ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE

Monday, September 14, 2026 - 10:00 AM

Matthew Stanley, Chairperson
Kenneth Hughes, Vice-Chairperson

Chairman Stanley called this Economic Development/Planning/Publicity Meeting to order at 10:03 am with the following Supervisors in attendance: Clayton Barber, Matt Brassard, Kenneth Hughes, Mary Lamphear, Tracie McGill, Clayton Menser, James O'Bryan, Timothy Pierce, Richard Preston, Cathleen Reusser, Matthew Stanley, Davina Thurston, Ike Tyler, Joe Pete Wilson, and Margaret Wood. Chris Clark, Timothy Follos, and Steve McNally had been previously excused.

Department Heads present: Mike Mascarenas, Anna Reynolds, Angie Allen, Jim Dougan, Krissy Leerkes, and Roy Holzer.

Deputy present: Dina Garvey

Also Present: Elizabeth Lee - Cornell Cooperative Extension, Carol Calabrese - IDA, Dan Kelleher and Mary Jane Lawrence - ROOST, Caitlyn Wargo - Adirondack Roots, and Aurora McCaffrey. Nicole Justice-Green - Essex County Land Bank had been previously excused.

STANLEY: It is just after 10:00, we're going to call the Economic Development, Planning and Publicity Committee to order. Up first is going to be the Essex County IDA, Ms. Calabrese.

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

CALABRESE: Good morning, we've submitted our monthly report, does anybody have any questions or comments for me this morning?

STANLEY: Any questions for the IDA? Looks like you are off quickly, today.

CALABRESE: Thank you very much.

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

REYNOLDS: Good morning, there are two referrals, today. The Town of North Elba, only.

Typically, they have combined local laws with the Village of Lake Placid, but this is for the Flood Damage Protection Local Law, so each municipality has to adopt separately. So, this was submitted as a referral, due to the adoption of the Law. There are no intermunicipal or countywide impacts, we approve of the FEMA adoption process and that is the letter that should be delivered.

STANLEY: Can I have a motion to move this referral? Ms. Reusser, second by Mr. Hughes

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 September 14, 2026.

REFERRAL	**PROPOSED ACTION**
Town of North Elba	**Adopted of Local Law - Flood Damage Protection**

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 we approve the FEMA adoption process.

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

HUGHES: Mr. Stanley, so I am aware that many of us have to do the Flood Damage Prevention Law update, does this mean that all of us that have to do that will have to pass this through this committee?

TYLER: That was my question.

REYNOLDS: Yeah, so it was in the letter that was submitted to the municipalities. I have actually never seen the letter. I have seen the instruction manual, Joe Pete sent me a copy of it, but if you're adopting a local law that impacts land use, you should submit it for a referral anyway.

HUGHES: Okay

REYNOLDS: But I believe it is in the instructions from FEMA

HUGHES: Okay

PRESTON: Step 5

HUGHES: Step 5? Okay, because it's my understanding in this process and I am kind of saying this because I want to be told wrong or maybe I am educating somebody here, that we just submitted a draft local law to the DEC so that they could take a peek at it and make sure that

what we've submitted, that was vetted by my town attorney is A Ok, we're going to get that back hopefully soon, because I guess the actual law process needs to be adopted with the introduction and pubic hearing and ratification by December of this year.

REYNOLDS: Yes

HUGHES: So, I just wanted to make sure that I'm not missing a deadline that you potentially have somewhere in that process and I want to make sure that we're on the same page.

REYNOLDS: You're on the right path. We don't have any timeline. It's just about your timeline. So, if you're waiting for comments back from your local law, get those in and then I don't know if you've done SEQR, yet, but then you would do your SEQR.

HUGHES: No

REYNOLDS: Okay, so you have a long way to go at this point.

STANLEY: And there could be a chance for it to be amended again, because I know they sent this out at the beginning of the year and they sent an amendment to it last month.

HUGHES: Yeah, they made some mistakes apparently and corrected themselves.

THURSTON: So, it is my understanding that Bill Tansey has been working on this FEMA local law for many of us and then just last month, like you said, FEMA had sent a thing that said, oh, by the way, you made a mistake, so we want you to do all of this instead, so ironically, they didn't give us an extension on the timeframe, so that was great. But I do not believe that Bill has this ready, because our next Board meeting is tomorrow night and I do not believe that we have the FEMA local law draft ready to do SEQR or move forward in any way. Do you know anything about it?

MASCARENAS: I know that Mr. Tansey was out all week, last week, and I can almost assure you it's likely not ready if there were requested changes by FEMA.

THURSTON: Right, okay, so I don't see how, if that is the case, we will be able to do SEQR, public hearings and get it passed by December, based on that information.

BRASSARD: I was just going to say, I received, before Bill left, I got a final draft back with the comments all corrected and stuff. So, he may have it, you might get it. I don't know when he's coming back.

THURSTON: By tomorrow?

BRASSARD: Yeah

MASCARENAS: I believe he's back today.

THURSTON: Oh okay, good.

MASCARENAS: But I haven't saw him.

THURSTON: Okay, perfect.

PIERCE: I am not on the committee, but we went ahead and passed ours. I got an approval by DEC, made the changes and passed it last Tuesday.

REYNOLDS: Have you held a public hearing?

PIERCE: Yes, that was just before.

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

REYNOLDS: The Village of Saranac Lake submitted a referral for a special use permit for the Short Term Rental Law. They are rehabbing a basement for 2-units in their home to use as their single family home. There are no intermunicipal or countywide impacts and a letter of comment is recommended.

STANLEY: Can I have a motion? Mr. Hughes, second by Mr. Wilson.

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

The following motion was made by Supervisor Hughes.

Whereas, the Essex County Planning Board has considered the following GML 239 referrals at its regular meeting on September 14, 2026.

REFERRAL	**PROPOSED ACTION**
Village of Saranac Lake, 45 Grove Street	**Special Use Permit**

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 Wilson and passed on a vote of 8 in favor, 1 excused, and none opposed.

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

REYNOLDS: We have a training coming up, well the Department of State has a training coming up in Keeseville. They're having it at the Grange, new venue. We typically have it in this building, but we're switching it up this year. I don't know if you all got the flyer. He emailed them to all your public officials, but we'll send another one. It's on the 22nd, next Tuesday.
And I don't know if you received the letter we put on your desks, about how we're going to work with you to on your project update sheets. So, get ahold of us after meetings this fall.

And as you know, we are hiring. So, please spread the word, we've got flyers going out with the positions advertised.

STANLEY: And while you're up here, I would like to, speaking about the position, offer a resolution of appreciation of Hannah Neilly for her years of service at Community Resources.

RESOLUTION OF APPRECIATION TO HANNAH NEILLY FOR HER YEARS OF SERVICES FOR ESSEX COUNTY IN THE COMMUNITY RESOURCES DEPARTMENT
Stanley, unanimous

REYNOLDS: Thank you

STANLEY: Any other questions or concerns for Anna, today? Alright, have a great day.

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The next item on the agenda was the Essex County Historian, with Aurora McCaffrey having been previously excused and no additional report given.

MCCAFFREY: Good morning, first, quickly, I just want to apologize for my absences this season. I won't go into detail, but I had a family illness, and it really affected my schedule, so I am sorry that I couldn't be here. Hopefully, I kept you well-informed and updated with my reports.
The Museum's done fantastic. We've had a great season. We've been busy, had lots of great programs and events, if fact we just had our last big in-house event, *People and Peaks*, this past weekend about John Brown. We have one more off-site tour which I put in my report; the Historic Ironville Tour, that's September 22nd.
But we are winding down, but we will be open to the public until October 11th and then we remain open by appointment, year-around.
And that's all I have.

STANLEY: Great, any questions for Ms. McCaffrey? Alright, thank you very much.

MCCAFFREY: Thank you

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

LEE: Good morning, everybody. I did submit a report, does anybody have any questions?

STANLEY: Any questions?

LEE: I am not seeing any questions. I will just remind you and invite you, again, that this weekend is the Adirondack Harvest Festival. It is a huge effort to put on, and I just want to thank all my staff who have done an incredible amount of work. They really exceed expectations in delivering this huge event. There will probably a 100 vendors and food trucks and musicians and normally we expect 3,500 people, we're probably going to hit that again and the weather is usually a big factor in this event, but so far, we're counting on another great, great day. So, we're all welcome.

TYLER: I scheduled a beautiful day for Saturday.

LEE: Thank you, I appreciate that.
Also, we have lots more of these cards which I have brought, which are of the, I did put them in your mailbox, but happy to provide many more, if you want them. The schedule is on the back and just beautiful, beautiful artwork by Gwen Vogal, who has been really putting out a lot of beautiful artwork for the festival.

HUGHES: I just want to say it was really great to see Cole Tragler, of your staff, you organization, quoted, multiple times in the recent *Adirondack Explorer* article about farming in Essex County. He provided some really great data details and really did a fine job of providing some explanations that helps reinforce how important agriculture is, community supported agriculture is in Essex County and it's really impressive to see how much we are producing. I think they said we're the second larger producer, direct to consumer producer in New York State. Second behind, I think it was Suffolk County.

LEE: All of that, there's a lot of data of interest in the Ag Census Profile and a lot of the data that he referred to comes from our Ag Census Profile, which that is, that data is complied over 5 years. The last data that was presented to you was from 2022. So, in 2027 they will be surveying again to update all those statistics, and it takes them about 2 years to report, once this data is collected, but as soon as that data is available, I definitely will be sharing it with you all, as it's produced.

HUGHES: Well, I know those individual CSAs, and agriculture is not, just be as successful unless they have support from Cornell, so keep up the great work with those relationships and that support.

LEE: Great, thank you so much.

STANLEY: Any other questions or concerns? Alright, not seeing any, have a great day and good luck this weekend.

LEE: Thank you

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

as follows:

KELLEHER: Good morning, great to see you all today. I also have MJ Lawerence with me in the audience today to bail me out if there are any questions I can't answer. But we will also be meeting with the 4 towns that serve as the bike route for the Ironman, after the meetings today to talk about Ironman's contract renewal. So, we have that ahead of us.
I just want to say thank you again for your vote last week to start negotiations for a renewed contract for us. Working for ROOST and serving Essex County in my capacity as been the honor of my file. I am very grateful to have it and the work ahead of us is something to take very seriously and I very much value. So, I just wanted to say thank you again. Thank you to County Manager Mascarenas, Deputy County Manager Dougan, you have all been a great help for us, so I am very grateful for that.
Please bear with today, there is a lot of performance reporting due to the time of year, so it might be a little data heavy. Several weeks ago, I sent out New York State's annual tourism spend data by county. I mentioned that Essex County had $988 million in visitor spending in 2025. I think it's always worth looking back, so back in 2012, the last year we had all the county data across New York State, visitors spent $145 million more in Warren County than they did in Essex County, and they spent $32 million more in Saratoga County than they did in Essex County. Today, we are ahead of Warren County by $32 million, which is roughly $180 million swing annually and we're ahead of Saratoga County, which is a $50 million swing. So, we are now the largest visitor market in the Adirondack Region, and we are also the fastest growing visitor market in the Adirondack Region. Statewide out of 62 counties we're positioned as #5 and the fastest growing north of the Mohawk River, so I think that's partnership between all of our small businesses, between our local governments and of course ROOST, and we're grateful that we've all worked together to have such success and to improve the lives of the people we all serve. Again, I said this is going to be a little data heavy. In the report that we sent you, you will see that in July 2026 we welcomed 3% more visitors that we did in July 2025, but what I think is important to note in that data is that those visitors that came spent 9% on their hotel room stays and so we know there are some towns with a sheer volume of people that are starting to, you know have some challenges for residents. What I think this data shows is that we can continue growing revenue to local businesses and sales tax and occupancy tax revenue to the County without continuing to exponentially grow the sheer volume of people coming. So, I did a little math based upon that data. Overall, hotels in Essex County in July saw $3 million more in spending this year then they did in July of last year, which equates to $128,000 more in sales tax revenue compared to last year and $60,000 more in CTEF revenue that goes back to the towns from the occupancy tax. So, we can continue growing revenue without burdening our communities. I do want to stress that we know through our resident sediment surveys that a lot of the communities in this room want more visitor spending, both in terms of more people and the amount of money that they spend and we dedicated to continuing to grow that, leveraging our new Adirondacks USA platform to introduce visitors to all the region has to offer. You know leaning into real local stories to entice people to see the unique assets each of our 18 towns has here in Essex County. And of course, through Adam Desantis and our economic development work, bringing businesses and the lodging facilities that we know are needed to help our small towns grab that visitor spending to continue to grow our economies. And lastly, before I finish, later today I will send out the results of our 2025 User Travel Study. This

report is compiled by a 3rd Party, it's called Placemaking Economics. They are a firm out of Plattsburgh, if you know, Victoria Zinser-Duley, she is the CEO of Adirondack Economic Development Corporation, but she also owns this firm on the side. So, she does this study for us every year and tells us about who's coming to the region, and what they're doing while they're here, how they're hearing about it. And part of the study is also our contractually required Return on Investment Analysis. There is a formula for that in our contract that talks about how we analysis the impact that ROOST is having in Essex County. Using that formula, I am pleased to report that 2025 ROOST converted approximately 182,000 visitor parties, a visitor party is roughly 4 people, so roughly 800,000 people were touched by ROOST and made a decision to come here and those leads accumulative spent $348 million in the County, which means the return on investment is $96 in visitor spending for every dollar that ROOST spent in marketing to them. So, we're quite pleased with those results. Our contract says that we need to $75 for every dollar we spend, so happy to exceed that.
But we also achieve some success in other areas. Some of our internal goals included extending visitors' stays. So, we actually had a record length of stay for the visitors that came here and that's really helpful because they can't just spend 4 ½ days in one place. It is easier to spread them out when they come for long periods of time, so it helps to get them to our other communities. We increased the spend, the per day spending that they had while they were here and that goes back to, it doesn't have to be a volume game, it can also be a spend game. And then we also increased shoulder seasons, particularly in the spring. So, we have a record number of people saying that they visited in May and June, compared to past years.
So, a lot of positive things to report, but we know that the work is always growing ahead of us and we look forward to keeping the foot on the gas and the economic engine going and with that, I am happy to answer any questions that you may have.

STANLEY: So, before we get to questions, we do have the annual resolution designating ROOST has the tourism promotion agency for 2027 for the I Love New York Matching Funds program.
If I can have a motion, and a second?

RESOLUTION DESIGNATING THE REGIONAL OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM (ROOST) AS THE TOURISM PROMOTION AGENCY FOR 2027 I LOVE NEW YORK MATCHING FUNDS PROGRAM.
Tyler, Wilson

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

WILSON: This is question is aimed at Mike more, than you, Dan, but is there any connection between strong visitor spending and the one-time sales tax distribution to communities that we just passed?

MASCARENAS: Yeah, I absolutely think there is. The hard part and Dan and I have had this discussion before and I am not sure if we have a really good mechanism to know the day trippers,

per se. We know they've increased, because our sales tax says so, our occupancy tax isn't growing quite as quickly as our sales tax which tells me we do have some of those travelers that are probably, you know, coming up, spending money, going back to wherever they came from in that day, but absolutely. Now, what also drives a lot of that is, quite frankly, inflation. We've got, you know, go buy a car, go buy a gallon of gas, those types of things. Those strongly contribute to our sales tax, as well. So, if we're seeing those, which makes sense on the day trippers, too, but they're getting here, they're learning about us somehow and that's usually through the work that ROOST is providing in terms of that outreach and letting people know where we are and what we have to offer, but it seems like people might have less to spend, but they might be staying closer to home, too and making those day trips that we're seeing reflected in our sales tax revenue which has continued to go up over the last 4-5 years.

WILSON: Thank you

BRASSARD: I am not on this Committee, but a couple of things. Dan, first off, thank you for coming down, supporting our Labor Day. It was great to have you there. Secondly, pass on to Adam, thank you for everything he has done for the businesses for the New York Forward in town. I know last week he was on foot, got some translation material for the Chinese restaurant there, and we were able to successfully put in for a project, you know, without him, these businesses would have been left behind.

KELLEHER: Well, thank you for that. The new venue on the beach of your music fest, I love that new venue right on the water.

BRASSARD: Everything is weather dependent.

KELLEHER: Yes, it is.

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

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

STANLEY: The Essex County Land Bank and Ms. Justice-Green are excused today, so we'll move on to Adirondack Roots and Ms. Wargo.

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The next item was Adirondack Roots with Caitlyn Wargo reporting as follows:
WARGO: Good morning, everyone, happy to answer any questions you have about our report.

STANLEY: Any questions or comments? Doesn't look like any.

WARGO: Also, briefly, really excited that the LIHC applications were due this part Thursday and we are working in partnership with Blue Line Development on a second application to redo the Lee House as part of a scattered site project that will also build a new structure in the Town of Schroon. So, apparently your second year is a charm and so we're looking forward to hearing good news in February.

STANLEY: Thank you very much. Are there any other questions or comments that need to come before this Committee? Being none, it is 10:27 and we're adjourned.

AS THERE WAS NO FURTHER BUSINESS TO COME BEFORE THIS ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/PLANNING/PUBLICITY COMMITTEE, IT WAS ADJOURNED AT 10:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Dina Garvey, Deputy
Clerk of the Board