

North Country Regional Economic Development Council

**Meeting Summary**

**July 30, 2012**

**Malone, NY**

**Open Session**

Attendance: Tony Collins, Gary Douglas, Megan Daly, Roseanne Murphy, Donna Wadsworth, John Ettling, Jeffrey Graham, Hugh Hill, Gordon Crossman,

Absent:

Garry Douglas opened the public portion of the meeting at 1:06pm

GD introduced Megan Daly as the replacement of Irene Baker. Ms. Daly noted that she was excited to be with the Councils. She stated that the NC was far ahead in the advancement of implementing the plan. She said that there was great collaboration amongst the Council and that the Council was doing stellar work.

GD outlined that the Council will be making its submission in September. The competition this year will focus upon plan implementation and the forward movement of projects.

GD discussed that the Council received refinements from the working groups for 2012's plan updates. The Council also added a healthcare strategy and a workforce development strategy that will be the culmination of the strategies first highlighted in 2011. Expect to have full reports from the arts and agriculture groups soon.

Garry Douglas stated that he is confident that we will compete very well. One of our continuing priorities is the effort to expand affordable broadband across the region. The governor plans to continue funding these projects and has allocated additional funding this year. David Salway is here to give us a presentation on this.

David Salway from ESD Broadband Program Office: Introduced his associate Angela Liotta. David stated that the annual report is available on the website. Web address: [www.nysbroadband.ny.gov](http://www.nysbroadband.ny.gov).

Thurman is utilizing white space to expand broadband availability in their geographically constrained communities. Senator Little noted that this technology isn't very expensive.

Mr. Salway noted that broadband is incredibly important for families and businesses. In general, 6+ mbps are needed for common applications and new applications are requiring faster and faster connections. National Broadband goal is 100 million homes with speeds of 100 mbps by 2020. One million New Yorkers do not have access to speeds that meet FCC minimums of 4 mbps download and 1 mbps upload. As an aside, 6 million residents of NY do not choose to subscribe.

“ESD website provides maps that track where broadband is available. We know the maps overstate coverage so there is the opportunity to tell us that this information is incorrect. The North Country does have the highest rate of people with no wireline or fixed wireless broadband at 10% or 43,250 people. 19% or North Country citizens cannot access download speeds of 6 mbps.”

“\$2 million was awarded in 2011 for broadband expansion. \$25 is committed for this year 2012. There is also \$20 allocated for public safety spending.”

Places with high speeds in excess of gigabytes are needed for large institutions such as universities or data centers. This is important for business retention and growth. The focus needs to be on both availability and the speed of the broadband that is available.

We are developing a clearinghouse on data for business needs regarding broadband.  
[www.nysbroadband.ny.gov](http://www.nysbroadband.ny.gov).

The \$25 million may be either an independent process or go through the CFA process.

Megan Daly noted that the goal is to announce the programs before or during the fall.

GD the next Council meeting is September 7<sup>th</sup> in Potsdam. This will be a crucial meeting as it will be finalizing what is submitted. Working group updates and reports will be circulated-please be sure that you are reading these and providing any feedback to Roseanne.

**Public Comment:**

Mary Scarf, Town of Malone: I am impressed with the work this organization has done. Economic growth in the North Country is difficult. Our downtowns have many vacant buildings hindering economic growth. We have changed from a community of walkers and cyclists to drivers and thus use more energy. We need a way to refurbish our downtown buildings. This would help us to create jobs and keep our small businesses. State regulations are preventing the redevelopment of our buildings. Vacant buildings are preventing tourists from coming to our community.

Boyce Sherwin, managing Malone Microenterprise Program: Thank you for coming to Malone. We have allocated all of our 2011 microenterprise funds and are ahead of all our required state metrics. This program is great for supporting people themselves. We could use more of those grants because we have a backlog of entrepreneurs. I think the program could be expanded County wide. Housing programs are also very useful. Lastly, we need the Mainstreet Revitalization Program. This program helps reduce the risk of redevelopment.

Garry Douglas concluded the meeting at 1:59 PM.