

Minutes
Planning & Economic Development Committee
July 16, 2025, 6:00 pm, Legislative Chambers
Livestreamed on YouTube
Gerace Office Building, Mayville, NY

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

Others: Chagnon, Lee, Swan, Engstrom, Zafuto, Wurster, Aldrich, Geise, Domst, McCoy, Nixon, DeJoy, Dr. Whitaker, Dennis Elsenbeck

Complete video of meeting can be viewed on YouTube

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

Approval of Minutes (06/18/25)

MOVED by Legislator Gustafson, SECONDED by Legislator Larson.

Unanimously Carried

Privilege of the Floor

Karen Engstrom: Karen Engstrom, I live in the Town of Chautauqua and I represent Chautauqua Energy Watch. We are talking this evening; we have a presentation I understand on the repowering of Dunkirk's NRG Power Plant. The original repowering plan described by County Executive Wendel began with the continuation of the development of a dual cycle natural gas generator with the potential of 900 megawatts of power being produced. That repowering was to happen in a short period of time. Where is that plan? We are not talking about that plan tonight, I don't believe. That plan would benefit Dunkirk very quickly. Any repowering could make the economic picture for Dunkirk improve – but the faster the better. Gas technology is tried and true, it is a known success. Micro nuclear power entails a long process of development. Is there a Natural Gas repowering plan? The presentation today by Drs. Elsenbeck and Whittaker includes an explanation of why we would do this. And, I'm going to quote that title "Energy Needs for AI, Data Centers, and Semiconductors". The question is AI and Data collecting gathering centers. Do we need them? Do we want them? Are they good? Are they progressive? Estimates say that data gathering and AI will increase energy demand 6 to 10 times more than what we the public – who have been conserving – changing our lightbulbs, imposing heat limits in the winter, etc. now are expected to accept for the production of AI and data gathering. Why? Is this progress or is it something else? Look at AI. There is a ten-year ban on AI regulation passed in the Big Bill. That means there is no oversight. No Oversight. There is no regulation to ten years. Forty state attorney generals have warned that oversight is needed. They say that without oversight AI could be dangerous. Artificial Intelligence amounts to a new technology order. Is it really innovation? AI could affect law enforcement, health care assessments, educational content, personal privacy and of course the role of elected officials. Do we really need elected officials if we have AI? AI would allow an erosion of due process in all

areas. Why waste electricity on something we should not be accepting without more comprehensive analysis. More scrutiny is necessary. Reasonable steps are needed to satisfy the legal requirements and constitutional rights that we all expect as warned by the state attorney generals in their letters to the federal government. And, where is the gas repowering plan? The reason for repowering Dunkirk should be to eliminate the justification that is given to us – the public – for the destructive and wasteful wind, solar and battery energy storage systems that are being imposed upon us. Not for AI and data gathering which will do no good to Chautauqua County. Thank you.

Chairman Harmon: Thank you. Does anyone else have anything to say for privilege of the floor? Hearing none, we will get on with the agenda.

Proposed Resolution – Authorizing Execution of Restore NY Grant Disbursement Agreement for the White Inn – *Presented by Nathan Aldrich, Economic Development Coordinator, Mark Geise, Deputy County Executive for Economic Development*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution – Authorize Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau as the Local Tourist Promotion Agency for Matching Funds Program Sponsored by the New York State Division of Tourism – *Presented by Nathan Aldrich, Economic Development Coordinator, Mark Geise, Deputy County Executive for Economic Development, Andrew Nixon, Director of Chautauqua County Visitors Bureau*

Unanimously Carried

Proposed Resolution - Establish 2026 Goals, Objectives, and Performance Measures for the Chautauqua County Department of Planning & Development – *Presented by Nathan Aldrich, Economic Development Coordinator, Mark Geise, Deputy County Executive for Economic Development, Rebecca Wurster, Planning Coordinator for the Department of Planning and Development*

MOVED by Legislator Larson to Amend to add the five points in writing submitted by Legislator Larson as listed below. The motion to amend did not receive a second- *Motion to Amend was Defeated*

- 1) Job creation as number 1 goal. Objective is to have a net gain of jobs in 2026. Measurement is NY State Department of Labor job statistics.
 - 2) A trained workforce is the goal. The objective is to expand job training opportunities in 2026. Offer County financial support to JCC for expanded job training opportunities. Measurement is how many people participated in workforce training programs in 2025 compared to 2026.
 - 3) Create the conditions for additional new jobs as a goal. The objective is to acquire 200 acres of land in 2026 suitable for industrial/business parks. Measurements are how many acres were acquired
 - 4) Making lands the County/CCIDA already own shovel ready for industrial/business park development is a goal. The objective would be to get 120 acres shovel ready by 2026 (including Ripley and the South County Industrial Park).
By Resolution 69-99, Chautauqua County purchased 37.8 acres adjacent to the County Airport at Jamestown in the Town of Ellicott for \$26,900 (\$711 per acre). These lands are served, or could be, by Jamestown water and sewer. 2026 should see a plan presented to the Legislature to make the appropriate lands shovel ready for industrial/business development.
 - 5) Expanding tourism beyond the Memorial Day-Labor Day season and ski season is a goal. Objectives include restoring passenger air service to the Chautauqua County Airport at Jamestown in 2025, attracting more conventions and group meetings in the "off season" in 2026.
Measurements include increased Occupancy Tax revenue from greater use of our lodging facilities.
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Carried with Legislators Larson and Johnson voting "No"

Other —

Presentation: Repowering with Nuclear/Small Modular Reactors/Energy Needs for AI, Data Centers, and Semiconductors *by Dennis Elsenbeck, Energy Expert at Phillips Lytle, and Dr. Whittaker, UB Distinguished Professor from the School of Engineering*

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

Unanimously Carried (7:59 p.m.)

Respectfully submitted and transcribed,
Nancy Quattrone, Senior Stenographer/Olivia L. Lee, Clerk of the Legislature