

PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

February 20, 2019

Members Present: G. Barnes, J. Burdick, P. Curran, W. Dibble, D. Healy, J. Hopkins, J. Ricci, C. Crandall (Absent: D. Root)

Others Present: L. Ballengee, D. Bigelow, T. Boyde, C. Clark, D. Decker, M. Denhoff, K. Dirlam, D. Fanton, G. Hanchett, B. Harris, S. Havey, J. Henry, K. Hooker, L. Kaminski, J. Kent, C. Knapp, R. Lynch, J. DiPasquale, A. McKay, B. Riehle, T. Ross, T. Shaw, P. Stockin, M. Washer

Media Present: C. Potter – *The Spectator*

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. by Planning & Economic Development Committee Vice-Chairman Gary Barnes.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Legislator Dibble, seconded by Legislator Ricci, and carried to approve the Planning & Economic Development Committee minutes of January 16, 2019.

Our Purple Cow: Similarities between Allegany County & the Hatfield-McCoy Trails

Allegany County Economic and Industrial Development Agency Executive Director Craig Clark and Kent Farms fourth generation owner Joe Kent presented on Allegany County's "purple cow" Tall Pines ATV Park. Dr. Clark indicated that he has been working with Tall Pines as well as others on how they can get Tall Pines ATV Park to the next level. Dr. Clark referenced the Hatfield-McCoy Trails Project and the Lewis County ATV Trail System, stating ATV trails are driving economic development.

The Hatfield-McCoy Trails Project opened in 2000 with three trail systems and 300 miles of cleared trails. By 2014, they had 8 trail systems and 700 miles of trails that span nine counties. The Hatfield-McCoy Trails Project has resulted in a 45 percent increase in the accommodations industry, and payroll in the food service industry has increased by 44 percent. The project has also generated \$19 million in economic activity from non-local visitor spending which has resulted in a \$1.5 million tax benefit. Dr. Clark noted that if we want to attract new companies and young professionals, as well as keep our current ones, they are going to want access to more restaurants and places to stay. The Hatfield-McCoy Trails see riders from all age groups with 45 to 54 year olds being their largest demographic. Legislator Healy asked if this age group can be considered to have the most discretionary income, and Dr. Clark stated, yes.

The Lewis County ATV Trail System has been operating for 10 years and has a full-time Trail Coordinator that is employed by their county. In 2018, they received \$90,000 in revenue from trail permits which has allowed them to be a self-sustaining program. They have a county trails app as well as the following coalition of trail systems working in harmony:

- Snowmobiling
- ATVs
- Snowshoeing
- Cross Country Skiing
- Hiking
- Biking

Josiah Brown, President and CEO of NY Welcomes You, who recently visited Allegany County and Tall Pines ATV Park has been quoted to say "I've just really never seen anything like it. I see a lot of opportunity here. It is clearly a differentiator. You don't have to be in the ATV business to have this be a benefit. Visitors to the ATV Park go home and talk about it, that benefits

the restaurants, the lodging, and the makers market. It benefits everything because it becomes something memorable to talk about.”

Joe Kent stated in 2008 they started to experience minor issues with the farm, and when he and his brother were asked what they want to do when it's their turn to run the business, Joe responded that he's always wanted a 4-wheeler park. Nine years later, the ATV Park is the biggest part of Kent Farms. In 2009, when they held their first event, they had 163 riders. In 2018, they received 12,193 annual visitors. Tall Pines ATV Park has 70+ miles of trails, 525 season pass holders, 21,000 social media followers, and have visitors from 37 states as well as Puerto Rico and Canada. Kent Farms currently has 12 cabins, a rental house, car wash, and kitchen for those who wish to come for an extended stay. Mr. Kent went on to say how amazing it is to see how many people come into our County to stay and enjoy what we have to offer. Kent Farms is known for a great place to come with your family and friends and unplug from reality.

Mr. Kent indicated that their second most asked question from visitors is “can we ride into town or on the roads.” Mr. Kent stated that currently Andover, Whitesville, Jasper, Troupsburg, West Union, Greenwood, and Hartsville have local laws that allow for UTVs. Legislator Stockin indicated that the town of Caneadea just recently passed the use of roads for UTVs as well. Mr. Kent continued that they do their best to send visitors outside of Kent Farms to help local businesses because those who are interested in this hobby spend a lot of money, and these businesses are thriving from the tourists they see. Mr. Kent referenced their well-known Prom Ride event, stating that one local business says it's their busiest weekend of the year. Mr. Kent noted that in addition to the ATV Park, they have the upcoming brewery, they held a concert last summer that brought in 1,500 guests, they host the Tough Mudder event that brings in thousands of visitors, and he hopes to someday have a zip line.

Constituent Debbie Bigelow asked how they handled all of the rain we received last year. Mr. Kent stated they do erosion control to the best of their ability, and those that still wish to ride are permitted to. Legislator Harris asked how they handle any disputes with neighbors, noise complaints, etc. Mr. Kent stated they do have some issues with people that don't like the noise. They do the best they can to re-route trails, in particular a trail in Alfred that is closed part of the year due to individuals who like to hunt and prefer that it remain quiet.

Chairman Crandall stated that Mr. Kent and his family have invested and built a substantial business in the County that benefits everyone around them. The awareness Mr. Kent has brought to the Board regarding the success they are experiencing is a great thing, and they will do anything they can to help enhance that while not getting in the way of their development.

Legislator Hopkins reiterated Mr. Kent's remarks on people making a substantial investment in the equipment, adding they are responsible people coming in wanting to unplug from society while being able to have places to eat and things to do.

Committee Vice-Chairman Barnes asked if they experience any problems with environmental people, and if so, how they handle it. Mr. Kent indicated that do have some “haters” out there that believe they are destroying the earth. Mr. Kent continued that 4-wheelers and side-by-sides are invasive and do make a mess; however, most of it is dirt that can be pushed back to where it came from. Mr. Kent noted that they plant trees to try and make things as nice as they can, and they also hold an event on Arbor Day where they allow people to ride for free as long as they clean up litter, garbage, etc. along the way.

Legislator Havey asked what the next steps are for the Legislature. Dr. Clark stated there are currently two Bills in Albany, NYA01587 and NYS01428, that need their support. Dr. Clark continued they can also utilize their district meetings to have this same discussion as well as promoting it any way they can because some people don't know how big this can be.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING DEPARTMENT

Employment and Training Director Reita Sobeck-Lynch attended the meeting and submitted her monthly report to the committee for review. Ms. Lynch stated the 2018 December unemployment rate for the County was 5 percent which is down from 6.6 percent in 2017.

Job Fair

Legislator Hopkins asked what types of jobs were being advertised at the Job Fair held at the Crossroads Center. Ms. Lynch stated it varied from front line jobs, to laborers, to engineers, adding that Home Depot, who attended, will be interviewing between 50 and 60 people they met that day.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT/INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AGENCY

Dr. Clark submitted his monthly report to the committee for review.

Crossroads Development Project

Legislator Healy stated the District II Legislators recently held a public meeting in Clarksville, and two-thirds of the meeting was in regards to the Crossroads Project and asked for a progress update of that project. Dr. Clark stated eight tanks have been removed, and they will be finished at the end of this week. They received bids for the Waterline Project on February 4 and are currently reviewing them. The low bidder is well below their estimates, and the site will be ready for developers, who are still interested. Dr. Clark indicated now that there is movement, he has received some interest regarding the fueling station. Legislator Dibble asked who is going to own and maintain the waterline. Dr. Clark stated it will be part of the IDA. Legislator Decker asked who is overseeing the bids. Dr. Clark stated LaBella Associates has gone through all three bids to make sure nothing is out of the ordinary. They will then look at the lowest bidder to make sure it is in good order, and then the IDA will make the final decision who to award.

Empire State Development

Dr. Clark stated they will be hosting Empire State Development on Wednesday, February 27, at the Crossroads Center from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. to discuss potential 2019 Consolidated Fund Applications.

Young Professionals Group

Dr. Clark stated there will be a Young Professionals meeting at Old Grey Hound in Cuba on Thursday, March 21, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Planning Director Kier Dirlam attended the meeting and submitted his monthly report to the committee for review.

Planning Board Annual Dinner

Mr. Dirlam stated the February 20 Planning Board meeting is cancelled due to a lack of a quorum.

Comprehensive Plan

Mr. Dirlam stated that the Comprehensive Plan has been distributed to the Comprehensive Plan Committee for review.

Upcoming Events

Mr. Dirlam announced the following upcoming events:

- The Consolidated Funding Application Workshop will be held Wednesday, February 27, from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Crossroads Center in Belmont, NY.
- The Appalachian Regional Commission Informational Workshop will be held Tuesday, March 12, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at the Crossroads Center in Belmont, NY.
- The Grant Writer Classes and Discussion will be held Tuesday, March 12, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., and 4:00 pm. to 6:00 p.m. at the Crossroads Center in Belmont, NY.

Chairman Crandall asked if there has been notification sent to the towns and villages of these events. Mr. Dirlam stated they send emails as well as memos, and they also plan to send out a press release.

Land Bank

Mr. Dirlam stated that the Land Bank is no longer working with ACCORD. They have hired 4th Sector Services who began administrating the program on February 1. The Land Bank is currently in the process of demolishing four properties that were acquired from the County Tax Sale, with one more demolition scheduled for late spring. Mr. Dirlam indicated that the Land Bank hopes to work with the Treasurer's Office to acquire properties from the 2019 Tax Sale that are more in line with their mission. Legislator Barnes asked what will happen to the properties once they are demolished. Mr. Dirlam stated that the Land Bank still owns them, and they hope to find a new owner to get them back on the tax roll. Mr. Dirlam noted that some of the properties are too small and will just become additional yard space; however, there are some that are large enough to build a new home.

TOURISM DEPARTMENT

Greater Allegany County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Gretchen Hanchett attended the meeting and submitted her monthly report to the committee for review.

Tourism Packages

Ms. Hanchett stated after some consideration and review with their Tourism consultant, they have decided to start fresh with the Tourism Packages and will begin by first developing a "25 Allegany County Must-dos" publication that will also be available on the Tourism website.

Visitor Engagement Academy

Ms. Hanchett stated they will be attending the A2D management training on Thursday, February 28, and hope to launch the program in March.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting was adjourned at 3:04 p.m. following a motion by Legislator Curran, seconded by Legislator Healy, and carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Meghan Washer, Confidential Secretary to Clerk of the Board
Allegany County Board of Legislators