



MEETING MINUTES
WNY REGIONAL COUNCIL
JULY 11, 2013 9AM-NOON
UNIVERSITY AT BUFFALO
CENTER FOR TOMORROW, AMHERST CAMPUS

Opening Remarks – Howard Zemsky introduced Lieutenant Governor, Robert Duffy. Lt. Gov. Duffy discussed the momentum building in Buffalo and how that momentum is attributable to all the hard work done by the council.

2013 CFA Process Update – Christina Orsi outlined the CFA process and timeline. There is one new step to this round in that top scoring ESD Grant Fund applicants (applicants applying for a piece of the \$5M-\$25M in 2013 competition funds) will be invited to present their project to the Council on September 11th. Of particular importance this year is the [Opportunity Agenda](#). Christina also mentioned that council members are to fill out the CFA scoring group preference sign-up sheet.

Smart Growth Update – Mike Ball presented on the Smart Growth work group. Mike described the creation of the Smart Growth Coordinating Council and the Smart Growth score card. The group is working on developing an online GIS tool for assessing projects impact on Smart Growth measures. The group will meet soon to finalize the questions that will comprise the online tool. At the next council meeting in August the Coordinating Council will present the Smart Growth Score Card for council adoption in this year's 2013 CFA scoring process. Howard Zemsky emphasized the importance of Smart Growth for the region as historically the region hasn't been wise about its growth or decline as evidenced by increasing sprawl despite a decreasing population. Employing Smart Growth principles will help to stem future costs while increasing the quality of life for region residents.

Marketing Update – Colleen DiPirro discussed how the marketing work group recently hosted a meeting with chambers from across 8 counties to inform them of the CFA process and the council. She remarked that many do not know all the opportunities out there but the group is making headway in changing that. She reminded folks that all are welcome to reach out to Colleen or Mike Ball about presentations to groups on the Regional Council, business assistance and the CFA process.

Agriculture Update – Mike Ball presented on the group's work around branding for local food. This work builds off of branding efforts already happening at the state level to better market New York State food. The group is working on collaborating to strategically plan the future of WNY agriculture. The group recognizes the need to create a pipeline to fill agriculture jobs. Encouragingly, there seems to be a growing trend of young folks becoming interested in agricultural careers. Food hubs are another area where the agriculture work group sees potential growth as Food hubs present an opportunity for communities to make healthy food sourcing a profitable enterprise for producers, distributors, and retailers simultaneously, while improving access to local foods. The group has committed to meeting on a monthly basis.

Small Business Presentation – Steve Cohen described the many funds available to support small business and incentivize innovation in New York State. Steve spent some time detailing Start Up NY as an opportunity to transform SUNY campus and stimulate business in NY. ESD is currently developing administrative policies and procedures around Start Up NY. Policies and procedures will protect against fraud and competing with existing businesses in the area.

Howard Zemsky raised the question that since our region is seeing an emerging life sciences industry with many start ups looking for state support, how can the council do due diligence on that company without having the proper expertise? Is there a way to tap into expertise to property vet new life sciences businesses? Steve Cohen said one of the funds may create a new committee to give that expertise to regions. Pamela Henderson mentioned how information on these funds is not readily available and questioned how would someone go about accessing these funds? Steve recommended the website and that ESD also has omnibus people to help folks navigate the funds. Robin Schimminger expressed concerns about competing with existing businesses and shifting skilled workers from existing businesses to new area companies. Steve reiterated that this potential issue is a strategic objective of Start Up NY that it will have to balance the interests of businesses inside and out of the tax free zones. The Lt. Gov. commented that this issue is one the region should welcome as new jobs and new positions for skilled worker means more opportunities we do not currently have that will have to be filled. This will ultimately create more economic development.

Tourism Update – Chris Schoepflin and John Percy presented on four complimentary tourism strategies which have the overarching goals of increasing tourist stay and spending. Chris gave an update on the Robert Moses Parkway as it creates a barrier to accessing prime waterfront. Creating better access to the water front could stimulate serious tourism dollars.

Chris informed the council that four new hotel projects (Wingate, Double Tree, Fairfield by Marriot and Courtyard Marriott) will create \$50M in new investment and will add 500 rooms to the downtown Niagara Falls tourism district. Capitalizing upon and organizing world-class outdoor recreation assets, combined with the new real estate development will create an original point of differentiation from the Canadian model.

The Rainbow Centre Mall's adaptive re-use plan is making progress but is a closed process so further details will be provided at a later date.

John Percy spoke of the branding study underway that is the starting point of a regional marketing plan. A survey on regional tourism assets will produce information for a comprehensive database which will be used in the development of a 5 year tourism and cultural development plan to improve the regional product.

Advanced Manufacturing – Chris Conrardy from EWI described the skills gap and the need for the Buffalo Niagara Institute for Advanced Manufacturing. The focus of the institute will be on applied research and development, process excellence, export assistance and the up-skilling of existing employee skills. The institute will assist universities and government agencies in

product commercialization. Chris and Steve Levesque (EWI) are traveling throughout WNY interviewing advanced manufacturers in order to fine tune and adapt the EWI model to meet the unique needs of the advanced manufacturers in the region. EWI will complete a 5 year business plan and deliver it to the REDC this fall for council approval and official adoption.

Workforce Development – Chris Sansone described the retiring manufacturing workforce of 17,000 by 2020 and the need to fill these opening manufacturing jobs. The jobs needed include electricians, electro-mechanical technicians, quality assurance inspectors, welders, mechanics, machinists and production managers. Area manufacturers have collaborated to create a welding program that educates trainees in the skills that manufacturers need the most. The group is working to develop a similar program for the other areas of need.

Sharon Jones presented on the Skills Broker. The Skills Broker will align training with industry needs. She is working to develop a curriculum for this training. Brendan Mehaffy questioned whether other players in workforce development have been included in this process. Sharon committed to continue to meet with other work force development groups in order to be collaborative in this process going forward.

Revitalization Update – Laura Quebral described Buffalo as ripe with opportunity for revitalization. To create revitalization the Better Buffalo Fund will utilize existing planning materials, including historical plans and the City of Buffalo plans and focus resources around Main Street and existing transportation infrastructure. Brendan Mehaffy described how we need to lift some communities as development will not beget development for all areas of the city and that we must not forget the communities adjacent to new development projects.

Entrepreneurship Update – John Seaman described the Business Plan Competition that will be inclusive of entrepreneurs across the region and around the world. The Competition will create new businesses in NYS. Someone raised the question about how much of an equity position the state would be taking in the new ventures? John said they are currently working on those details and more information would be provided at a later date. Colleen DiPirro mentioned she had heard of tax credits for angel investors down state but she hadn't seen anything similar available for upstate. She called on the Lt. Gov. to look into making that available for this region.

Project Tracking – Mike Ball provided an update on 2011 and 2012 projects. Nearly 100% of all 2011 and 2012 projects are on schedule. Mike also highlighted the progress of PUSH Buffalo and Allegany Park's funded projects.