

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Monday, March 9, 2026 - 10:00 AM

Matthew Stanley, Chairperson
Kenneth Hughes, Vice-Chairperson

Vice-Chairman Hughes called this Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Meeting to order at 10:20 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, Davina Thurston, Joe Pete Wilson, and Margaret Wood. Matthew Stanley, and Ike Tyler had been previously excused.

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 Aurora McCaffrey - Essex County Historian. Nicole Justice-Green - Essex County Land Bank, and Caitlyn Wargo - Adirondack Roots had been previously excused.

HUGHES: I'll call this meeting to order, good morning, Carol.

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

CALABRESE: Good morning, everyone, we submitted a report if anyone has any questions.

HUGHES: Any questions for Carol or the IDA on their report this morning that they provided? Does not look like there are any questions for you, okay, thank you very much, have a great day.

CALABRESE: You, too

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

HUGHES: Let's move on now to the Community Resources Department, Anna Reynolds.

REYNOLDS: Hello, good morning. This morning, I have two referrals, one is for the Saranac Lake

Local Law Unified Development Code Amendment, definitions, zoning map and some use regulations are going to be changing, the allowable use schedule, including. There are no intermunicipal or countywide impacts, so a letter stating that fact may be submitted.

HUGHES: Great, can I have a motion on that recommendation, please. Ms. Reusser, Mr. Follos

**ACTION OF THE ESSEX COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
ON REFERRALS RECEIVED FROM THE VILLAGE OF SARANAC LAKE**

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 March 9, 2026.

REFERRAL
Village of Saranac Lake

PROPOSED ACTION
Unified Development Code Amendments

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 Follos and passed on a vote of 7 in favor, 2 excused and none opposed.

HUGHES: Questions, concerns on this resolution? Does not look like there are, all in favor? Opposed? Carried, thank you.

REYNOLDS: The last one in the Town of North Elba, a Site Plan Review for a new home construction, located on River Road, which is County Route 21. A driveway will be required, so there are no intermunicipal or countywide impacts, but a Highway Right of Way Permit will be required.

HUGHES: Motion on that? Ms. Reusser, Mr. Preston.

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

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 March 9, 2026.

REFERRAL
Town of North Elba - River Road (County Route 21)

PROPOSED ACTION
Site Plan Review

And whereas, 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, but an Essex County Highway, Right-of-Way Permit is required and the respective referring bodies may take such final action as they deem appropriate.

This motion was seconded by Supervisor Preston and passed on a vote of 7 in favor, 2 excused and none opposed.

HUGHES: Questions or concerns on this topic?

FOLLOS: Is this required every time a new driveway is installed?

REYNOLDS: No, it has to do with if the town has adopted a local law that requires the Site Plan Review, Use Variance or Area Variance. So, if one triggers the other, so yeah, they're separate.

MASCARENAS: Also, say the new driveway is coming onto a county road, that would also be a reason that we would want to get that referral to make sure that the county road wasn't being damaged to proper culvert was being put in, those types of things. So, there could be a few different reasons as to why we would want to get that referral.

REYNOLDS: Yeah

HUGHES: Good question. Any other questions on this topic? Being none, all in favor, aye? Opposed? Carried.

REYNOLDS: I have a resolution request. A resolution authorizing a budget amendment for \$55,008 for the zero emission vehicle EV Chargers that we approved last month.

HUGHES: Motion? Ms. Reusser, Ms. Wood

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A BUDGET AMENDMENT IN THE COMMUNITY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, INCREASING REVENUES AND APPROPRIATIONS IN THE AMOUNT OF \$55,008.00, - PREOJECT #ZEV FOR SERO EMISSION VEHICLE GRANT.

Reusser, Wood

HUGHES: Questions? Concerns? No questions or concerns, all in favor? Opposed? Carried. Thank you.

REYNOLDS: I put the Adirondack Park Agency forum agenda in my packet, just because if you're updating your zoning, if you're planning to update your zoning, if you have new zoning members on your board, please send them to this. They've got conference schedules for those folks, and I think it would be a great learning experience.

REUSSER: It's a requirement, as well.

REYNOLDS: Yes, it's 4 credits a year. This is probably 4 credits, so if they get this one day done, they're set for the year.

HUGHES: Yeah, it definitely knocks out those hourly, annual requirements, just in the morning, alone.

PRESTON: What's the location of this?

REYNOLDS: It is in Saranac Lake.

HUGHES: At the Hotel Saranac?

REYNOLDS: Yes, Hotel Saranac.

HUGHES: It is excellent, I know several of us have been there before. They generally do a really, really great job, great opportunity to be in the room with people from Albany and you're neighbors and colleagues, all around the County and the North Country, it's an excellent opportunity to network and to learn and get out of the office every once and awhile.

Anything else, Anna?

MENSER: As you're already aware, Crown Point's going to end up having to do Phase Two of our wastewater treatment and that Phase Two is going to go physically where our town building office is right now. So, I am going to be looking to have an engineering study done to determine where we can go and what our requirements are in a new facility. Is that something that, before I ask the Town Board to approve a resolution to do this, we have to have anything special from you to apply for grants?

REYNOLDS: So, that is on our list of things to do, because that is a project on our to do list. I mean it would be nice to have a resolution to support that project, that specific project, if you're moving your town facility. As for specifics, we won't know that yet, until we have the feasibility completed, but I think you're getting the ball rolling, and it sounds like a good idea.

MENSER: Right, so I need to pass the resolution to get the ball rolling with the Town to have an engineering study done to find the feasibility?

REYNOLDS: Yeah, it doesn't have to be an engineering study, but more of a land use, or like a feasibility study of what the utilities are available, if it is vacant land. Are we going to rehab an existing structure on Main Street? Something like that.

HUGHES: Big project for you, good questions.

FOLLOS: The Saranac Lake building code changes, just out of curiosity, can you describe them?

If not, that's fine, too.

REYNOLDS: Actually, I printed what they are, the changes. I can give them to you. It's pretty comprehensive, about 10-pages of changes.

HUGHES: Anything else for Aurora, I mean Anna?

REUSSER: Can you send those out to all of us?

REYNOLDS: Certainly.

HUGHES: That's great, anything else for Anna? Anna, nothing for Anna? Anna, you're excused, have a great day, Anna.

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

MCCAFFREY: Good morning, so I have submitted my written report for the month and in that I gave you a little more description and detail of the upcoming seasonal exhibits that we're going to have. They will all open with the Museum on May 23rd, fast approaching. So, I would be happy to answer any questions about those.

HUGHES: Any questions for Aurora, this morning, on her report?
I just want to make a comment; I'm also impressed with the breadth of topics that you all decide on.

MCCAFFREY: Well, Essex County has so many great historic aspects we can delve into.

HUGHES: Yeah, it's quite ripe and so you guys do a really great job plucking and picking out various topics from various different areas that all seem to kind of weave themselves together as Essex County, but great job on finding those different topics and bringing them together.

MCCAFFREY: Thanks

HUGHES: You're welcome.

MCCAFFREY: And real quick, also note, I will absolutely have the full season's calendar in next month's report. We have the events and the lectures scheduled, we're just finalizing the film series, so that will definitely be done next month.

HUGHES: Awesome, awesome, looking forward to the new season. Anything for Aurora, this morning, County Historian?

MCCAFFREY: Thank you

HUGHES: Thank you very much.

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

LEE: Good morning, everyone, I submitted a report and I am happy to answer any questions, if anyone has any questions.

HUGHES: Questions for Elizabeth? I have one, what is hippology?

LEE: It is horse anatomy.

HUGHES: Horse anatomy, H-I-P-P-O-L-O-G-Y?

LEE: Yup

HUGHES: Okay, thank you, fair question.
Anything else more intelligent for Ms. Lee, this morning?

LEE: This morning, we are requesting a resolution to change the Agricultural District enrollment period from October - November, from that period would move from May 1- May 30 and the current enrollment period means we're conducting farm visits during the middle of the winter and it's difficult to assess the agricultural viability. So, we're requesting that change to May 1- May 30.

HUGHES: I need a motion for this recommendation. Ms. Reusser, Ms. Wood.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A CHANGE TO THE ESSEX COUNTY AGRICULTURAL DISTRICT'S OPEN ENROLLMENT PERIOD FROM OCTOBER 20 - NOVEMBER 19 TO MAY 1 - MAY 30

REUSSER, WOOD

HUGHES: Is this to begin in 2026?

LEE: Yes

HUGHES: Thank you, any other questions on this topic? All in favor, aye? Opposed? Motion carried.

LEE: And we will follow through with making sure that the public is notified.
And the only other thing that I wanted to say, well two small things, but they're important to us.

We just received a grant to expand our senior wellness programs. So, we have one more program in our quiver to offer to the seniors throughout the County. The utilization of our senior programs just continues to grow and we're hoping by the end of the year to add a position to support the senior programs, as well as some of our other education programs and we are really excited that this Friday we're going to be joining the Prevention Team in Mineville for a full-day event for Youth on Friday which is going to focus on mentoring youth and it's a continuation of an event that they have run for three years. It's been really successful; they have as many as 100 students attend and so we're proud to be joining 4H forces with the Prevention Team.

HUGHES: That's a really awesome relationship, there.

REUSSER: Congratulations on the grant, what qualifies as senior in terms of age?

LEE: Ah, there is some flexibility there, depending on the community. We don't have a hard line.

HUGHES: Any other questions for Elizabeth Lee, Cornell Cooperative Extension, this morning? Does not look like it, have a great day.

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

KELLEHER: Good morning, great to see everyone, today. Many of you are enjoying the sunshine, outside, from a tourism perspective, not so great. So, the first six months of the year, January through the end of June are really, what is the most elastic, they're really the most weather dependent months for tourism that we have. In the first few months, January - March, we're looking for those ski and snowmobile days and good snow. So, it looks like we're going to be using March, here, but we lost March last year, so the year over year change won't be so bad. We did have a terrific January. Last year we bet the 5-year average by 30%, this year we beat last year by 5%. So, we have a new record in terms of visitation in terms of January this year. We did get the occupancy tax report on Friday and that showed a little bit different of a story. It actually showed a decline in occupancy tax collections. What's important to keep in mind is those occupancy tax collections are a function of both the timing of the payments from the hotels, as well as the performance and so those swings, year over year, can be quite dramatic and don't necessarily reflect the actual performance of that given month. So, we had a positive January, we think we had a good February, we don't have any data on that yet but moving forward. Last month I talked to you a little bit about our new ability to track AI Bots, scrolling our websites to feed the customer. I have a little more data for you on that. We're actually seeing a 50% increase in overall traffic when you include those bots to our websites and these bots now make up 33% of all traffic coming to our websites and to shorten that up, the general message is, we're actually getting more impressions now, because AI has enabled a new way for people to search and when people are asking of lists or weather recommendations, etc., we're now in a better position to show up in that type of search and so we're actually showing more traffic, which will

hopefully be beneficial to our region.

MASCARENAS: Dan, are you seeing an increase to your costs of being included in those search engines that are tracking those bots, so you can be at the top of those lists? Because I see it has kind of a race to see how can get there first and driving the cost of those search engines.

KELLEHER: Right now, it's primarily, we're using our staff to write structure data underneath the websites and so the websites are continuously being updated. You know, as a county we're only one of the best performing counties and a lot of people, a lot of our competitors are under investing in the technology side of their designation marketing efforts, but as some of those counties, catchup, we will be looking at renting new server space that is closer to some of these data centers, so that we can get our contact more quickly to the customer than we can and that will ensure that we show up.

MASCARENAS: Speed

KELLEHER: Speed and energy efficiency, so that's what we're looking at in the move to the future.

Finally, I just wanted to, AATV, we will send out formal invites, but we wanted you to put it on all your calendars, Adirondack Day at the Legislative Office Building in Albany is going to be held on April 27th, that's a Monday. Last year, we heard from 9 local Legislators, as well as the Senate Majority Leader, Andrea Stewart-Cousins; the Speaker of the House, Carl Heastie; we also hosted the Parks and Tourism Senate Chair, Senator Jose Sarano and then the Governor sent a representative, as well. So, it's a good opportunity to go and network with your local Legislators, as well as some folks that are a little higher in the Legislature. Again, that will be on April 27th, last year we hosted 20 Adirondack vendors came down, to showcase what they have to offer. That included Fort Ticonderoga, that included Essex Food Hub, that includes our local housing partners. So, it's just a great opportunity for many of you, in particularly the new Supervisors to come and make some new connections and with that, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

HUGHES: Any questions for Dan or ROOST, this morning? We are going to segue into housing and I want to say thank you for ROOST's presence at the Adirondack Community Foundation event, down in Schroon Lake at the Lodges. I thought Adam did an excellent job serving on the panel. It was great that ROOST could be involved in that conversation to help educate area leaders about workforce housing in the North Country, so bravo to him and bravo to you.

KELLEHER: Thank you very much.

HUGHES: You're welcome, sir.

FOLLOS: Just a general question, Wilmington, like many towns, recently, we're working on updating or redoing our comprehensive plan. I was just wondering, I know you have some experience dealing with that, so I was just wondering, what has ROOST done in the past to help

towns with that or what can ROOST do to help towns with that?

KELLEHER: So, in the past, we haven't ever written a full comprehensive plan, but we're certainly happy to provide data and expertise and insights, both on the input side, what are we seeing in the market and how do we address that, but also on the recommendation side, if you're looking for guidance, we're always happy to provide that as well.

HUGHES: You might even be named as a partner or collaborator in executing some of their recommendations of a comprehensive plan, absolutely.

Anything else for Dan Kelleher and ROOST? Thanks, Dan.

I do not see any representatives from the Land Bank, and they don't have a report, so I am going to move on to Adirondack Roots, and they do have a monthly report and Caitlyn tell me that she couldn't attend.

So, thank you for that monthly report and I don't see anything else on the agenda. Is there anything else for the good of the order, for this Committee? Thank you for putting up with me, we are adjourned.

The next item was the Essex County Land Bank with Nicole Justice-Green having been previously excused and no report was given.

The next item was Adirondack Roots with Caitlyn Wargo having been previously excused and no additional report was given.

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