

Economic Development Committee Minutes
October 5, 2011 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Daly; Supervisors A. Johnson, Kinowski, Lawler, Richardson, Sausville, and Wood; Spencer Hellwig, Administrator, Ryan Moore, Mgmt. Analyst; Jason Kemper, Planning; Annamaria Bellantoni, Todd Shimkus, Chamber of Commerce; Jim Angus, SEDC.

Chairman Daly called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. Kinowski, seconded by Mr. Sausville the minutes of the September 7, 2011 meeting were approved unanimously.

Ms. Bellantoni requested a resolution to designate the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the Tourism Promotions Agency for the county and authorization to apply for an “I Love NY” 2012 fund grant. Currently two budgets are being prepared, one with the county money and one without the county money, as the state of the county tourism program has seen a reduction in funding over the last few years, and in 2009 no funding was received. Last year the funding that was received from the State was \$54,000.

Ms. Bellantoni said the July occupancy rate was up over 9% this year and the August occupancy rate was up over 8%. The average daily rate for July was up 2% over last year and 1% higher for August.

During the wrap up most establishments reported they were up from last year. This year a wrap up was held for businesses in Clifton Park, Malta, and Mechanicville, with Hotels, attractions and restaurants, showing positive results, as well as much higher occupancy rates.

Some highlights from the summer promotions program included completion of the mobile site and the summer coop advertising program, which consisted of on-line, video, print and radio.

Ms. Bellantoni requested a resolution designating the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the Tourist Promotion Agency for Saratoga County in order for the Chamber to apply for the “I Love NY” grant in the amount of \$190,000.

Mr. Lawler asked if the county only designates one entity. He said there are other chambers of various sizes throughout the county. Mr. Shimkus said there could only be one TPA per county.

Mr. Lawler asked if there was any communication with other Chambers? Mr. Shimkus said, yes. He said originally part of the agreement was that the county use to have its own paid staff to do promotions. It was agreed that the Chamber would provide those services and that the funds would be used for marketing as opposed to staff.

Mr. Lawler asked how much money Saratoga County give the Chamber? Ms. Bellantoni said approximately \$350,000.

Ms. Daly said the resolution would be to authorize the Chamber to be the TPA for the grant. The county budget is not a part of this. Whatever budget money the county puts out, is yet to be determined.

Mr. Lawler said if the county already supports the Chamber with approximately \$350,000, do we support any other Chambers? Ms. Daly said to her knowledge, no. Mr. Lawler said to give the Southern Saratoga Chamber \$350,000, and allow them to have the opportunity to be the sole applicant of a \$190,000 grant it looks as though we are assisting or providing money to just one Chamber. Mr. Lawler said his concern was whether it was equitable.

Ms. Bellantoni said your brand and marketing message become diluted when you divide the money. She said that the Chamber promotes the entire region. One of the goals is to drive occupancy tax and sales tax. Through our buying power we have done a really good job with that.

Mr. Shimkus said that the Chamber doesn't benefit as a result of these monies. We provide a service to the County.

Mr. Lawler asked if the entire \$350,000 goes to advertising? Mr. Shimkus said it goes to advertising, marketing, development of the print materials, development of the distribution of the materials, electronic advertising and video productions. Mr. Shimkus said there is approximately \$11,000 in the budget for part time expenses largely for email campaigns and social media. We do not count any of these monies as a part of the Chambers operating budget, he said. The operating budget is \$1.5 million, of which none is county money. The county money we account for separately and it is used for marketing.

Mr. Lawler said he would like to hear from some of the other Chambers with regard to their possible interest in this. He said he would be abstaining on the vote because this should be open to other Chambers.

Ms. Daly asked if there was a time issue. Ms. Bellantoni said part one of the grant application is due by the end of October.

Mr. Lawler said he would like to see an RFP go out next year.

A motion was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Kinowski to approve a resolution to approve the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the Tourism Promotion Agency for Saratoga County and authorizing them to apply for an “I Love NY” grant in the amount of \$190,000. Ayes – Daly, A. Johnson, Kinowski, Richardson, Sausville Abstained – Lawler. Motion passed.

Mr. Lawler requested that next year the other Chambers be given the opportunity to express their interest.

Ms. Daly said that Chairman Wood and she have been participating in the Capital Region Economic Development Council. The last meeting was held in Saratoga Springs, and she thanked Mr. Kinowski for being present. She said there were some great panelist from the Saratoga area with a great amount of information brought forth. A fact sheet from the Economic Council was distributed to all committee members for their review.

Ms. Daly said that the State of New York is trying to take all of the funding and basically put it into one pot, and trying to come up with what they are considering a grassroots initiative to develop a mission and vision statement. In addition, they are trying to solicit applications that are going to be for projects that they can fund that will develop and design a strategic plan for the next five years. They are looking for projects that are going to sustain growth and leverage the assets, providing linkages across all sectors of our community. At the last meeting reports were generated by many subgroups that have been assigned by the co-chairs of the council. Reports were shared with the council with regard to assets of existing conditions and economic opportunities in the capital region. A work group was formed to address key issues and opportunities and was divided into subgroups including technology, specialty areas and regulatory subgroups. A draft plan will be presented by the middle of October. Saratoga County’s assignment has been with the public engagement workgroup to help develop public participation throughout the process. Thus far there have been approximately 557 responses from the business development category. There were 172 responses from economic development infrastructure, 169 on quality of life, 106 on business climate, 86 on collaborative partnerships and 86 for workforce development.

Ms. Daly said the State of New York, through economic development, has put together a workshop to be held on October 6th at the Empire State Plaza beginning at 9:00 a.m. which will address Consolidated Funding applications. All applications will be due by October 31st.

Ms. Daly said NYSERDA is going to be putting up \$9.6 million for Cleaner Greener Communities, a sustainable planning program and the money for this program will go through the council. This is an excellent opportunity for communities that would like to get involved collectively.

Ms. Daly said she would continue to bring information forward as it becomes available.

Mr. Angus said for the past ten years SEDC has been trying to get some business back into the 274-acre IP Mill site in Corinth. In April, Moncada Energy Group was introduced. They have expressed an interest and have had two site visits to the IP Mill site. Their interest is in developing solar panels and renewable energy assets; however, the liabilities with the landfill around the site have been an issue. Options were explored and a presentation was given to the town and village boards and businesses in the community about Moncada Energy Group with an explanation of the liabilities that they were not willing to take on. SEDC has also met with Waste Connections, operators of between 20 and 40 landfills across the county. Mr. Angus said there is currently a local law that prohibits putting solid waste in municipal landfills and there is a deed restriction between the town and the village and former owners that you can't put garbage or burn garbage at the landfill. There was a joint board meeting with the town and village board with a presentation about Moncada Energy, along with a presentation from Waste Connection about their plan should the community be willing to learn more. SEDC is waiting to get feedback from the town and elected officials as to whether they feel they are willing to take on this subject.

Mr. Kinowski said at the southern end of the Zim Smith Trail there is an opportunity with the railroad giving the land to the county and NYSEG doing the grubbing work. If we commit this years funds that the Planning Department has towards the Zim Smith Trail, which is approximately \$160,000, we could capitalize on those things we could get for nothing to complete the trail.

A motion was made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mr. Kinowski to approve the Planning Department to proceed on a right of way acquisition for the extension of the Zim Smith Trail from Coons Crossing to Mechanicville at a cost not to exceed \$180,00, including any necessary costs related to the completion of survey work, acquisition maps and easement acquisitions. Unanimous.

On a motion made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Kinowski the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Chris Sansom