

## North Country Regional Economic Development Council

Jefferson County Community College

September 19, 2011

### Questions and Answers

Q: We do a lot of development around low income housing. How does the CFA impact applications that are pending. The project we have is a collaboration with the municipality to create 5 jobs and low income housing. Do we move forward and submit the application at the end of October?

A: Tony: Good housing projects needs to appear in the plan. Roseanne: I don't know if the program you are asking about is subject to the CFA. I will find an answer from that agency and will get you a contact person. Tony: Everyone should talk to their respective agencies to get an answer. If it's unclear, please let us know. Be prepared to submit your application as usual. Changes to application processes will be communicated.

### Comments and Suggestions

#### Infrastructure and Community Development

- I am here as co-spokesperson for YesEleven. We are concerned with regional highway infrastructure and its connection to economic development. Existing studies on transportation and economic development can be found on our website at [www.YesEleven.org](http://www.YesEleven.org). YesEleven supports upgrades to Route 11. Route 11 is a major economic development corridor. Upgrades to the infrastructure will create jobs. It is more sustainable to improve on it. Many of the upgrades are shovel ready and based on existing plans. Upgrades to this highway will promote more economic development than an Interstate. YesEleven opposes an interstate highway in the North Country. An interstate would represent a bypass for the existing transportation infrastructure. Building an interstate would divide areas. I would urge members to visit our website and further read about highway transportation issues in our region. There are links to past studies. We believe that the need is rational and sensible.

#### Strategic Clusters: Health

- I am here to reinforce worksite wellness promotion. We will not be successful if we do not have a healthy workforce. Please consider inserting priorities for a healthy workforce in the plan.

#### Community Development

- We are the largest town with the smallest population. We have a couple of existing state projects and new ideas. In rural Hamilton County, it is difficult to find local suppliers. As a result, it has raised the cost of projects. We are at the border where concrete can be delivered, poured and pass tests. A recent project that was put out to bid has come back at 1/3 more than we anticipated. [Also see handout on the wastewater collection and treatment system.]

## Strategic Clusters: Agriculture, Arts, Energy

- I'd like to call myself a retired dairy farmer, but I am unable to retire. It used to be that for farmers, our farm was the source of retirement. However that is no longer the case. We need to support our farms by buying locally instead of in large supermarkets. We could expand our growing seasons in greenhouses, but that would require significant capital commitments. At the farmer's market, we are unable to hand out product samples, but in neighboring states they can. There is a lot of regulating concerning the facilities that we can use. While we can get small residential kitchens certified for use, they are not sized right. Commercial kitchens must be separate from homes. I would also like to see an expansion of the arts. As a member of the arts council, I would like to introduce more people to local art. These are the things we can do if our economics grow and thrive. In order to grow our economy locally, money must circulate locally. We need to sell what we produce locally in order to keep the money local. Energy costs are also taking away from spendable income. High energy costs are sending people away and keeping new people out. Open space does not support tax base. We need to develop these areas.
- Speaker: Reading prepared remarks from the Mayor of Watertown.

## Strategic Clusters: Agriculture and Health

- The report we developed is intended to assist council members in preparing its plan and including healthy workforce points. We know that health and our economy are closely linked. Our region is a food desert. Some barriers to local food include state regulations that limit the ability of small farms. Farmers lack the access to larger markets and mostly rely on farmer's markets once or twice a week. Even state regulations limit the ability for farmers to share their products in local markets. Many areas of the North Country lack access to retail where farmers can sell their items. I encourage you to include considering health a priority for the regional plan.

## Strategic Clusters: Energy and Wood

- I am the plant manager at the Lyonsdale. It is located on 46 acres in Lewis County. It uses biomass to generate electricity. It is a 22 gross megawatt plant. We use residue that would otherwise rot on the floor of the forest. We get the tops and limbs of trees not used otherwise in production, but instead would be used as firewood. Trees in New York State are growing at a rate 3 times faster than they are being harvested. Fortunately, technology has allowed biomass to produce energy with fewer emissions than biofuels. It enhances our national security by reducing our dependence on foreign oil. In our region, we have abundant timberlands that are underutilized. Some things that would help grow alternative energy include low-interest loans and tax credits.

## Community Development

- I was at the recent meeting at the Barrington Student Union on September 12. At that time, I posed a question regarding jobs. As the director of economic development for the town and village, I have worked to help the community take advantage of its waterfront. Will the council favor or give the same consideration to those projects that are reflected in local plans? We have considered regional partnerships with adjacent communities as a way to keep things moving.
- We have to build on existing projects or work that has been done in communities that has been done to help grow the economy. I am sure every elected official will come forward to suggest a project that will grow the economy. I think that few projects must have a significant private sector investment. It's not enough to give away public money, but it must be tied to private investment.

## Strategic Clusters: Agriculture and Energy

- In Florida, the county has converted all of its county vehicles to run on biofuel by collecting cooking oils. When I see the North Country, I see thousands of acres of arable lands that are no longer in use. Cannot the North Country grow crops for use as a biofuel? Biofuels are a win-win situation. What is being done?
- I only use a portion of my farm and I have looked into biomass but the significant investment is the machinery for planting and harvesting. When you start out with nothing and not knowing what you will get in return, it's difficult.