

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT / PLANNING COMMITTEE

October 24, 2011

PRESENT:

**Richard Keaveney, Chairman
Clerk**

**Jeffrey Braley
Patrick Grattan
Margaret Robertson
Arthur Bassin
Robin Andrews
Arthur Baer**

ABSENT:

Edward Nabozny – notified

ALSO PRESENT:

Becky Vinchiarello, Dep.

**Ronald Caponera
Ann Cooper
Kenneth Flood**

Public: 1

Press: 1

Chairman R. Keaveney called the meeting to order 5:00 P.M.

K. Flood announced that relief for farmers affected by Hurricane/Tropical Storms Irene and Lee is being offered from the Agricultural and Markets fund as well as from NYSERTA and National Grid. Applications are due November 7th. Some money has come through the Governor's office for assistance with these relief efforts as well. Soil and Water has received funds to assist with soil erosion.

Agriculture

Farmland Protection Plan Development Update:

The plan is now being drafted. They are on schedule in accordance with the extension requested from Agriculture and Markets. They expect the draft to be complete around the first of the year. The draft will then be subject to a round of public meetings.

Agriculture District 303b:

K. Flood disturbed a copy of the law regarding this. October is the month they request land be added to the Agriculture Districts. They have submitted a public notice. They are discussing bringing the number of agricultural districts in the County from ten to four.

An Agriculture Real Property Assessment Q&A was distributed.

It was clarified that agricultural exemptions do not generally apply to buildings.

Tourism – A. Cooper

New York University Graduate Class Case Study Update:

The students visited the County on October 1st – A. Cooper and Ann Marie Schaumann took them to tour major tourism sites in the County. Olana, Omi Art, Martin Van Buren, and Golden Harvest were among the places visited. Other than the weather the tour went well.

The students have been tasked with creating a 1 to 2 year marketing plan for Columbia County and a spot analysis. They will be presenting to A. Cooper and K. Flood at the end of the year and will then have copies of the final study.

Film Office Activities:

K. Flood would like to raise the profile of the County's film office in 2012. He plans to look into joint funding. His department also plans to make updates to the tourism and film office websites.

Resolution Request - Authorization to designate the Columbia County Tourism Department as the Tourism Promotion Agency for the "I love NY" Matching Fund Program year 2012. This is required from the State. They received 55K plus for the year 2011. Motion to approve by A. Baer, seconded by R. Andrews, motion carried. Refer to Finance.

Transportation:**Public Bus Service Status:**

K. Flood plans to bid the service out in May or June. In the meantime he has been coordinating with MAS – Sate Medicaid Transportation. They have been slow to get up to speed with the new program. He is also hoping to add a stop at Albany Medical Center and the surgical facility so Medicaid clients would have better access.

When this is worked out MAS will start using the public transportation system.

Reimbursement was also briefly discussed. He is going to have a meeting with P. Mossman regarding this. DOT does not want to use their money for reimbursement purposes which is causing an issue.

Economic Development**Micro-Business Program:**

The Department is running there 30th Micro Business Seminars every Tuesday night for 8 weeks. They have twelve attendees. As part of this program, they have made ten loans this year. The average loan is 20-25k. They teach business techniques (i.e. QuickBooks, etc.), and then loan the business money, SBA provides the money. They have experienced a 10 percent default rate. Discussion ensued on larger loans and what happens when people default on loans. The management of this program is funded out of money from the County, while the money loaned is not.

Project Updates:

Flanders has started production and they continue to hire. They are working with DSS regarding employment as well as the WIB.

K. Flood explained that he offers the company guidance such as providing them with the forms needed in order to not have to pay the 11% sales tax on electricity.

Eurial – Still waiting on financial system approval from NYS.

Camp Hill Ghent – They are putting the finishing touches on some of their buildings.

Greenport Crossings – Had an issue with the roof. The foundation will be going in the first building and they plan to open in April.

New Projects:

The demand has been for small business. K. Flood is currently working with a business in Ghent that is undergoing an expansion

He also reported that Ginsburg's is looking for a new site.

Broadband Initiative:

It was asked if the Department is currently doing anything to jumpstart or restart this project. K. Flood responded that he was able to obtain the funds for this, but the carrier turned the business down because of Federal Regulations.

He does plan to ask for money through the NYS Capital Region Economic Development Council under a transformable project. It was questioned if they should concentrate more on single areas that are available for broadband, rather than countywide.

NYS Capital Region Economic Development Council's Strategic Plan**Status:**

They plan to have plan done and submitted by November 14th.

At the next CEDC round table Global Boundaries will be presenting to give tips and direction on how business in Columbia County can be a supplier for this project.

Marketing

CEDC secured 75K from National Grid for Economic Development in marketing.

A copy of the budgets K. Flood is responsible for was handed out with 3rd quarter updates. Mass transportation is doing much better now with the two new busses. Next year he plans to apply for another bus. They are running slightly under budget. He is still currently interviewing for his Deputy position.

With no further business there was a motion to adjourn at 6:03 P.M. by A. Baer, seconded by A. Bassin, motion carried.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/ PLANNING:

Richard Keaveney, Chairman

Robin Andrews

Arthur Baer

Arthur Bassin

Jeffrey Braley

Patrick Grattan

Edward Nabozny

Margaret Robertson