



## MEETING MINUTES

### WNY REGIONAL COUNCIL MEETING - PUBLIC

Thursday, May 2, 2013 | 9:00 am - Noon

UB Clinical Translational Research Center, 5<sup>th</sup> floor

875 Ellicott Street | Buffalo, NY 14210

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#### Attendees:

Howard Zemsky, Satish Tripathi, Christina Orsi, Aaron Bartley, Deanna Brennen, Rosa Gonzalez, Pamela Henderson, Robert Gioia, Brenda McDuffie, Robert Brady, Richard Tobe for County Executive Mark Poloncarz, Jeffrey Belt, Paul Brown, Dr. Raul Vazquez, John Koelmel, Tom Kucharski, Colleen DiPirro, Jennifer Parker, Robin Schimminger, Mike Hettler for Senator Mike Ranzenhofer, John Foels for Curtis Crandall, Kathy Peterson for Mayor Byron Brown, Tom DeSantis for Mayor Paul Dyster and Sam Ferraro for William Ross.

- **Opening Remarks** – Howard Zemsky thanked UB for its significant role in helping the Council and also thanked the council members for donating so much of their time to help the community.
- **Smart Growth Work Group Update** – Aaron Bartley mentioned a recent Boston Globe article that mentioned Buffalo favorably and where to go if you visit. It was great press for Buffalo and smart growth. He said there is a smaller group within the Smart Growth workgroup called the Coordinating Council which is most active at CFA scoring time.
- **Tourism – Path Through History (PTH) Plan Presentation** – Eve Berry is a consultant who gave an overview on this strategy for heritage tourism. She said it builds on the Governor's statewide initiative to put WNY on the map by connecting historically and culturally significant sites, locations and events throughout WNY which will bring more people to New York resulting in significant contributions to the economy. PTH tours, which will include historic sites, museums and cultural institutions that tell the story of our state's rise to prominence over the last 200 years, are set to begin the first two weekends in June. Dr. Vazquez said he would like to see better representation of immigrants in history tours; Howard Zemsky mentioned that this PTH is a living document and can be tweaked as new destinations and historical priorities emerge. with the understanding that the PTH work group would evaluate the opportunity to further highlight the historic role of immigration in future plan revisions and implementation of projects. The Council unanimously voted to endorse this plan.
- **CFA Update** – Mike Ball outlined the project tracking milestones and Dr. Vazquez said that he is more interested in job numbers/MWBE opportunities than project status and that the current project tracking system doesn't have MWBE in the dashboard. Christina Orsi gave an example of Alfred University. Of the \$2.8M that they were awarded, Alfred must spend 30% on certified MWBE

certified contractors. Each project is different and if they don't meet the goals, it is paid back and in some cases with good reason, the goals are waived. Howard stated that we don't make the laws; we just have to follow them. Mike updated the council on the activities of the Executive Committee. Regarding CFA reallocation from 2011 projects: a slate of projects was presented to the Executive Committee and a representative from each entity came in to present their project and the Executive Committee voted to reallocate the remaining money to these projects. Motioned to accept; Brenda McDuffie seconded. Passed unanimously.

- **Western New York Sustainability Planning Project** - Lindsay Robbins, Project Manager, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) Cleaner Greener Communities Program and Elizabeth Santacrose, WNY Sustainability Plan Project Manager, Ecology & Environment presented an update on this plan. Governor Cuomo established the Cleaner, Greener New York Program in 2011 to empower regions to create more sustainable communities by funding smart development practices. The WNY region is partnering with public and private experts across a wide range of fields, along with community residents, to lead the development of a regional sustainability plan and to implement projects that will significantly improve the economic and environmental health of our area. The program is administered by NYSERDA through a two-phase competitive grant process. For information, visit [www.sustainable-ny.com/](http://www.sustainable-ny.com/). The Regional Council was asked to endorse this plan. Jeff Belt motioned and Dr. Vazquez seconded. All were in favor.
- **Proposal for U.S. Border Fees** –The Department of Homeland Security last month proposed a study to assess the feasibility and cost of collecting a fee from people crossing by land into the U.S. from Canada. Howard Zemsky wanted to know what the Council thought about this. He said that as Chairman of the NFTA, his perspective is that it is not a good idea and that our federal delegation is opposed to it. Jennifer Parker, Dr. Vazquez, Tom Kucharski and John Koelmel all stated that we should not be adding new fees and that it doesn't fit into the REDC strategy.
- **NYS “Work for Success” Employment Initiative** – Rachel Gold, Special Counsel for the NYS DOL, outlined this program whereby businesses can earn up to \$2,400 in tax credits for each formerly incarcerated person they hire. DOL will screen the applicants and refer only the most qualified, pre-trained candidates for the open jobs at no cost to the business. She mentioned that there are lots of streams for training and placement but not enough specific job training. For more information, visit [www.workforsuccess.ny.gov](http://www.workforsuccess.ny.gov).
- **Buffalo Billion** – Christina Orsi outlined the six strategies of the Buffalo Investment Development Plan that create a plan for sustainable economic and inclusive jobs growth. Manufacturing is the third largest employer but qualified candidates are hard to find. Chris Sansone, president of the Buffalo Niagara Manufacturing Alliance and chair of the Workforce Pipeline Work Group, spoke about the shortage of skilled manufacturing workers in WNY. He said that has happened, in part, because high schools have stopped offering shop programs or scaled them back significantly. About 17,000 manufacturing jobs in the Buffalo Niagara region

are expected to come open by 2020, mostly due to retirements and about 30 percent of those openings are expected to be in the advanced manufacturing jobs that the council is targeting, with demand forecast to be especially strong for machinists. Amber Dixon, chair of the Workforce Right Skills Work Group spoke next on what the solution is and how we can close the gap. In order to determine the gap, we need to understand where manufacturers are finding their candidates for job openings. The lynchpin of the Buffalo Billion workforce development initiative is the skills broker which will align labor supply and demand. A pilot has been designed to quickly place skilled candidates into job openings and help build a full scale job matching and training program. In the pilot, candidates will be assessed by NYS Dept. of Labor, placing the first batch of candidates with employers within six months of the pilot launch. There is a need to create a manufacturing training center to supplement the capacity of current training providers which includes under represented populations in the region. The WNY REDC endorsed a plan to create a workforce training center that will help teach local workers the skills needed in today's more-advanced factory work. The center will train the most flexible, high tech workforce as a key asset for attracting and growing manufacturing in the region.