

North Country Regional Economic Development Council
Best Western, Watertown, NY
Friday, March 20, 2015

Present: Lt. Gov. Hochul, Tony Collins, Garry Douglas, Ken Blankenbush, Jim Calnon, John Donoghue, Randy Douglas, Bill Farber, Kate Fish, Carolyn Fitzpatrick, Jeff Graham, Paul Grasso, Hugh Hill, Billy Jones, Bob Lenney, Joe Lightfoot, Betty Little, Cheryl Mayforth, Jim McKenna, Anne Merrill, Patty Ritchie, Addie Russell, Michael Tabolt, Donna Wadsworth, Jim Wright

Also Present: Reg Carter for Bill Murray, Ryan Silva, Richard Tobe, Congresswoman Elise Stefanik,

Absent: Cali Brooks, John Ettling, Joe Giroux, Bridget Hart, Carl McLaughlin, Bill Murray, David Tomberlin, Dan Wilt, Sam Dyer, Joseph Griffo, Marie Regan, Mark Tryniski, Lisa Weber, Janet Duprey,

Public Session

Garry Douglas opened the public session at 3:00 pm.

Garry Douglas provided a synopsis of the working session. The co-chairs submitted a letter to the record on behalf of the council supporting Fort Drum. We heard about the upcoming Upstate Revitalization Fund, but will know more after the budget passes when guidance is available. We talked about some aspects of it and will have more information out when we have it. Our public participation and planning committees are active already. We reaffirmed the council's support for the Franklin County Occupancy Fee. We heard from Congresswoman Elise Stefanik about her focus in the federal government regarding Fort Drum, relationships with Canada, transportation, infrastructure, higher education. We had a presentation from the Development Authority of the North Country on the status of broadband development across the region and some of the ways we need to compete for funds after the budget to fill in the gaps of broadband in the region.

Garry Douglas introduced Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul

Lt. Governor Kathy Hochul: We'll continue to do our best to promote tourism in this area. I thank you for your work and dedication to this council. I want to commend your co-chairs for jumping right on the Upstate Revitalization Fund. It's very important that the public step up and participate. The ideas will percolate up from the community. I also want to talk about Ft. Drum. We cannot recover from cuts from sequestration. I'm working aggressively on this. Ft. Drum must be preserved and made stronger. Regarding Global NY, being on the border with Canada is a strength for this area. Regarding the Broadband \$500million competition; we take broadband for granted if we have it, but if you don't have it, it hurts and you get left behind

economically and personally. This is important for the North Country and other rural areas of the state. We'll continue with the REDCs to create jobs across the state.

Garry Douglas thanked Lt. Governor Hochul

Jim Wright: Thank you Lt. Governor for your commitment and attendance this evening in support for Ft. Drum. State dollars to support the military mean a lot to the Army. Many of the impacts on Ft. Drum are priority projects for the NCREDC.

Garry Douglas called for public comment

Ed Robertson, Indian River Lakes Conservancy: We're a non-profit that works to preserve water quality, scenery, and recreation opportunities. We're having issues with water quality. The state has designated some of the lakes as impaired and other lakes are going in that direction. We have initiated a water project with a NYS grant setting up collaborative effort with stakeholders who enjoy, benefit from, and support the lake. Thank you for letting me come and make you aware of this. We're developing our plan to start a community outreach and public awareness campaign to try to develop an Indian River watershed management plan. We want to figure out the problem and solutions. We have toxic algae blooms that are bad health-wise. People from all over the world come here for the lakes.

John Donoghue, Plattsburgh – Saranac Building Trades Council: Sen. Russell made the suggestion to incorporate apprenticeship programs and local hire language in the contracts for the large pots of money that become available. We've been asking about this for three years. This is not just a North Country concern, it's a statewide concern. Lt. Governor Duffy was supposed to respond to this before he left. Is there something you, Lt. Governor Hochul, can do to resolve this issue? We're losing a lot of jobs because these requirements aren't included.

Lt. Governor Hochul: I'll look into the requirement portion. I know we're looking in this round for strong apprenticeship programs where labor works with local officials. We're looking for proposals that address the element of skills and training, and this often comes out of apprenticeship programs. This is why people look elsewhere for contractors, because the skills aren't available in the area. This will be a part of the URF.

Sen. Russell: The problem is that in the bidding process, out of state businesses that get the contracts don't reinvest back into training. The local programs then don't get the money to reinvest in their training programs. We just want the businesses that do have apprenticeship programs to be on an even playing field with those that do not have programs.

Richard Tobe: These are complex issues, I suggest we get together and talk about it.

Randy Douglas: At a future meeting, I'd ask that Jim McKenna give a status of the Olympic facilities in NY and where we're trying to go with this. We're talking about improving the facilities. Some are in disrepair and we can't compete with other locations. We're losing jobs, competitions, and revenue because they are going other places to train and hold competitions. It's important to Essex County. We're talking about getting a group together to put in a statewide Olympic bid.

Garry Douglas: We'll schedule this in the next meeting.

Upcoming Events: We have the public rally supporting Fort Drum at 5pm at Jefferson Community College. Following at 6pm is the Army's listening session also at Jefferson Community College.

Garry Douglas closed the public session at 3:30pm.