

## North Country Regional Economic Development Council

Public Forum – Plattsburgh, NY

Date: Monday, Sept. 12, 2011      Time: 6:00 p.m.

Attendance: approx. 64 (including 7 council, 5 staff)

Garry Douglas introduced the following who offered a few words:

John Ettling – President, SUNY Plattsburgh

Don Kasprzak – Mayor, City of Plattsburgh

Janet Duprey – Assemblywoman

G. Douglas spoke to PowerPoint presentation

### Q & A about Process

Q. Will each of the councils get some of the monies?

A. I believe that each council will get something, but several councils will get \$40 million each. If we do not get initial approval for the \$40 million, we will be committed to going after the other \$800 million. We have also talked about having a federal agenda as well.

Q. My understanding that applications have to be submitted by municipalities by October. How do we fit our request in a plan we don't know?

A. You may be as informed right now vs. in a year from now. You will see some of the clusters we are working on...and ask whether your idea will be included in the plan.

Q. Town has a drinking water supply. Would the town have to apply through here vs. EFC.

A. EFC is one of the departments included under CFA, so town will have to apply through common funding application and then be weighted.

Q. Actually a Comment -- Hopes council will include younger generation on working groups. A recreation component should be considered as a work group or strategic initiatives.

Q. Comment -- We need to think strategically and include private sector housing opportunities.

### Comments

- Will NYS interface with Federal government on economic funds or will each municipalities have to do that separately? A. This is just NYS funds, but some council members want to include federal agenda.

Plattsburgh Town will need that effort at PARC, which has a 60 year infrastructure. People looking to PARC as source of jobs, positions, but we can't do it if we don't have proper infrastructure.

- We are all on the same page and will succeed.

- Make libraries a partner in your endeavor since libraries have computers, internet within 30 local libraries. The North Country Library system has 64. We can offer retraining where necessary. CEF Library System has a database for those who need to make business decisions. We look forward to helping the council.

(Training people to adopt and use broadband is very useful – Tony Collins)

- Speaker lives near Chateauguay Lake. He feels that there are promising things happening in the Plattsburgh area. He owns a 21 megawatt biomass generating power plant. We could generate all of our power from our own forests. NYS is a huge location. We could produce 283 million gallon of fuel from biomass. We could be energy independent and farmers could be growing energy producing farm products.

Problem: He worked in Jefferson and St. Lawrence Counties...there are constraints here vs. Canada. He is building a new facility in Canada because the regulations, banking are seen as hindrances by investors in NYS (U.S.) vs. Canada. More of a confidence thing than anything.

- She wants to speak to arts and culture in the plan. Arts and Culture is a huge generator of tourism dollars. Museums employ 17,000 people and generate \$1 Billion in NYS. 1,900 museums in NYS with most being small museums. Carolyn Thompson found arts and culture is a \$21 million generator in this region.
- She would like council to include Strand Theater in Plattsburgh in economic priorities. The plan is to get the Strand open by 2012. While we get a lot of Canadian dollars for clothes and merchandise when they come to shop, the Strand could increase the Canadian dollars spent here. When Strand opens we could see another \$2-3 million increase in dollars spend with theater productions, musicals, etc. Some businesses have trouble attracting high quality professionals, because high quality arts and cultural events may be missing.
- Empire Zone was an awesome incentive for developers to go into an area (blight and risk) and turn it around. It was a partnership with ESD. He turned an old department store into high end offices in Plattsburgh. Partnerships were great with economic development zones and produced a lot of synergy in the local community by incorporating the local developers and contractors. We should also take the opportunity to help those who lost their wineries and farms due to the tropical storm.
- We need funding for broadband in the region. The council should also consider an effort to open the area where CP rail is located south of Plattsburgh between Route 9 and the waterfront by relocating the railroad to the opposite side of the road closer to an existing spur. Money for Strand will revitalize the downtown and stop the "brain-drain."
- Every job created needs to be created with a living wage in mind. The state should consider accepting lowest responsible bidder vs. lowest bidders in state contracts. We have 3,000 workers in the area ready to work.
- Comprehensive town strategic plan was completed recently. Matches for waterfront grant are difficult for communities, and he would like to see required matches reduced. Saranac is looking at doing a biomass thermal heat plan...woodchip or pellets are high energy fuel. Farm land going fallow could be used for wood chips/pellets production. This would increase the timber industry. Many local mills have closed in the area. Would like the council to consider biomass thermal heat in its strategic plan
- Glad to see the arts/cultural sector included in the NC regional economic development council strategic clusters...One problem: we need help from the economic development sector since state funds are dwindling faster than any other sector. Hard to come up

with one project in one location since Council encompasses six counties. In the 1990s, Franklin County asked Arts Council to revitalize Saranac Lake downtown...it is now a thriving arts community.

- Speaker is concerned about recruiting professional. Hamilton County has no health care facilities...average age of physician population is 55...need to figure out way to attract and retain health care people with so small a population base...need to emphasizing the quality of life for those workers.
- CVPH has \$300 million budget and employ over 2,000 people. We have an outstanding physician base, but recruiting and retaining physicians is difficult if we do not have the cultural base. Surgeons create \$2.3 – 2.6 million budget...
- Speaker gave the Gov. praise for opening Rte 73 today. Praised Tony Collins and Garry Douglas for carrying forth the Adirondack agenda. We need an economic development strategy that includes affordable high speed broadband telecommunications network, renewable natural resources (biomass, solar, wind, etc.) that will put money in people's pockets. We've got too many units of government for too few people...need to consider how to deliver services with less government. There should have a dedicated line item for the Adirondacks in the state budget. We need to have one voice to speak to Albany.
- Chateaugay lake is infested with milfoil... Will take about \$1.5 million to eradicate and no funding for this. There is an opportunity here for businesses to start and grow through environmental Chateaugay Lake residents provide 30 percent of tax base for Dannemora, Belmont and Ellenburg. She asked for the council to look for a way to work that in.
- RE: Workforce...The council needs to address issues with unskilled, unprepared workforce. She works with many students who leave the area after gaining skills. Many local young people remain here who are unskilled...we need to address how to prepare those who will remain and will be needed for the businesses here in the local area. Bill Murray added – We need a skilled workforce, and the Higher Education and Wood/Paper strategic clusters are also concerned and addressing this.
- She has been a resident of the area for 1.5 years...originally from Montreal...she loves the area...but, nothing is advertised...lacks marketing...thousands of Canadians coming south...suggest put up marketing billboards...bring the boaters further into the city instead of just to the Naked Turtle. Some decay is happening...Is there a way to establish partnership with schools to redevelop those homes? Concerned about schools for her little children and she teaches French at middle schools...Quebecers are intrigued by you...new territory to explore...suggest more restaurants provide bi-lingual menus. She taught marketing at Clinton Community College. The college needs helps to renovate the exterior...Make entry into the US easier at the border and a huge billboard with info about events...Suggestion for a billboard: a person holding a glass of champagne inviting people to stay for one more night... Would help Bed and Breakfast in the area...She will do whatever it takes to remain here because she loves it...Need to figure out how to create partnerships between the colleges and businesses...without losing your identity...

- Recreation...He chose Plattsburgh over Burlington due to Gordon Bike Run and City of Plattsburgh Recreation Hall...can use recreation to create business and tourism...Chair of the Saranac River Trail Association...Suggest including the trail in the council's plan, which will link the Boat Basin through the City to the Town of Plattsburgh for additional biking and other uses...Can also link to the arts (such as the Strand)...museums, etc. and help keep people in the local area.
- Working on seven-year long project for its Massena to Chateaugay pipeline...Energy source is the key to retaining business...applauds the council...project specific proposals are as important as regional specific proposals.
- Employee-owned business model and succession model should be looked at. Retaining professionals is getting harder and harder to do and would like the council to consider in strategy....
- Suggest council speak with the ADYP to figure out how to create and retain young professionals.
- Health Care ...recruitment and retention is important...health care reform is coming...Changes in way health care professionals will be reimbursed will leave the region at a disadvantage. We need to work very carefully together on these issues.

In Closing:

Co-Chair Tony Collins said we have the largest land area in NYS with the smallest population. We want to thank you for your input.

Forum ended at 7:58 p.m.

Notetaker: Keith Tyo