

NORTH COUNTRY REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

PUBLIC WORKSHOP AT THE WILD CENTER, TUPPER LAKE

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 14, 2011, 6:00P M.

**Q&A about the Process.**

- Q: What resources do you have to work with to move between June 1 and November 14?
- A: No direct budget. Involved organizations are making important investments in time and resources to the process. All council members are participating. Counties are providing staff resources. New York State is contributing staff resources.
- Q: Will the CFAs be open to the public? If there are competing projects, can the competition comment on the competing proposals? Is this subject to Freedom of Information Laws?
- A: This is the same type of process as in the past with a new element that considers regional priorities. We still have to follow the same rules as always. We are still bound to confidentiality. The change is that applications will be reviewed by the council for its consideration under its endorsement standards. State agencies will still review their areas of concern. There remains a high level of confidentiality on applications and proposals.
- Q: Where do things end up if regional plans are not successful in receiving the top funds (one of the four recipients of \$40 million)?
- A: The plan does not end at the funding competition. If the region is not successful in securing the first year's funds in the planning competition, there are still other resources that the region needs to consider and this plan will assist in prioritizing projects.
- Q: How will the council interact with Federal programs?
- A: This plan is not directly tied into Federal funds however this council will consider the need and priority for projects for projects that have a strong Federal funding component.
- Q: How about inter-regional activities?
- A: One dimension of this process is the statewide Chairperson's Committee. A purpose will be to identify issues that transcend regional limits and address those matters cooperatively so that we do not lose out on opportunities that are not solely located within the region. While it was not feasible to have an Adirondack Park-only region, this region has a strong park influence and will reach out to the other regions that also have an Adirondack Park interest. If the council is smart, the Adirondack Park has the chance to have an influence in three regions, not just one.

Q: Do the county Industrial Development Agencies play a role? Shouldn't their financial resources be part of this?

A: The IDAs are other local resources that can help advance projects but are not a formal part of this process.

Q: Where can we see a map of the entire state and the councils?

A: Go to [www.nyopenforbusiness.com](http://www.nyopenforbusiness.com).

Q: Are workgroup meetings open to the public?

A: No, but they have worked to be as inclusive as possible involving a broad array of stakeholders by interest and region.

Q: Is this a process that can be shrunk to be used at the local level once you are done? How can we use this process at the local level?

A: That will be a key recommendation of the community development group to identify a place for the local stakeholders who have an interest in the long-term plan.

### **Public Forum**

- I am here to represent the interests of Benson Mines. We still have about 600 million tons of crushed rocks. We do not have a railroad. I have talked with the St Lawrence IDA and they have hemmed and hawed. The nearby paper mill needs power and transportation. If the railroad would allow for a pipeline in the right of way of the railroad, Newton Falls Paper can have a chance to be more sustainable. Our rock passes the NYSDOT requirements for rail and bridges. When Benson Mines was running, we had 500 jobs. Newton Falls had 200 jobs. Newcomb Schools has lost enrollment over time. The rail line goes through Benson Mines and to Newton Falls.
- The idea of healthcare is more proactive and considers prevention more than ever, including healthy community concepts. It is important to realize that the hospital and health care system is economic development. We have a \$45 million payroll and want to support the region's economy. We want to be partners with the region. We may be a large organization, but there are a lot of small businesses like private medical practices, labs, stores that spin off of our activities. We also have strong strategic processes and may be helpful.

You should help us craft how your industry should be reflected in the plan.

- Consider affordable and workforce housing as a development tool as part of the plan. Consider funding sources for developers and how to build multifamily projects. Further input should be directed to the Community Development group.

- We give small grants to people that have small business start up ideas. We provide these grants to those who are educationally and economically deprived. There are many people who are interested in working and will make their own opportunity if given the chance. We have done about 9 projects for about \$15,000. A stone mason was able to buy a business license, obtain a trailer and business cards. He has added two employees. Total investment as \$750. Another project involved a \$2,500 investment for sustainable agriculture. An art school in a home received less than \$1,000. Another project helped start a small farm stand. We believe that we have a successful model for small business development.
- Thank you for coming to Tupper Lake. The only problem I have is that major projects need to go through a streamlined system. We've invested seven years and lots of money to see a project develop here.
- I would like to start with talking about sustainability and energy. It is going to catch us if we are not paying attention. The one thing missing in a SWOT analysis was the high price and scarcity of energy. Are these projects going to make sense when fuel is \$6 a gallon? I was heartened by the comments about Potsdam and New York State. Franklin County's isolation is a larger problem than what we blame Albany for. We assume that Albany is the problem. We need to focus on general issues that span the six counties and while specific projects, we should consider energy, food and other big pictures items. My own sense is that we have the financial resources to have a fine way of life here. Very little of our food is produced here but we spend a great deal of money on it. A local food system can help us keep money here. Energy use and loss is another leak of our resources.
- The trustees want to bring up the role of libraries in the economic development system. Tourists use them to get online. Those who cannot afford internet access use them. We are becoming computer centers. We provided classes around the region in a mobile unit that contains computers and broadband access to promote computer literacy in areas that need to provide training. We are funded by local taxes and are being forced to make some cuts. We need help to continue to provide training. We need to train our staff to train the public. We deliver these computer services and we want to be partners in economic development. The library stream of funds is drying up and we need resources to continue to do our job.
- I want to make sure that everyone remembers that it is important to look at the strengths each area has, but sometimes weaknesses represent possible opportunities. In Malone, we have a significant population of the unemployable (i.e. due to criminal record). That is a potential for start-up businesses if we can get those people the help to do so.
- I think that the Adirondack Railway is the best thing we can do for tourism. The other problem we have is over-regulation. I don't know how the Adirondack Club and Resort can make it with what they have gone through. When building the Wild Museum, the project was unable to participate in a photovoltaic system with NYSERDA because Tupper Lake is municipal electric. In Sunmount, they switched to a home fuel to reduce the emissions but they are burning so much

of it, it doesn't really help. Instead, a wood burning project could have happened but it died because the NYPA did not want to get involved in it. OMRDD was also not happy having another state agency get involved on its site. APA told a local municipality to cut back some brush but the DEC told them to stop because the location was part of adjudication. This council has the chance to change the process.

- (Read from written remarks.) We support your strategic plan. Implementation of a plan will help local residents. We know that healthy behaviors reduce risk factors for disease and reduce health care costs. Health is not mentioned once in the vision statement. The council could link health to economic development. In recognition of the tasks you are addressing, we are submitting a document to make it easier for council members to include health in its work. We know that the health of our area is important for your success.
- We are group of about 40 independent artists working together for about 3 years. We are focused on the arts in Saranac Lake. We pool our resources and do our own marketing. We believe that the arts can have a major impact on the economic environment of the region. We add to local communities something that can be attractive to those that live here and visit here. We can attract not only art buyers but local consumers.
- One thing we have notices in the North Country is the over dependence on the public sector. We need access to capital for private investment and opportunity.
- I wanted to plug all of the non-profits in the region, supporting them is not only nice but we are part of the economic engine. The Adirondack Network is trying to identify our economic impact. We want to work in a parallel tract with your efforts.
- As you develop your plan, there will be intertwined requests. The Town of Tupper Lake was set to receive a new prison but it never happened. The reason being was that it was not beneficial to the tourism economy. I request that you give serious consideration to the Remsen Lake Placid Rail and Trail Line as a rail and trail system that can piggyback onto Federal funds. A total completion of this projection would provide more than 130 miles of trails. The Adirondack Club and Resort project should be in your phase plan, assuming the permits are issued. This will also reinvigorate the Big Tupper Ski Area. It will add 250 full time jobs in this community. Working together with your assistance, both projects
- Newspapers in general are reflections of local economies, as well as our radio stations. It is my privilege to be part of "Next Stop, Tupper Lake!" The tracks must stay and the beds must be improved. Rail is a critical economic development asset in this region. The Adirondack Railroad could once again ferry tourists from New York to the Adirondacks to ski for example. Snowmobiles that could run along the side of the track also represent a big opportunity. Tupper Lake could be a rail hub in the region. The site has the capacity to handle repairs and parking. Rebuilding the tracks on the corridor is the right catalyst for economic development for the region.

- Like our neighbors in the Adirondacks, we are also facing the decline of industry, flight of our residents and other challenges. Tupper Lake has been facing and addressing these challenges. The Wild Center, the reopening of the ski center and the rail depot are examples of these successes. This community has been engaged in long range strategic planning effort and implementation plan. Our vision in 2020 is that Tupper Lake will be a recognized center for visitors and residents alike. The action plan includes aesthetics improvements, housing rehabilitation etc. We are supporting and assisting local entrepreneurs. We will be submitting CFAs for new funding opportunities. We can help the council elevate the region. We will be sending you details for a coordinated plan and a transformation of tourism in Tupper Lake. We look forward to a partnership.
- I am a member of Next Stop, Tupper Lake. I agree with all that Danny has said and the comments about the Adirondack Club and Resort. The Allies won World War II faster than the Adirondack Club has gone through the APA.
- I am here on behalf of Stuart Carlisle for Benson Mines. The Newton Falls rail spur, owned by the county IDA, has significant potential. It would help in reopening the Newton Falls paper mill. It would also spur new business at Benson Mines and Slac Chemical. As an example, Benson Mines was one of the largest mines years ago and still has a significant amount of material that can still be used include aggregate rock and tailings for concrete. It is only economical to ship via rail, not via truck. While Benson Mines projects 5 to 10 new jobs, the county expects more spin off including at the paper mill. Renovating the line to class 1 would allow for slow speeds but would provide for new opportunity in the region.
- I am here to talk about health. We want walkable communities and locally grown, affordable food. We will need assets like trails for new residents that economic development would hope to draw to the region. The workforce needs to be healthy to work.
- I am here as a sheep farmer in Chateaugay. There is no method to market our sheep to markets out of the area. We have drafted a marketing plan with assistance from Cornell Cooperative Extension. If we can advance this, we can use underutilized lands and assist other farmers as well.
- We have a terrific product in this region, natural resources. None of the other states in this nation have this resource. We need development to go with it. You have to really search for a good place to stay and activities to engage in. I have a few ideas. We need a marketing campaign to attract travel-related business. ESD markets to traditional industry but has never focused on the travel industry. We need new product development, a coordinated marketing campaign to reach out to the travel industry. I believe that 16% of our employment is related to the travel industry, up to 1/3<sup>rd</sup> in major tourist areas. An infrastructure improvement fund would be helpful to direct resources to tourism areas. Resort market feasibility studies can help, on a matching basis, to site new projects. We also need better and more data to understand what is happening in travel here. We also need tourism development incentives. Existing

incentives are not written for tourism and travel. Our flagship properties have disappeared for second home development. The places where people want to stay as tourists are not available anymore.

- Thank you for putting this event together. The national association of realtors states that for every home sold, two jobs are created. Every week I get an out of town buyer who is interested but then they see the taxes. If we want to create jobs, it's hard when taxes are so high. We need to consider residential taxes.
- Several people here tonight discussed energy. Plattsburgh, Watertown has natural gas. I do not believe that there is any natural gas within the Adirondack Park. Natural gas is 1/3<sup>rd</sup> less in cost than fuel oil. In the Park, people that are not using wood are using oil or propane (a distillate of oil). The cost of fuel will impact residents and new development. Natural gas is going to be the future relative to cost, sources of energy. It is going to be abundant and cheaper than oil. It will make oil products competitive. Energy makes up 15% of the expendable income of our residents. We need natural gas.
- As a planner, I really like the approach that the State is taking conceptually. I am a little skeptical about implementation. I realize that no one has all of the answers yet. I appreciate that the state is working on this to be the best it can be. The aggressive timeline seems to be impossible. The schedule seems to be based on a political calendar. It's hard to imagine that it can be done properly in a short period of time. I hope this process doesn't create intraregional competition. The last thing we need is to compete within the region as we compete with other state regions and beyond. Regarding the unified funding process, I would ask the council to tell the State to tell the local stakeholders that write grant applications that the process changed with more warning than overnight. I think turnout will be lower than it could be because of the short timeline. Please ask the state and its agency to look at the grant administration side. Grant administration is much more difficult than grant writing. Streamlining grant administration will have a significant benefit. The rules and regulations that are part of the CFA, I hope that the agencies are looking at them to provide for greater flexibility. If a grant doesn't allow a project under its rules and regulations, it does not matter what the Council recommends. I hope there is a place for those projects that cannot be tied to traditional economic development indicators. It is going to be hard for communities to document how a canoe launch will change a municipality. Rather, small projects like a canoe launch is only a part of the big picture and cannot count how many jobs are created. The Town of Brighton received a grant to rehab its historic, Adirondack town hall. I tried to imagine that grant writer today and how the case would be made in this new grant process. Just because a project isn't a direct jobs generator, doesn't mean it's not a worthwhile project.
- I am guessing that you will be looking at projects that are transformational. Tupper Lake is in a unique position because other communities are fighting for opportunities. The Adirondack Club is the engine to economic success in Tupper Lake and the region. It will have a huge regional impact. Regarding the layers of regulatory review, the Adirondack Park Agency is charged with

balancing natural and economic considerations. The Adirondack Club must get approval from the Adirondack Park Agency, DEC, DOH, Department of Law, Army Corps, local planning and zoning, NYSDOT and maybe more. In developing and streamlining a review process, we should look at one simple approach to permitting projects.

- My comment is sharing a success story. My girlfriend owns P-2 Irish Pub. It was owned by her father before that. Last year she took advantage of some grants. She created one full time and one part time job. Every little bit helps. Small businesses do need help from time to time.