the waitlist. So, we haven't been able to serve homeless people in two years. So, there's gonna be two vouchers. Our staff is undergoing training. I know that DSS team is undergoing training and at some point, in the next few weeks to months they'll open applications and likely, there will be interest in those two vouchers that we have. I'm happy to answer any questions.

STANLEY: Any questions or comments for Adirondack Roots? Being none, thank you very much

FOLLOS: Real quick question, in these documents there's many references to AMI, what is the Area Median Income?

WARGO: That is a great question, it depends on your family size, and I actually don't have the 100% area median income memorized, but I would be happy to get that to you.

FOLLOS: Thank you.

WARGO: I can tell you what it is for 100% for a family of 2 in Essex County is \$64,000.

FOLLOS: That works, thank you.

HUGHES: Lee House, super exciting. What's the timeline for the LHITC funding, potential?

WARGO: From what we understand is, we were hoping for February, we hear it might be March before decisions are announced.

HUGHES: Okay, thank you.

STANLEY: Any other questions or comments? Alright, now you are excused.

WARGO: Thank you.

STANLEY: Is there anything else that before the Economic Development Committee?

TYLER: It's not 100% appropriate, but I'm not on any of the other committees, but I'd like to put a resolution of appreciation for John Tefoe, Town of Westport, 50 years in the Fire Department.

STANLEY: So, that is a motion by Mr. Tyler, can I have a second? Unanimous second, thank you.

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION AND CONGRATULATIONS TO JOHN TEFOE FOR HIS 50 YEARS OF DEDICATED SERVICE TO THE TOWN OF WESTPORT FIRE DEPARTMENT

Tyler, unanimous

TYLER: Thank you.

STANLEY: Anything else to come before the committee? If not, it is 10:43, we are adjourned.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:43 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board