

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EDUCATION, CULTURE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS COMMITTEE OF THE ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE, HELD AT EVELYN'S VIEW BED & BREAKFAST, MILTON, N.Y., ON THE 26<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF JULY, 2000.**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

VINCENT DUNN, Chairman  
FRANK FELICELLO  
DAVID DONALDSON  
JOAN EVERY  
EDWARD JENNINGS  
WILLIAM BEESMER

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SAM MAGARELLI

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED:**

NONE

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

LEG. FAWN TANTILLO; PETER GAROFANO, Director and PAT JACOBSEN, both representing Ulster County Tourism; GERALD DAVIDSON, Executive Director of Ulster County Development Corporation; LEE REIDY, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension; and JANET CRISPINO, Recorder.

A quorum being present, Chairman Dunn called the meeting to order at 5:15pm and requested Janet Crispino to speak on behalf of Ulster County Community College

This recorder reminded the Committee of the Special Committee Meeting to be held on August 3, 2000 at 4:30pm, at the County Office Building for the purpose of voting on a proposed Resolution to approve the successful bidder on Phase IB of the construction, which bids are scheduled to be opened on July 20<sup>th</sup>.

At this time Chairman Dunn recognized Gerald Davidson, Executive Director of Ulster County Development Corporation, who distributed copies of the latest edition of UCDC's "Bulletin." He also advised that he had been having some on-going negotiations with several companies having a lot of jobs at stake; however, they are not closed as of now. The candle manufacturing company is one of them.

The shovel ready bill has passed both houses in Albany and letters had been sent to the Governor urging him to sign this bill. Hopefully that will happen shortly, at which time the Joint Economic Task Force of the Ways & Means Committee will interface with UCDC to come up with an implementation plan.

Mr. Davidson announced that Sen. John Bonacic has money available for tourism and economic development projects. UCDC has asked for \$500,000 to assist with some Internet ready buildings, with the logic being that if there is a way to help some manufacturers to build a base for better jobs, we should do so. Mr. Carofano said he had a Resolution regarding this item.

Continuing, Mr. Davidson said UCDC has been working to get more viable land in Ulster County. He discussed Hudson Valley Data Net and its plans to build a data ring around Orange County, come up the Thruway to New Paltz and then to Poughkeepsie. Ulster County will have to get some large customers in order to draw them here before going on to Dutchess County. A brief discussion followed.

Leg. Beesmer said last week he had a conversation with Geddy S. who suggested that this Committee be more focused on this project. Geddy believes the Government should invest in companies to make sure this happens. Mr. Davidson was not sure that the Government should invest in private industry. Leg. Beesmer asked how big a company Hudson Valley Data Net is and whether they were well funded. Mr. Davidson replied they seemed to have financial backing; however, there is a constraint on fiber optics since at this time there is not enough to keep up with the demand.

Discussing the new County Directory, Mr. Davidson said there should be e-mail addresses in it. Leg. Beesmer said someone had sent him a form asking for his e-mail address. Mr. Davidson would like to see e-mail addresses listed for everyone, as the image we give to the outside world is very important.

The UCDC sponsored "Ulster 2000" meetings are going well. The next major item is a series of forums on how the Hudson Valley should be developed. Mr. Davidson said Scenic Hudson was very good at practically getting the County designated as an endangered species; it believes the Hudson River Valley should not be developed. This Fall, UCDC will be doing a series of forums that will debate whether we should expand our industrial base. UCDC will be sponsoring that forum with Scenic Hudson. He said there has to be some land opened up that will be designated for future development and high-paying jobs. The intent is for the municipalities that border on the Hudson River to share their land use plans with others. A brief discussion of this matter followed, as well as discussion on how land use laws were originally passed.

Leg. Felicello asked how the Ad Hoc Committee on Economic Development was progressing, and Mr. Davidson said they seemed to have many individual ideas, but hopefully they will be able to put something together by the end of the week.

The report of Ulster County Development Corporation being concluded, Chairman Dunn read aloud to the Committee a letter-report of Bruce Burgher, Ulster County Historian to Chairman Alfonso dated July 1, 2000. The letter-report of the Ulster County Historian is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

At this time Leg. Donaldson advised that he wished to correct the minutes of the last meeting to show that he had been excused and not absent. Chairman Dunn requested that this be shown on this record.

Leg. Donaldson also discussed the history of Ulster County and Kingston and the tourism it generates. He said he would like to see something done with the former Gov. George Clinton residence. He backs the Ulster County Historian's request for the building to be designated as a museum. The Committee then discussed this matter in detail.

Chairman Dunn introduced Leg. Fawn Tantillo and advised that she would be speaking at a later time.

Chairman Dunn then recognized Lee Reidy, Executive Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, who advised the Committee that while the Gov. Clinton Building was of adequate size for a museum, the basic problem with the use of the building for any purpose is the complete lack of parking facilities.

Ms. Reidy handed out the latest issue of "Legislative Update" and advised that the "Community Conversations" series was still on-going. She advised that Lois Leviton of Cornell was very interested in and was working on West Nile Virus information. Ms. Leviton has been invited to come and talk about "Things That Can Kill You in Nature" at a public meeting. This meeting is scheduled for September 28<sup>th</sup> at Central Hudson's meeting room on Route 28 in Kingston. Cooperative Extension will be looking at a series for teenagers to look at these issues. She is also trying to put together workshops on the things you can do around the house to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds. There will also be some information forthcoming on Lyme Disease and on Rabies.

Leg. Felicello said he believed that the General Services Committee conducted mandatory testing and voluntary inoculations for County employees. Ms. Reidy said one of the interesting things is that testing and detection of Lyme Disease is not reliable, since not all deer ticks carry Lyme Disease. She stressed that the more you know the better off you are. People should be aware of what they should do if they find a tick.

Ms. Reidy advised that the Ulster County Fair opens on Tuesday, August 1, 2000 with carload night. The opening ceremonies are Wednesday, August 2<sup>nd</sup> and all Legislators should have received invitations.

On the hail damage to area farmers, Ms. Reidy said the farmers have been working with Mike Fargione of her office. Many farmers have sustained damages to at least 25% of their crops. These apples will not sell and it does not pay to pick them for juice or cider.

Congressman Hinchey is trying to get disaster relief for the smaller farmers of so-called "Specialty Crops" such as apples or sweet corn. This was for last year's damage and should be about \$7 million. If these apple growers get some aid, they may be able to stay in business. There were farmers who went out last year and those farmlands are going to become housing developments. She said that anything the Legislature could do to expedite this relief would be appreciated. Ms. Reidy also advised that Cong. Gilman is also working on this matter in trying to get some federal aid.

Ms. Reidy also discussed John Gill and the debate currently on-going about some of his farming practices. A short discussion was held on this matter.

Ms. Reidy said that in 1997 the Legislature passed the Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan. On the Committee there are four farmers; one person who represents land use issues; one County Legislative representative who is Leg. Fawn Tantillo; someone representing agri-business; the head of the Real Property Tax; the head of Planning; Lee Reidy representing Cornell Cooperative Extension; and the head of Soil & Water. There is a State Right-to-Farm Law; however, this bill would encourage people to look at agriculture as an advantage.

Leg. Tantillo and Ms. Reidy discussed this Local Law establishing the Right-to-Farm, especially all of the economic benefits in having agriculture in New York State. Leg. Beesmer asked if the State Right-to-Farm Law was similar to this, and if so, what value <sup>is</sup> this law going to add. Leg. Tantillo answered that it is going to underline that the County recognizes the importance of agriculture in Ulster County and the need for it. She said that what this Committee will be doing is to set a date for a public hearing.

A motion to approve setting a date for a public hearing was made by Leg. Donaldson and seconded by Leg. Jennings. On further discussion, Ms. Reidy advised that when this Local Law is passed, it would give people involved in agriculture the knowledge they are welcome in the County and that the County sees agriculture as important.

Leg. Beesmer asked if this law would be enough to protect farmers and their neighbors. Leg. Donaldson had a similar question. Leg. Tantillo said there is a State Law that says when real estate agents are selling property next to agricultural land, they are supposed to notify people of this and the buyers are supposed to sign a statement to that effect. At the present time people are not following that. Leg. Beesmer said people are really naïve when it comes to finding out about the property they plan to buy. Leg. Tantillo said we should also be looking at proposed developments next to farmland. If the farmer is there first, the buyer wants a buffer zone. She said the County might want to encourage towns to learn more about the sale of property located next to farmland.

Chairman Dunn said farming has always been the backbone of this country. People respected farmers once and understood their importance but over the years the environmentalists and others are starting to go too far. They are against everything. What they

are doing is encouraging farmers to quit farming and do something else. These farmers don't have a choice. Chairman Dunn said he would not stand by and see productive farmland turned into something else.

There being no further discussion and there being a motion on the floor to set a public hearing on this law, Chairman Dunn called for a voice vote. There was no opposition and the motion was unanimously approved. Leg. Tantillo advised that the public hearing would be set for some time in September. A copy of the proposed law is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

Following the vote, the discussion on the Right-to-Farm law continued. Leg. Tantillo said recommendations should be given to the Towns since Town Law supercedes County Law. The Committee also discussed possible ways to protect buyers of property located next to farms by making sure they are informed.

The report of Cornell Cooperative Extension being concluded, Chairman Dunn recognized Peter Carafano, Director of Ulster County Tourism who introduced the evening's hosts, Bill Stufel and Bonnie Sherman, owners of Evelyn's View, who gave a presentation on the history of the building and land, and on its current use.

Following this, Mr. Carafano continued his report by reiterating the County Fair opening and also distributed the first issues of the Ulster County Travel Guide, which he said were printed incorrectly and would be re-printed shortly.

At this time Mr. Carafano presented to the Committee a proposed Resolution to amend the 2000 Ulster County Budget to accept a grant of \$125,000 obtained through Senator John Bonacic for the purpose of developing tourism. The funds would be routed through the Office of Tourism. Mr. Carafano said there would be no matching funds, and the purpose of the Resolution is only to accept the funds. A motion to approve the Resolution was made by Leg. Donaldson and seconded by Leg. Every. There was no further discussion and upon Chairman Dunn calling for a voice vote, the Resolution as presented was unanimously approved. A copy of the Resolution is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

Mr. Carafano advised that Sen. John Bonacic had held a press conference this date for the purpose of announcing that he has obtained monies to develop and implement a regional marketing and advertising campaign.

Mr. Carafano presented a proposed Resolution amending the 2000 Ulster County Budget to transfer \$20,000 from the contingency account to the advertising Matching Funds account. These funds would cover the first of three annual payments which are Ulster County's contribution. This is a matching funds grant, the details of which are as follows: \$500,000 from New York State which come from Sen. Bonacic; \$500,000 from the Catskill Watershed Corp.; \$125,000 per year for three years from the Catskill Area Association for Tourism Services; and \$20,000 each per year for three years from the counties of Ulster, Greene, Delaware and Sullivan. These funds are above the usual tourism budget. The total grant equals \$1,615,000.

Leg. Every noted that since the funds would have to come out of contingency, someone should speak to the Ways & Means Committee. There being no further discussion, a motion to approve was made by Leg. Donaldson and seconded by Leg. Felicello. Chairman Dunn called for a voice vote on the motion; there was no opposition and the Resolution as presented was unanimously approved. A copy of the Resolution is attached to and made a part of these minutes.

Mr. Carafano gave an update of the railroad and the Agreement which is Part B of the old ISTEA grant. Part B was \$78,000 for two miles of track beyond the crossing. The original project was split down the middle and was for the crossing and the two miles of track. Part A was the engineering plans which are now being approved. That will go through the County for bid. Mr. Carafano said there was a meeting last week consisting of an inspection ride on the five mile portion which is going to be rehabilitated. Leg. Donaldson asked to be advised of any meetings regarding the railroad, and Chairman Dunn directed Mr. Carafano to do so. Mr. Carafano said most of the meetings to date have been contractual.

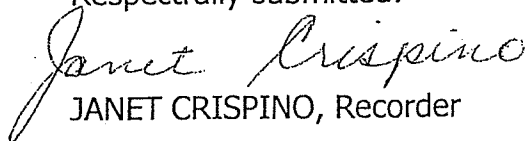
Reporting on group tours, Mr. Carafano introduced Patty Jacobsen of his office. Ms. Jacobsen distributed a copy of the "Ulster County Tourism Group Tour Report." She spoke on the tours she had recently been on and a booking by a particular group tour operator for nine trips to Kingston, including Catskill Corners and Hudson River Cruises. She described in detail how group tours are arranged and the various tourist attractions visited by bus tours. Her report shows most of the advertising for tour and travel agencies covering the Hudson Valley, including Mohonk Mountain House, Rocking Horse Ranch, Hudson Valley Garlic Festival, Williams Lake Hotel, and many others.

Mr. Carafano and the Committee discussed Horse Shows in the Sun (HITS) and their move from Ulster County to Rhinebeck. The problem appears to have been that, although they were satisfied with the site, there was insufficient housing and food service establishments for competitors, staff and visitors.

Chairman Dunn advised that Don Pesner of Ulster Park was a friend of the pilot of the SST Concorde which recently crashed in France. Mr. Carafano said Don Pesner was involved with the railroad years ago and is an advocate of the railroad bridge across the river in Highland, as well as the Rondout Strand. He is also a group tour operator of trips to Europe via the SST Concorde.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Leg. Donaldson and seconded by Leg. Every. Chairman Dunn declared the meeting adjourned at 7:15pm.

Respectfully submitted:

  
JANET CRISPINO, Recorder