

Board Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2020 12:29 pm

Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown

Call to Order: Chairman Cooper welcomed board members and acknowledged that the meeting was one person short of having a quorum. Minutes from the meeting in August and resolutions will be voted on at our next meeting in January 2021. Chairman Cooper thanked everyone who has attended the last 3 meetings that have been back to back to make up for missed meetings during the Covid-19 shutdown. We are now back on track for our regular quarterly meetings.

Privilege of the Floor: Mr. Hagemann announced that the 2020 Census Offices will complete their work by September 30, 2020. Census takers are currently going door to door interviewing households that have not responded in each county. Vice Chair Pettit asked if you can really track who has responded and who hasn't. Mr. Hagemann answered that it is difficult to track especially in the North Country where many people have second homes in areas such as Cape Vincent, Clayton and Alexandria Bay. He said about 30% of the secondary homeowners are not actually part of the population of Jefferson County. The intent is to get as many people as possible to fill out the Census to get the most accurate population count possible. These numbers will effect funding in the upcoming years. Mr. Hagemann encouraged members to take a 2020 Census mask to promote the Census.

Minutes of the August 13, 2020 Meeting: Due to not having a quorum, the August 13, 2020 Minutes will be voted on at our next meeting in January 2021.

Correspondence: None

One Stop Manager's Report: Due to having meetings scheduled so closely together, the One Stop Manager's Report has not been updated since the August board meeting. One Stop Manager, Angel Munson will provide an updated report at our next meeting in January 2021.

Summer Youth Employment Report: Youth Coordinator, Ethan Brown reported that due to Covid-19 participation numbers were low. Parents did not expect the program to transpire, therefore we did not receive as many applications as normal. Although, numbers were low, Summer 2020 still proved to be challenging. There were 5 Summer Counselors hired this year, who went above and beyond their duties to help participants who were struggling with home life and mental health issues, as well as providing healthy work habits. Mr. Brown is proposing that the Summer Counselors be trained as mandated reporters in 2021 due to the fact that they work so closely with the participants.

Lewis County Manager, Lisa Hetzner, reported that recruitment for their Summer Youth Program was difficult. Mr. Brown agreed, but said even though the numbers were small, he was happy to see the program move forward and it was worth it for the participating youth. One grandparent said that his grandson was able to afford a pair of Nike shoes and a video game that he really wanted. He would not be able to afford these items for his grandson without the Summer Youth Employment Program. More importantly, the work experience and ethics gained will raise the morale of the participants.

Director/Financial Report: Director Mayforth reported the unemployment rate to be 12.3% in Jefferson County and Lewis County at 9.7%. We have not seen a decrease in the unemployment rate as expected, now

that the \$600/week PUA has ended and the \$300 FEMA funding has been exhausted. Director Mayforth explained that the average unemployment check is only about \$207/week. That being said, the unemployment numbers are not going to decrease anytime soon and we will see an increase in the upcoming months due to seasonal workers being laid off, as well as businesses ending the season early. Director Mayforth added that in the last recession there were about 300,000 unemployment claims. Throughout the Covid-19 crisis there has been over 2 million claims and counting.

Director Mayforth explained that there are not stellar opportunities in the job market. Employers are looking for a high skill set, but are not willing to pay adequate salaries. The employee pool is of a lower skill set and there are limited employment opportunities as we see retail sectors reduce hours of operations and require less staffing. WARN notices are only applicable if the business has 25 or more full time employees and most of the businesses are not affected due to the fact that they are not considered mass layoffs.

Director Mayforth pointed out that, in completing the North Country Regional Economic Development Council (NCREDC) report, we lack broadband access here in the North Country. If we want to encourage people to move here for work we will have to expand our broadband efforts. Director Mayforth questioned, "How many kids are suffering from the lack of broadband during these times?" Mr. Monaco replied that in a Board of Regents Survey with only a 51% response rate 300,000 students didn't have access to a device such as a google chrome book and 200,000 reported not having access to the internet.

Director Mayforth reviewed the Jefferson-Lewis PY19 Revised Budget, the resolution for approval will be voted on in January due to being short of a quorum. Chairman Cooper asked about the difference between the required vs. the projected expenditures. Director Mayforth answered that we have to spend at least 80% of the funding, so this is the "required" expenditure amount. The "projected" expenditure is 82%, which is our goal. We aim above the required expenditure amount to ensure that we meet the 80% that we *must* spend. Director Mayforth also explained that we did not make the 80% spending amount in PY19 due to the pandemic. We applied for a waiver and it was accepted, but we must spend PY19 money before we can use PY20 money so we will have ground to make up. Director Mayforth also noted that in the event that there is another stimulus package, we will need to spend that money accordingly. The funding will need to be at just the right time in order to fund the enrollment of students. Enrollment is in September and January.

New Business: Resolutions are being tabled until the next meeting on January 21, 2021 due to not having a full quorum to vote at this meeting. The Executive Board Members will meet in the meantime to act upon the resolutions and they will be ratified by the full board in January.

Round Table & Discussion: Mr. Alexander shared that alternative energy projects are a positive in the North Country as there will be a future decrease in taxes. Brittany Davis shared that there are 2800 acres of solar energy projects in Lewis County. She said that they are trying to make use of marginal lands and not farmable land.

Mr. O'Driscoll pointed out that the solar energy industry has not had all positive effects on our economic development as they are not hiring local and if they do hire locally, they do not pay well. Mr. Alexander responded agreeing that there are some concerns about these issues and we will need to make some agreements with the developers such as hiring 50% local labor.

Ms. Pietroski reported that construction at ARC is ahead of schedule. Covid-19 has actually sped up the

progress of construction as the building is vacant due to furloughs. The time line has been moved up to August 2021, about 1 ½ years ahead of scheduled.

Ms. Hetzner announced that Lewis County received the 2019 Veterans Office Award.

Next Meeting Date: January 21, 2021 8:00am at Hilton Garden Inn, Watertown, NY; Executive Board Meeting TBA

Adjournment: Chairman Cooper asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. A motion was made by Vice Chair Pettit and seconded by Ms. Pietroski. Chairman Cooper adjourned the meeting at 1:41pm.

Attendance:

Don Alexander
George Anderson
Matthew Cooper
Brittany Davis
Bob Hagemann
Cheryl Mayforth
Fred Monaco
John O'Driscoll
Jody Pettit
Lynn Pietroski

Others in Attendance:

Ethan Brown
Lisa Hetzner
Angel Munson
Jennifer Pound