

Meeting Minutes
Jamestown Local Development Corporation

A meeting of the Jamestown Local Development Corporation was held at 5:30pm on 7/16/2025.

Attendance

Voting members in attendance

Kimberly Ecklund

Wayne Rishell

Jeff Russell

Luke Fodor

Tony Dolce

Elliot Raimondo, Corporation Counsel

Members not in attendance

Eric Hagglund

Brent Sheldon

Vicki McGraw

Andrew Nickerson

Others present

Crystal Surdyk, Director of Development

Aili Makuch, Economic Development Coordinator

Ross Ramsay, Ramsay Agriculture

Larry Cosenza, Ramsay Agriculture

Julia Ciesla-Hanley, 107.9 WRFA-LP Radio

Kimberly Ecklund called the meeting to order at 5:50pm, and apologizes for the delay in starting due to technical difficulties.

Approval of the meeting minutes for the 4/16/2025 meeting

A motion to approve the minutes of the previous 12/18/2024 meeting was made by Luke Fodor and seconded by Tony Dolce. The motion passed with no opposition.

Approval of the JLDC financials for the months of April, May, and June 2025

A motion to approve the JLDC financials for the above stated months s made by Tony Dolce and seconded by Wayne Rishell. The motion passed with no opposition.

Presentation by Ramsay Agriculture in advance of their JLDC Application Submission in August

Crystal Surdyk introduces Ross Ramsay and Larry Cosenza, and states that they have purchased 40 Winsor and 65 River and that stabilization efforts are beginning. She explains that the group will be providing an informational presentation about the stages they have already completed, and what their next steps are to reach their end goal and become fully operational. Aili Makuch chimes in to say that the slides of their presentation will be shared with the group after the meeting so that board members may review more in depth.

Larry introduces himself as the Chief Science Officer and explains their request for gap funding to help with continued stabilization efforts of their properties, and begins to tell the board about the business. Their goal is to produce energy in several different forms – through food, renewable natural gas (RNG) and electricity. He continues and states that they have been in touch with several local organizations such as the City and the BPU, and have backing from a variety of businesses and institutions already interested in supporting their endeavor.

Larry proceeds to start his presentation, and talks about how some other businesses like this do not succeed is due to the extremely high energy cost of a vertical grow operation. But their operation combines vertical agriculture with anaerobic digestion (a sequence of processes by which microorganisms break down biodegradable material in the absence of oxygen) to create energy to support their production needs.

Ross states that there are multiple supermarket chains downstate that are interested in buying their produce, and they have been beginning to network here in Jamestown. Jeff Russell asks who they have connected with locally, and Ross replies they have been in conversations with Brigiotta's and they're interested. He also mentions that they intend to set up a sales team local to Jamestown, who will go out and secure connections for them. The goal is to sell within 350 miles. Tony Dolce states that the area is a food desert, and all agree. Larry talks about how selling their produce so locally and within that 350-mile radius ensures freshness for the customer. Ross states that between the two facilities they will be producing 7-8 million pounds of produce each year! Tony asks if they intend to have a retail shopping space, like an indoor farmers market for direct-to-consumer sales, and Ross replies that there is room at 40 Winsor and it is something they would definitely consider. Luke Fodor asks what produce they are planning to grow. Ross says they will start with leafy greens, and then expand to strawberries and mushrooms. Larry added they will also diversify into cucumbers and peppers, too. Jeff asks if they have any intention of growing marijuana, and Ross assures him they do not.

Wayne Rishell asks where they are at in the process of getting licenses and permits, mentioning the state and the DEC. Larry assures him they will cover that in the presentation. Ross says they have the DEC lined up through their architect, and the permits and applications will go through them when the time comes, likely within the next 1-2 years, and that they currently own the buildings and are working on stabilizing them now and that will continue simultaneously with the permitting and applications with the state.

Jeff asks if he is correct in understanding that the business is designed to be self-sustaining, and Larry tells him yes, that they will be making their own energy, and it will cut their prices in half compared to competitors because of the cost savings. Jeff asks if any of the food will be all natural or if it will be genetically modified, and Larry says it will all be pesticide free, but they cannot call it organic or anything, and that the food itself will not be genetically modified, no. He continues and explains that he did bio-genetically engineered a bacterial enzyme to help with the anaerobic digestion, but it will not be used in the food production.

Larry explains that instead of using solar panels for power generation, that they have chosen anaerobic digestion as their method. It will create a renewable natural gas known as methane, which can be enhanced and purified to be burned in a generator to create electricity. It will be powered by organic matter diverted from landfills, and that therein lies an additional revenue

stream because they can ask for “tipping fees” to ensure proper handling of that material. It is good for everyone, because it creates jobs and pulls CO2 out of the air and handles waste appropriately.

Tony asks how many jobs they expect to create, and Larry and Ross state it is expected to be around 100. Their footprint is about double that of a recently published operation in New York state, and that operation had about 50 employees. Elliot Raimondo asks if there will be any opportunity for agricultural tourism. Ross says they consider it, but that it is not on the top of their priority list right now. Larry does state that they want to educate the public about how their process works. He states that Ross has an idea for the buildings where they maintain the exterior perimeter and then the floor is glass so you can see from top to bottom as you walk through, while preserving the sterility of the operation. If they did some kind of tourism, of course energy production would be an aspect of the education, too. Jeff posits that the schools could benefit from some kind of interaction and training, and Larry agrees because they will need highly skilled workers. Ross says Larry is right, and everybody laughs because he does not say that often.

Larry says he has been working on this idea for upwards of 10 years, and how the main problem hydroponic farms face is energy. He had a lightbulb moment a couple years back about how they could combine farming with energy production to eliminate that problem. It allows their operation to make sense financially. Ross reiterates that they hope to produce between 7 and 10 million pounds of produce annually, and at an average of \$5 per pound, that shows the kind of revenue streams they are looking at... The only limiting factor is the amount of space they have for producing food, but there is not really a limit on the amount of energy they could create. Wayne asks if they will be net positive or net negative on the amount of energy they need to pull from the grid, and Ross replies that they anticipate being able to contribute energy back to the grid consistently, and Larry agrees. They acknowledge that once energy has been created, it can be hard to store. Crystal Surdyk chimes in to add that these conversations have been happening with the BPU since the beginning of Ramsay Agriculture’s process. Ross agrees, and Larry states that Ellen Ditonto has been invaluable and has even helped them identify sources of organic material for the anerobic digester. Jeff says with the amount of lake weeds this year there is certainly potential for those to be used. Larry says they have been in conversations with them about it, and that if more people needed to be hired to help rid the lake of weeds, that would be a good thing! Ross adds that they can bottle and sell the natural gas, too, if they create more than they need. Larry states that they could even use some of the extra CO2 created in the process to pump into the greenhouse and expedite the produce growth.

Larry says they have purchased 40 Winsor since Mayor Ecklund has been in office, and that this acquisition doubles their viable production space. So far they have conducted the environmental testing of both 65 River and 40 Winsor, both phases I and II. They are working with C&S to handle the remediation of 65 River to help them apply for the Brownfield Cleanup Program for that property. 40 Winsor was found to be “clean” and ready for use, so that is where they are starting.

Wayne confirms that they will be a for-profit entity, and asks if they will be utilizing tax credits from the brownfield cleanup, and Larry says yes. Wayne confirms they won’t be selling them, and Larry says no, they will not be. They continue to briefly discuss tax credits and how they work.

Wayne confirms they have done Phase II at both sites, and the answer is yes. 65 River needs further cleanup, but 40 Winsor is clean. Mayor Ecklund exclaims how she loves to hear those words, because the general public does not think that is the case. She praises Ross and Larry for their patience and vision for those properties, because she has regularly heard from constituents that the building is too far gone, and always reassured them that it could be saved, and thanks them for their continued effort.

Larry talks about how the weather has caused some safety hazards at 40 Winsor, and that they have been engaging an engineer to assist in stabilization. He shows the diagram on his computer of their plans, and it is small, so Aili Makuch reassures the JLDC board that the presentation will be sent out for everyone to review after the meeting. Mayor Ecklund adds that people can drive by and see it in real time! Ross says the exterior is secured with scaffolding while the interior is stabilized and explains how they intend to add a temporary roof on the 4th floor and slowly work on removing the floors underneath one at a time. This will maintain the exterior structure and allow for stabilization of the interior, as well. Ross adds that they will be using steel to support the building. Larry makes it clear that this is what they are asking for funding for – the stabilization. Jeff asks if they can use any local companies for this portion of the work, and Ross says that at this time, they cannot because he works in structural steel and he will be bringing in his team for now. But in the long term, for the reconstruction part of the job, yes, absolutely they will use local labor and companies.

Larry talks about the cell tower company they intend to lease part of the property to, so they can begin generating income immediately which is intended to help pay the loan. And if for some reason that falls through, he assures the board that he and Ross have it covered personally.

The presentation proceeds to cover an overview of the operations, and recaps what they have discussed so far. Larry reiterates the opportunities for various types of feedstock in the area, and how they are developing and evolving as they go.

Jeff asks where the gentlemen are from. Ross says New Jersey, and Larry says Germantown, NY and proceeds to discuss his schooling and work history in-depth.

Larry tells the board about how Jamestown is perfectly located for them to sell their produce to multiple city-centers within a couple hours drive, calling it the gateway to the midwest. Wayne asks about their business plan and financials. Crystal states that they will be providing a final application with all of that info for the August board meeting, this was simply an opportunity to provide the board with a high-level overview of the project. Wayne asks about their investors, who they are approaching, what they are looking for. Ross tells him it is private equity. Mayor Ecklund states she has been them in town many times since she took office, and acknowledges that they have been around and working with the City long before she started as Mayor. She also mentions how quick they respond when there have been concerns about the building, and how much she appreciates that. Crystal adds that they have made a lot of connections locally, and that they have done plenty of due diligence so far. And that they have a quarter million invested of their own funds already. Ross states that all of their buildings are secure and their property manager is very on top of things. Jeff talks about how someone previously bought the building and just let it decay, and Crystal says yes, that has happened a couple of times. Tony talks about how he remembers when Crawford Furniture was active there, and how cool it was. Ross says the buildings were so solidly built, if the roof had been maintained, they would likely have

remained that way. Ross relays that his son lived here, and that they own multiple properties in the city outside of the two industrial ones.

Larry continues the presentation, talking about how their indoor operation allows them to grow and sell produce year-round. Jeff talks about how much his daughter loves strawberries, and how hard they are to find fresh in winter. Mayor Ecklund talks about how she has talked with Briotta's about the pricing volatility and how having something like this locally could be a game changer for them, and everyone in our area.

Jeff asks where they plan to get their water, and Larry says it will all come from the BPU. He proceeds to talk about how the hydroponic process works, and what standards the water needs to meet and how they will handle that.

Wayne asks if they have any concerns about how legislation may be changing and could limit them in the future. Larry talks about how they are keeping a close eye on that, but they are definitely going to be held to high standards for how they process everything. He explains that they were worried about p-foss, but that they are doing their research diligently and Larry talks about engineering a specific bacterium to help handle that within the biodigester.

Larry talks about how much food Americans waste, and how it can be so useful to them! And how it can even save the community some money because they can take it instead of a landfill. Jeff suggests schools as a source for this.

The presentation highlights the differences between vertical farming and standard 2-dimensional farming. Vertical farming, when combined with the energy production, it creates year-round positions and lessens the financial burden on the farmer. Vertical farming refers to the act of growing vertically in a space. A vertical farm is when there are multiple stacked levels of farming in the same location.

Larry talks more about the biodigester and the decomposition process that creates the gas and energy, and how it makes their entire process more sustainable and diverse because it uses so many different materials. It creates a cyclical environment.

Jeff brings up permits, and how the State is prioritizing environmental protections, and asks if they have spoken with the State. Larry says he is expecting a hard time, but that there are rules and regulations, and if they comply and meet the standards, they should be fine. Jeff talks about how a friend of his has been in a battle with the DEC for years by using waste to create energy. Larry brings up that he had at one point been working with a film crew who wanted to document how hard it can be to bring this about. Wayne asks if they plan to partner with SUNY schools and the State about the education process. Larry talks about how he is a professor and regularly talks with the school system about it, and how he is developing a curriculum about it. Wayne posits there may be some potential grant funding opened up for that. Ross circles back to Jeff's story about his farmer friend, and Ross says they would like to talk with him and that there are other operations similar to what they are proposing that have been successful. Jeff says he will give Ross the friend's contact.

Larry talks about possible outlets for the energy they produce beyond their needs, there are lots of options! The development group they have been talking with about it have plenty of ideas and are well-versed in all of them. He adds that they hope to be operational by 2028. He talks about

the series of supermarkets downstate that are interested in buying their produce, and how negotiations will continue as they move forward.

The racks they intend to use for the growing operation are about 30' high and allow for them to grow a bunch of different produce. By putting this operation within the City, it turns agriculture on it's head – bringing something that is typically rural into an urban area. Larry reinforces the concept of a circular economy as the presentation comes to a close.

Elliot asks about the timeline. Larry says they should be able to begin reconstruction next year, and energy production would come the next year – barring any permitting issues. Wayne says he has a million questions, but understands there will be an opportunity to ask them next meeting. He confirms his assumption that their ask is for funding to help stabilize the building. Crystal reassures the board that the cell tower creates a revenue stream that will allow them to keep up with loan payments prior to the operations are up and running.

Ross reiterates that their main priority is stabilizing the building.

There was no need for executive session.

A motion to close the meeting was made by Jeff Russell and seconded by Wayne Rishell. The motion passed with no opposition.

Adjournment

Meeting is adjourned at 6:56pm.