

North Country Regional Economic Development Council Public Participation – 2013

The Public Participation Committee for the Regional Council is getting stronger and more efficient as it gains experience. A core group of individuals including Council members, the co-chairs, and State Agency representatives comprise the active committee. This group has met regularly throughout 2013 to continue to ensure that information and activity for the Regional Council is provided to the public. Minor changes were made to the program and successful efforts from previous years were continued. The committee and the Council are committed to ensuring the citizens and businesses in the North Country are involved and aware of the Regional Council's activity.

Public Forums, Council Meetings

The NCREDC has been very successful and aggressive in getting to the community and seeking feedback at the local level. For the third consecutive year, the Council held public forums in each of the seven counties in the region. Council Co-Chairs Anthony Collins and Garry Douglas led these forums at the following locations:

<u>Date</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>City</u>
July 15	Hamilton	Oak Mountain Ski Center	Speculator
July 16	Clinton	Clinton Community College	Plattsburgh
July 16	Essex	Fort Ticonderoga	Ticonderoga
July 22	Lewis	Forest Presbyterian Church	Lyons Falls
July 22	Jefferson	Clayton Opera House	Clayton
August 6	Franklin	Malone Golf Course	Malone
August 6	St. Lawrence	Ogdensburg Bridge and Port Authority	Ogdensburg

The forums included a presentation on Council information and activity, an explanation of the CFA application process, the Opportunity Agenda and the Cleaner Greener program. At least one project recipient from the region presented at each forum adding commentary about how to approach the funding process. These forums are attended by a wide ranging audience, including community members, education leaders, small business owners, municipal officials and non-profit organization representatives. The Council hears comments about existing projects, suggestions on improving the funding application process, and presentations of needs and projects in a community.

Each North Country Regional Council meeting, which are held in various locations across the region, included specific opportunities for open public comment. In addition, the Public Participation Committee was involved in the NYS sponsored CFA workshops. Committee members presented information on best practices for CFA applications and seeking priority project status from the Council. These forums were held in Potsdam (June 18), Plattsburgh (June 26) and Watertown (June 28). Students attending Clarkson University recorded the Potsdam CFA training session, which was later uploaded to Youtube <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BLifgCaHWVQ> and embedded on the NCREDC website so individuals can obtain this training from their office or home.

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council and its co-chairs believe this direct outreach to our communities has been very successful, and with the size of our region, is important to ensure all corners are covered.

Public Officials

The NCREDC recognizes the importance of municipal government officials in furthering the economic development priorities in the region. The Council has involved local government representatives in many ways.

In 2013, the Council developed a database of contact information for every town, village and county elected official in the seven county region. Direct interaction with these officials occurs in various ways. For example, the Council has

- Provided NCREDC newsletters
- Provided notification of NCREDC events and public forums
- Presented at County Planning Board meetings
- Invited their municipalities to apply for funding through the North Country's Infrastructure Development Fund – this was an ESD funding pool of \$2,500,000 to be used for local municipal water and wastewater projects that would create economic development opportunities.

Municipal officials were active attendees at the public forums and at the public comment portions of the Council meetings. In addition, the Regional Council is an important topic at conferences throughout the region for local government officials. Specifically, the Council was present at the Tug Hill Commission Conference in March, the Forever Wired Conference in Potsdam in September, the Potsdam Local Government Conference in October, the Adirondack Park Agency Local Government Conference in April, the Flip the Switch event in Tupper Lake in June and the Common Ground Alliance in July. Each of these events attracted a large number of elected officials.

Regional Council members and staff work closely with these event organizers, and local government officials interact on topics such as infrastructure planning, community sustainability, shared services, zoning and economic development. Each of these forums also provided participants with an opportunity for an overview of the Regional Council process and the NCREDC strategy.

Other Events and Organizations

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council and its members have been active participants in The Common Ground Alliance, the North Country Clean Energy Conference, local chamber of commerce events and business fairs. The Council has active work groups in tourism, agriculture, the Adirondack Park, clean energy, and others. These groups include approximately 170 individuals in business, community organizations and municipalities that provide feedback and direction for council issues. In addition, the NCREDC is working closely with the North Country Alliance, the Adirondack Economic Development Council, seven county industrial development agencies, Development Authority of the North Country, North Country Chamber of Commerce and others to provide outreach to businesses in the region.

The Regional Council will also co-sponsor two upcoming public forums on the role of higher educational institutions in driving local economic development. The forums, which will be held at Clinton Community College (Plattsburgh), Thursday, Sept. 26 and Clarkson University (Potsdam) Thursday, Oct. 7, will be open to the public and documented by the public television stations in Plattsburgh and Watertown.

Digital Connections and Media Outreach

The Council has maintained an active and informative web site <http://regionalcouncils.ny.gov/content/north-country>, which is as up to date and comprehensive as any other council's site in the state. In 2013 we initiated e-mail newsletters. These digital packages contained key news items about the Council, our projects and Council members and were sent to more than 500 individuals on a bimonthly basis in 2013. In addition, the Council has a Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/NCOpen4Business> site that is maintained by Clarkson University. Our page has over 250 likes and receives dozens of views for every new item posted.

The NCREDC, in cooperation with the Empire State Development Press office, provides media updates regarding council meetings and events and also news stories on key project activities throughout the year. These news releases are provided to the major newspapers, radio and television stations and other media in the region. Regional Council representatives hosted a number of celebratory ground breakings at NYS funded projects throughout the region during the past year. The public was invited to events at the Clayton Hotel, Fort Drum biomass project, mobile poultry processing unit in St. Lawrence County, Nova Bus in Plattsburgh, Adirondack Meat Company in Ticonderoga, and others. We have a vast region and we believe we have provided wide distribution of information on the activity of the Regional Council.

ADK Whitewater Challenge

The North Country Regional Economic Development Council was proud to be a key partner in sponsoring the Governor's Invitational Whitewater Race, which was part of the 2013 Adirondack Challenge Festival – a celebration of New York's beautiful Adirondacks region, culminating in a day of water races, food, music and more!

The Whitewater Race featured 25 rafts with state and local elected officials, business leaders, members of the media and other invited guests. Gov. Andrew Cuomo and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg paddled down the Indian River in Indian Lake. The governor's office said his team beat the mayor's raft as well as state Senate and assembly teams.

Highlighting the natural beauty and outdoor resources of our Region, this event provided incredible public outreach on the North Country and the influence of the North Country Regional Economic Development Council. Go to http://youtu.be/4oK8P7N_irs to see a video of the event.

