

Minutes
Planning & Economic Development Committee
May 21, 2025, 6:00 pm, Legislative Chambers
Livestreamed on YouTube
Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

Members Present: Harmon, Gustafson, Johnson, Larson, Penhollow

Absent: Dickey

Others: Chagnon, Lee, Swan, Feldmann, Zafuto

Complete video of meeting can be viewed on YouTube

Chairman Harmon called the meeting to order at (6:00 p.m.)

Approval of Minutes (04/16/25)

MOVED by Legislator Larson, SECONDED by Legislator Penhollow.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Legislator Larson: Thank you very much. Good evening everyone. The 1998 Charter, which we still operate under, says that the County Legislature - section 2.05 of the Charter on at least an annual basis prior to the County Executive's preparation of the tentative budget the County Legislature shall adopt by resolution goals and objectives as well as specific performance measures for those goals and objectives which shall be utilized in the formation of the budget and in measuring the success of its implementation. Resolutions adopting goals, objectives and specific performance measures shall not be subject to veto by the County Executive. Now, I think since 2005, probably the County Legislature has not followed this mandate of the Charter which means that we have about 20 years of department heads who have never been involved with committees whether it's the Department of Public Facilities, whether it's the Health Department, Social Services Department or in our case our own Department of Planning and Economic Development so our current department head has never taken part in this process. I shared with Chairman Harmon last week, I think it was, a draft which is in front of you tonight and it's a rough draft but this is already May and the legislature is supposed to adopt performance goals, objectives and measures by June of each year so you've got this in front of you and goal number one- job creation is number one. Goal objective is- and I picked 500 net new jobs in our county this year and 750 net new jobs next year. Measurement is New York State Department of Labor job statistics. This is an arbitrary number as all numbers are basically, but as I've tried to bring to the legislatures attention for 17 months, since roughly 2010 employment in our county is down by 14,000 so setting a goal of 500 net new jobs. A growth in employment for this year (*inaudible*) 750 next year seemed pretty modest, probably too modest. Number two goal- a trained workforce is the goal. Objective is to expand job training by 100 workers in 2025, 200

workers in 2026. Our (*inaudible*) county financial support to JCC for expanded job training opportunities measurement is how many people participated in workforce training programs in 2025 and 2026. I could be wrong, always could be, but I don't think our county budget contains any money for helping pay for job training at Jamestown Community College and I believe we've been educated in the last year plus that for whatever reason the state of New York stopped supporting JCC Community College job training programs as not being the same as students studying math or history or whatever so the county currently doesn't- as I understand it, doesn't contribute toward training our workforce. We might want to look at a goal here or an objective of the county using some of our own money to do that. Number three- create the conditions for additional new jobs as a goal. The objective is to acquire throwing out there 100 acres of lands in 2025 and 200 acres of lands in 2026 suitable for industrial business parks. Measurements are how many acres were acquired. I've been very pleased with the help of Chairman Chagnon in the last year-we moved forward with getting 60 acres of land in the South County Industrial Park shovel ready by a year from summer however by most accounts we will be lucky to have out of that 60 acres maybe 150 jobs someday and again we're down 14,000 in employment since 2010. Number four- making lands the county/our county IDA already own shovel ready for industrial business park development is the goal. Objective would be to get 120 acres shovel ready by 2026. That one should be an easy one because between the 60 acres in the south county industrial park and 60 acres roughly in Ripley we've already seen a proposed timetable that by a year or so from now those should be ready for somebody to go in. And five, expanding tourism beyond the Memorial Day/Labor Day season and ski season is a goal. Objectives include restoring passenger air service to the County Airport at Jamestown in 2025, attracting more conventions and group meetings in the off season in 2025 and 2026. Measurements include increased occupancy tax revenue from greater use of our lodging facilities. As the Chairman knows, I shared this- you did get the proposed resolution I hope? Okay. As a retired lawyer/judge I try to remember not to assume things. It's a bad thing to assume. We do know that our department head got it because he responded in a fashion that would indicate that he's not been through the process that the County Charter puts forward, in particular the issue of industrial business parks what is the role of the County Legislature in creating county industrial business parks well after the 98 Charter was adopted in 1999 the County Legislature was presented with this report that I have in my hand. "Building Now for our Future Business and Industrial Parks Infrastructure Development Plan 1999" that was a presentation to the legislature. In response to that presentation the legislature passed resolution 210-99 you have a copy of tonight. The title was supporting the business and industrial parks infrastructure development plan and \$13,100,000 in bonding therefore. That was the legislature- there were 25 legislators then it was about 13 to 12 I think- just split evenly. And I was county attorney, part of this industrial parks task force that put this report together. It's pleasing to look back and see there were only two no votes out of 25. So it was overwhelming bipartisan support to go forward with this plan it was a very detailed plan the legislature had in front of it before it authorized spending any county money. That same night resolution 217-99 a bond resolution for \$5,600,000 that lines up with the earlier resolution and you can see that the total projected business and industrial park development was going to be \$13 million and it indicated out of that \$5 million the legislature approved that by the same 23-2 vote-why do I bring this up? So that the members of the committee here tonight-the five of us- we see that after the adoption of the 98 Charter and that Charter was very strong in saying- you all- now 19 of us- we're supposed to set policy around here we're supposed to set goals and objectives and it was interesting I hadn't read that part of the Charter prior to 15 minutes ago. It

makes it clear in that Charter that any resolution we pass dealing with goals objectives and measures for economic development out of our committee- it's not subject to veto by the County Executive, so we are to set policy. Very seldom does the legislature in fact set policy but that Charter said we're supposed to and it had a mechanism for doing it. I was not here in 2023 when the legislature that year as I understand it gave \$5 million roughly of Joe Biden's money to the IDA which the resolution that I remember doesn't even specify that the \$5 million was for Ripley or anywhere else or how it was going to be spent. In addition to that, I think there was over a million dollars of county capital projects money that was handed over to the IDA. I remember looking for any resolutions in 2023 by this body that said anything about Ripley and I don't think there were any. That's not the way to do business if you take your job seriously as a policy maker. As a legislator you're elected by the people, you have the authority to tell department heads what you want done you have authority to indicate for Department of Public Facilities that our rural representatives you want fog lines on every county road and if the DPF Director or the County Executive don't like it well you can haggle it out but you have a right to tell department heads what you expect, what policies you want. If you want turn lanes at every intersection in your townships on county roads you've got the authority to pass a resolution every year saying what your goals and objectives are.

So, this is a draft but what we have currently, is this committee and the legislature through us, we get maybe once a year or something we get a report from our department heads telling us what they want to tell us and that's nice- we should get that information but we're supposed to tell them what we want in the way of policy in the coming year. For a department head to say that our job as the Economic Development Committee is to keep our nose out of economic development and just hand money to the IDA, that's not acceptable and it's in conflict with the Charter. So, I hope that by next month's legislature meeting the other four of us on the committee- that you'll have your own thoughts and we can work up a resolution at next month's meeting that we can pass on to the legislature in our little part of Chautauqua County government Planning and Economic Development. The idea that our County IDA is the beginning, the middle and the ending- the alpha and the omega of economic development is factually wrong- legally wrong and suggests that we should do nothing more than basically ministerial acts. We'll sit here and pass on the ag. district renewals and things like that- community development block grant applications for restaurants- by the way, you've heard in the news that community development block grants may go away completely. Do we have anything that we'd like to say to Congressman Langworthy or anybody else parenthetically? So, whether you like any or all of my draft this is what we're supposed to do on at least an annual basis. I'm trying my darndest to have the Economic Development Committee be involved in setting policy for economic development (*inaudible*). Mr. Chairman I think the experts in our presentations indicate there might be 500 and some jobs at Ripley someday. I would remind north county people especially that doesn't replace the jobs that this county lost at Carriage House- 500 jobs and in Silver Creek at Petri Baking- 200 jobs. Tom, I couldn't believe there were 200 people working in that collection of buildings there in downtown Silver Creek but there were. Those two businesses alone lost us 700 jobs, so Ripley at 500 (*inaudible*) you can see that at best we're replacing the loss of just two businesses. We've got to do better than that.

My last comment is that if we all were sitting here in 2025 with a growing county, growing population, growing school population, growing employment, then you would say why is Larson making a big deal out of goals objectives and measurements, but we're not. We're sitting here in 2025 with about 14,000 fewer people employed than 15 years ago in our

workforce. The reason I threw in job training- and we've all heard here and elsewhere in our own communities the complaint by employers they can't find qualified workers, which is obviously true, so can we do something about that? Our labor force in these last 15 years is down by the same 14,000 as everything else, so is it any wonder it's hard to find qualified trained workers who show up on a daily basis even if they don't feel great- show up with some skills- so, I hope and I believe the four of you will take seriously over the next month this matter and add your ideas to what we can turn into a resolution to submit out of this committee to the whole legislature for the month of June. So, that was under privilege of the floor. That's on that matter.

This committee- last month, I'm quite sure we formally asked our Planning Department to give us some kind of a report on small nuclear power. Have we received that?

Chairman Harmon: I do have a response on that one.

Legislator Larson: Do we have a report tonight?

Chairman Harmon: Not a report. There was an email sent out by Mark Geise- we will have it in July. We're going to have an expert-

Legislator Larson: That's not what we- this committee asked our Planning Department just to do basic research and give us a little report.

Chairman Harmon: That information is going to be presented in July.

Legislator Larson: But Legislator Gustafson is asking all of us to sign a letter saying that we're open to small modular nuclear power in Chautauqua County. This is May. We asked for something in April and I do believe the Post-Journal reported- somehow quoted the County Executive after our meeting when we asked for our Planning Department to put something together by this month or June not July.

Chairman Harmon: I've scheduled-

Legislator Larson: Well did you schedule, or did Mark Geise tell us when we're going to do it?

Chairman Harmon: I believe it's the availability of the guy who-

Legislator Larson: That's not what we asked for-

Chairman Harmon: Well it's- that's the way it is going to be. It may not be what we asked for, but that's what's going to happen.

Legislator Larson: The County Executive is quoted in the Post-Journal as saying that the administration did have some kind of a study or report- has the legislature received anything from the administration on small nuclear power plants? No?

Chairman Harmon: No.

Legislator Larson: So, I know partisan politics is stronger in Mayville than the public would ever guess. It's about as strong as in Albany or Washington, not quite as bad, but let's take ourselves seriously as legislators. Each one of us were elected by the people of your district. You weren't elected by the County Republican Committee. I was elected by the good people of the north side of Jamestown- nobody else. We're *(inaudible)* to our public not to our parties and when we ask for a simple- any college student could put together a little report off of Google on small nuclear power plants in about a few hours-

Legislator Gustafson: I think you want to do it correctly and if you're serious about-

Legislator Larson: Well how do we know that one expert is the person we're supposed to listen-

Chairman Harmon: I think it's a great start to get someone who knows what they're going to be talking about to present it to and that's why I had a conversation and it's going to be done.

Legislator Larson: I agree with you completely. Before we make decisions as legislators we should have good information, so I'm not signing some letter about small nuclear power being invited into downtown Dunkirk until I have good solid information. As of today, as a county legislator and the Chairman confirms the administration has not provided this body with one iota of information backing up the notion of inviting small nuclear power into the Lake Erie shore in Dunkirk, New York.

Legislator Gustafson: The letter is just *(inaudible)* not to implement or anything else it's simply to explore.

Legislator Larson: Why don't we wait until July then for this expert to talk to us so we have information?

Legislator Gustafson: Well I would say this expert would be our first step in exploring so the letter of support would come before the expert. We're seeking additional information and the next step would be to receive that information. Thank you

Legislator Larson: All I'm saying Legislator Gustafson, is anybody in this government taking us seriously?

Legislator Gustafson: I would say we have we have certainly sought the letter of further discovery and further discovery is being presented to us in July. So, I would say yes.

Legislator Larson: Not by our planning department that's what we asked for I've read the minutes again for last month-

Legislator Johnson: Let me ask a question *(inaudible)* by our June committee meeting, what's that date? June 17th? Ok, so *(inaudible)*. Thank you.

(Cross-talk)

Chairman Harmon: Thank you. Back to the agenda.

Proposed Resolution – Confirm Re-Appointment – Off Track Betting

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Confirm Reappointments – Chautauqua County Soil and Water Conservation District Board of Directors – *Presented by James Feldmann, Executive Assistant to the County Executive*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Amend 2025 Budget – Enhance Programming for the Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau – *Sam Zafuto, Deputy Director of Finance*

Unanimously Carried

Other –

Motion by Legislator Larson, SECONDED by Legislator Johnson that Planning & Economic Development Committee discuss the potential changes to the occupancy tax legislation in January of 2027

Unanimously Carried

Discussion – Root Cause of Job Loss & Retention in Chautauqua County

MOVED by Legislator Larson, SECONDED by Legislator Penhollow to adjourn.

Unanimously Carried (6:37 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Kristi Zink, Deputy Clerk of the Legislature/ Nancy Quattrone, Senior Stenographer