



## MINUTES

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, May 20, 2021 – 9:30 AM

State Office Building – Conference Room 1, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor

Zoom Conference Call/Teleconference

317 Washington Street, Watertown, New York

The Development Authority of the North Country Board of Directors met in regular session via Zoom Conference Call/Teleconference and at the State Office Building, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room, 317 Washington Street, Watertown, New York on Thursday, May 20, 2021 at 9:30 am.

#### **Members Present**

##### Voting

Frederick Carter, Chairman  
Margaret Murray  
Dennis Mastascusa  
Alfred Calligaris  
John Johnson Jr.  
Alex MacKinnon  
Gary Turck

##### Non-Voting

Mary Doheny  
James Hollenbeck  
Stephen Hunt  
Nancy Henry

#### **Members Absent**

Thomas Hefferon  
Brian McGrath

#### **Staff Present:**

Carl Farone, Executive Director  
Jennifer Staples, Chief Financial Officer  
Carrie Tuttle, Chief Operating Officer  
Stephen Bohmer, Director of Information Technology  
Dawn Caccavo, Comptroller  
Michelle Capone, Director, Regional Development Division  
Laurie Marr, Director of Communications and Public Affairs  
Brian Nutting, Director of Water Quality  
Patricia Pastella, Director of Materials Management  
Regina Rybka-Lagattuta, Director of Human Resources  
David Wolf, Director of Telecommunications  
Angela Marra, Executive Assistant

#### **Guests:**

Jennifer Granzow, Counsel, Wladis Law Firm

1. Chairman Carter called the meeting to order at 9:37AM.
2. Chairman Carter requested a roll call.

- A quorum of voting and non-voting members was established.

### 3. Privilege of the Floor was offered

A. MacKinnon stated that the Gouverneur Area Development Corp held their first in person meeting in over a year yesterday. The meeting went over a number of activities that the Development Authority is involved in around the Gouverneur area. He further stated that C. Farone's attendance at this meeting was appreciated.

C. Farone announced that today's meeting, due to the Coronavirus emergency restrictions, in compliance with Governor Cuomo's executive order, is being conducted in person as well as via teleconference with several members of the Board in attendance via teleconferencing. The meeting has no in-person public access, but is accessible through livestreaming on the Authority's website. The meeting is being recorded and will later be transcribed for posting to the Authority website. During this meeting, because it is being conducted in part via teleconferencing, it is asked that when speaking please state your name so you may be identified appropriately in the minutes. Lastly, to the Board members attending in person, the microphones are set to off. When speaking please be sure to turn them on.

### 4. Chairman's Report

Chairman Carter stated that Mr. Johnson has elected to step down at the end of his current term, ending June 5, 2021.

Chairman Carter also announced that the Watertown City Council has appointed Ms. Mary Doheny to this voting member position on the Authority Board, effective June 5, 2021 through June 5, 2025.

- a. Resolution No. 2021-03-71, formally conveys the Authority's most sincere gratitude to John B. Johnson, Jr. for 36 years of dedicated service in advancing the interests of the North Country.

This resolution was read aloud during the meeting by C. Farone.

Upon a motion by M. Murray, and seconded by D. Mastascusa, Resolution No. 2021-03-71, In Recognizing John B. Johnson, Jr., Board of Directors, 1985 - 2021, was unanimously approved.

C. Farone read the following statement sent by B. McGrath. "I fully support the very non-controversial resolution 2021-05-71. I greatly respect volunteer public service and believe it says a lot about the character of a person. And as the resolution recognizes, John has given more of his time to this organization than probably anyone. Please note in the minutes that I wholeheartedly thank John for demonstrating the highest level of commitment to his community and this organization. Thank you John, your insights will be greatly missed."

A. MacKinnon stated that sometimes he agrees with J. Johnson, and sometimes he doesn't, but these are the discussions that are important because they are what brings together discussions for proper change in communities. He further stated that he appreciates Mr. Johnson's service.

S. Hunt stated, "There isn't a token or piece of paper that can express the amount of gratitude we have for your service to the State of New York, thank you."

J. Johnson expressed his appreciation for the resolution and the clock, commenting that his time with the organization has resulted in modest successes within the Board. As members and leaders of this Board, we have used education to create a better place within the North Country of which we can all be proud.

5. Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by M. Murray, the minutes from the March 25, 2021 Board Meeting, were unanimously approved.

6. Executive Director's Report – C. Farone

a. Household Hazardous Waste –

The next event will be held on June 5<sup>th</sup> in Watertown. Followed by September 11<sup>th</sup> in Lowville, September 18<sup>th</sup> in Canton, and October 2<sup>nd</sup> in Watertown. Please be sure to take advantage of these events as they are free of charge. Photos were shared of the event last weekend showing the large number of participants.

b. Recycling Transfer Station –

- SCS Feasibility Analysis – MRF

This has remained status quo since the last Board meeting. Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties will begin paying their own hauling cost on June 1. SCS Engineers should have their study completed by the end of May. We will need to work on getting all three counties to participate.

D. Mastascusa asked what the timeline is for the study. C. Farone responded that we should have the results of the feasibility study by the end of May. We will only go on to do Phase II if Phase I is favorable.

J. Johnson stated that there are trash haulers in Jefferson County doing single stream. C. Tuttle stated there is possibly 1800 tons in Jefferson County per year. Overall it could be 7500 to 15000 tons per year depending on partners and rates.

c. Fort Drum –

C. Farone and M. Capone met with Eric Wagenaar on Fort Drum to review their mission and operations. A follow-up tour was provided of the waste water facility, Wheeler Sack Army Airfield, and the ReEnergy power plant. We hope to be able to meet out there sometime soon for a board meeting.

d. Annual Board Forms – Completed -

100% of all requested annual Board forms have been received. The results will be compiled, reviewed with the Chairman, and then with the full Board.

e. Telecommunications – Department of Transportation Fees -

Mark Wladis and C. Farone met with Assemblyman Magnarelli who was working on a bill requesting municipalities be exempt from this fee. At the time of the meeting he agreed he would consider including the Authority in the exemption request. As of this morning, Assemblyman Magnarelli had changed his legislation to include the Development Authority of the North Country. This

will still need to be approved by the Assembly, the Senate, and the Governor. The Assemblyman suggested that municipality support could go a long way for when he is speaking to the Governor and his constituents. Authority staff will be looking to entities such as Jefferson, Lewis, and St. Lawrence Counties and possibly hospitals who could send potential support for this legislation that could help with our exemption.

J. Granzow stated this assemblyman has been very friendly to projects that are beneficial to the public. The last year has shown that this is critical. We are already aware that Verizon plans to contest this. It should be easy to differentiate what the Development Authority does from what private providers do. NPR reported the Central New York Regional Planning Authority is also now sending out surveys and working with Mohawk Valley EDGE on similar legislation.

A. MacKinnon asked if we are paying this fee yet. C. Farone responded no. A. MacKinnon asked if the Authority would pass this charge onto our users as an additional fee. C. Farone responded that as per the legislation we cannot pass along the fee by increasing prices. We are hopeful that the \$1.6 million we have calculated using our GIS information is not correct, as the NYS DOT has told us.

A. MacKinnon stated that it would still mean someone will need to pay this. C. Farone replied that currently new telecommunication builds are assessed this fee to obtain the permit in addition to hiring a surveyor which is time consuming and expensive. We are currently not paying for the existing infrastructure estimated fee of \$1.6 million.

A. MacKinnon asked if this legislation would exempt the Authority from existing and future builds. C. Farone responded yes.

f. COVID Update –

C. Farone reported that 20% of our workforce is still working from home. The Authority continues to be 100% operational. The staff have done a great job in wearing masks, social distancing, and staying healthy. Protocols are changing drastically and very quickly, but we have not changed our protocols yet. The COVID team will meet later this afternoon and determine our next steps. We have asked our staff to provide proof of vaccination so sound judgements can be made on changing protocols.

F. Carter asked if we are going to stay within the HIPPA rules. C. Farone responded yes.

A. Calligaris stated that if an employer requires all staff to vaccinate and someone gets sick from the vaccine that the employer may become liable. C. Farone stated that the Authority is leaving this decision up to the employee whether or not they get vaccinated. It is not going to be required. We have only requested that employees provide documentation if they have been vaccinated so we can better manage the safety of our staff.

C. Farone informed the Board he will be on vacation next week. He will have his phone with him, but the Authority will be covered with C. Tuttle and J. Staples.

## 7. Financials –

### Financial Results - March 31, 2021 – CFO

J. Staples focused on the annual summary. Beginning with operating income it is shown that customer billings is under by \$1.4 million or 6% lower than budget due mainly to materials management where customer billing was off by a half million dollars, mainly under contaminated soil. Materials Management operating revenue was under budget for \$715,000 due to waste diversion. Lewis and St. Lawrence Counties are being invoiced directly for any material they are sending to recycling facilities. An expense was noted that offsets this under the budget.

Grant revenue is below budget by 48% due to lack of loan closings in the Community Development Loan Fund. In general, loan funding is down as well as loan interest income.

In total operating income is down 9% versus budget.

Operating expense less depreciation is under budget by \$3.2 million. J. Staples reviewed some of the larger items that are under budget.

Salaries are under by \$367,000 due to open positions.

Fringe benefits are over budget by \$464,000 due to NYS Pension Expense.

Operating and maintenance was under by \$600,000 with the largest variance, fuels.

Recycling Transfer Station is under by \$873,000 due to recycling facilities directly billing the counties.

Waste Diversion is under by \$469,000 due to the county capital recycling incentive.

Depreciation expense is off due to the Southern expansion.

Interest Income is under budget by \$888,000 due to the overall interest rates being offered today. The current CD average rate for one year is .18% and .32% for five years. The Market adjustment was a \$249,000 reduction based on the current market value. This loss would only be realized if it was cashed in.

Pension expense first line shows a savings of \$114,000 due to people being hired at tier six versus tier four or five. GASB 68 came in at over \$1 million and is only an accounting entry required by GASB (Governmental Accounting Standards Board) which states that because we participate in the state's retirement plan, we must report a proportionate share of the state's plan overall net pension liability. While the pension expense is in our annual audited financial statements, this is not a real cash expense to the Authority.

A. Calligaris asked if the state had to increase their liability for this pension. J. Staples responded there was no reason given as to why. If there is a shortfall we get a portion based on what our pension requirements are. A. Calligaris continued by saying they probably reduced their estimate for the discount and the liability increased for the state. C. Farone responded that the state of New York's total liability did increase.

Lastly, Materials Management waste volumes were projected at 226,370 tons, under budget by 9%. Municipal solid waste was over by 6%, and contaminated soil was under

by 20,221 tons. Contaminated soil is hard to predict as it is based on the number of jobs in any given year. COVID and people not working would have also had an impact on this number. Host community benefits were budgeted at \$780,000 and had a shortfall of \$61,000 based purely on waste volumes.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by A. Calligaris, the financials ending March 31, 2021, were unanimously approved.

## 8. Engineering –

### a. Technical Services Summary Report –

C. Tuttle reviewed the listed contracts individually, and the table was approved as a whole.

- I. Town of Pamela, Water Quality contract, renewal of an existing contract, Underground utility locating services, as needed/no set fee, 3/1/21 – 2/28/22
- II. Village of Sackets Harbor, Water Quality renewal operation and maintenance, Water Treatment Facility, five year term of the contract through 5/31/26
- III. Village of Sackets Harbor, Water Quality renewal operation and maintenance, Wastewater Treatment Facility, five year term of the contract through 5/31/26
- IV. Village of Adams, GIS Hosting Agreement, Renewal, five year contract worth \$8,200, through 5/31/26
- V. Village of Potsdam, GIS Hosting Agreement, Renewal, five year contract worth \$8,200, through 5/31/26
- VI. City of Ogdensburg, SCADA Service Contract Amendment, wastewater treatment plant improvement, \$12,000, though 12/31/22
- VII. Village of Castorland, SCADA Service Contract, additional service request, \$36,000, through 12/31/22
- VIII. City of Ogdensburg, Technical Services Agreement Amendment, wastewater treatment plant, \$25,000, extend project duration though 12/31/22
- IX. Route 3 Sewer Board, Construction Phase Services Amendment, \$15,500, moved from bidding to construction through 9/30/21
- X. Town of Potsdam, Technical Services Agreement, \$13,750, through 9/30/21
- XI. Village of Alexandria Bay, Extension of Services, Water/sewer village rate study implementation, \$8,500, through 10/31/21
- XII. Village of Clayton, Funding administrative Design Services associate with FEMA grant, \$25,000, through 10/31/21

Upon a motion by M. Murray, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Board Contract Summary Table for the month of May, was unanimously approved.

- b. Resolution No. 2021-05-72, authorizing the Executive Director to enter into a GIS hosting agreement in accordance with the terms of the contract within Table 1 in the resolution.

Upon a motion by F. Carter, and seconded by M. Murray, Resolution No. 2021-05-72, Authorizing GIS Hosting Agreement, Village of Lacona, was unanimously approved.

## 9. Regional Development –

## Loan Report – M. Capone

Within the current loan portfolio, all loans are being paid as agreed, with the exception of MCM Development in Franklin County. This project has been completed and the restaurant has been opened. Due to COVID they are struggling some and are 49 days past due. They have requested a moratorium and M. Capone will be reviewing for Project Development Committee approval.

M. Capone further reported the approval of a grant through the New York State Grown and Certified Ag Producers Grant Program. There have been a few projects that have not moved forward so the funds have been recaptured resulting in additional available funding.

A grant has recently been approved for Susan Saunders for Killian Biohoff in St. Lawrence County in the amount of \$11,938. A piece of equipment was overlooked on the grant list increasing the actual grant amount to \$16,638 and M. Capone wanted this difference noted in the minutes.

There may be funding available for one last grant.

- a. Resolution No. 2021-05-73, accepting the Annual Report as the sole member of the Housing Development Fund Company (HDFC), and further waives the written consent, and confirms the existing directors of the HDFC until their next Annual Meeting

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by M. Murray, Resolution No. 2021-05-73, Accepting Annual Report, Creek Wood Housing Development Fund Company, Inc., Waiving the Annual Meeting, Appointing Directors, was unanimously approved.

- b. Resolution No. 2021-05-74, accepting the Annual Report as the sole member of the Housing Development Fund Company (HDFC), and further waives the written consent, and confirms the existing directors of the HDFC until their next Annual Meeting

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-74, Accepting Annual Report, Creek Wood II Housing Development Fund Company, Inc., Waiving the Annual Meeting, Appointing Directors, was unanimously approved.

- c. Resolution No. 2021-05-75, approving a line of credit loan up to \$150,000 to Cambray Housing Corporation from the Affordable Rental Housing Program subject to the terms and conditions in the Term Sheet attached to the resolution, and further Authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary. It is further resolved to be considered a Type II Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and is considered an exempt activity requiring no further action.

M. Capone explained the previously demolished units were on the river and consistently flooded. This resolution is unique in that there is no mortgage due to timing as it will go before the state in August for the final grant amount approval. Community Bank has already approved the construction financing. If we were to do

a mortgage it could take two months and this funding is needed today. This project has been in service since the 1970's.

Upon a motion by F. Carter, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Resolution No. 2021-05-75, Approving Affordable Rental Housing Program, Cambray Housing Corporation, Loan, was unanimously approved.

M. Capone further stated that once this loan is paid in full with the construction financing, we may see a request for a term loan which would be a second mortgage position where we would be able to negotiate those terms.

- d. Resolution No. 2021-05-76, modifying the commitment of a loan in the amount of up to \$190,000 (\$65,000 Community Rental Housing Program/\$125,000 Community Development Loan Fund) to the Heuvelton Historical Association at the terms and conditions in the Term Sheet attached to the resolution, and further Authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary. It is further resolved to be considered a Type II Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and is considered an exempt activity requiring no further action.

Upon a motion by F. Carter, and seconded by M. Murray, Resolution No. 2021-05-76, Approving the Community Development Loan Fund, Community Rental Housing Program, Heuvelton Historical Association Loan Modification, was unanimously approved.

- e. Resolution No. 2021-05-77, approving a loan in the amount of \$155,000 to the St. Lawrence County Arts Council at the terms and conditions outlined on the Term Sheet attached to the resolution, and further authorizes the Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary to make the loan. It is further resolved to be considered a Type II Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and is considered an exempt activity requiring no further action.

M. Capone reported that the St. Lawrence County Arts Council received the \$577,800 they requested from the downtown revitalization initiative (DRI) and will be able to do improvements to the facility. We may see a request for bridge financing of the state DRI funds in the future.

Upon a motion by A. MacKinnon, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-77, Approving Community Development Loan Fund, St. Lawrence County Arts Council, Loan, was unanimously approved.

- f. Resolution No. 2021-05-78, approves the loan modification for Scalisi & Bernazzani Financial Services, LLC releasing 25393-453 NYS Route 26, Great Bend, from the mortgage subject to receipt of a payment of approximately \$42,506.72, to be adjusted for payments received, and further authorizes the Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer to execute all necessary documentation.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-78, Approving Community Rental Housing Program, Scalisi & Bernazzani Financial Services, LLC, Loan Modification, was unanimously approved.

- g. Resolution No. 2021-05-79, ratifies the grant/loan commitment in the amount of up to \$200,000. (\$100,000 loan/\$100,000 grant) from the North Country Redevelopment Fund to the St. Lawrence County Property Development Corporation at the terms and conditions outlined on the Term Sheet attached to the resolution, consistent with the Empire State Development program requirements and further authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary to make the loan. It is further resolved to be considered a Type II Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and is considered an exempt activity requiring no further action.

Upon a motion by A. Calligaris, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Resolution No. 2021-05-79, Authorizing North Country Redevelopment Loan Fund, St. Lawrence County Property Development Corporation, Ratifying Loan and Grant, was unanimously approved.

- h. Resolution No. 2021-05-80, ratifies a loan in the amount of \$300,000 from the Regional Tourism Transformational Community Revolving Loan Fund to Dalai Mama Inc. at the terms and conditions outlined in the Term Sheet attached to the resolution, and further authorizes the Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary to make the loan. It is further resolved to be considered a Type II Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and is considered an exempt activity requiring no further action.

M. Capone stated the woman doing this project has done many transformative projects in the Buffalo area. Her idea of retiring is going to the Adirondacks and buying and renovating another property.

Upon a motion by F. Carter, and seconded by M. Murray, Resolution No. 2021-05-80, Authorizing Regional Tourism Transformational Community Revolving Loan Fund, Dalai Mama, Inc., was unanimously approved.

- i. Resolution No. 2021-05-81, authorizes a technical services agreement with the Village of Tupper Lake of up to \$35,000 to provide program delivery and grant administration for a NYS Affordable Housing Corporation grant, and further authorizes the Executive Director or the Chief Financial Officer to execute all documents necessary.

M. Capone stated this was not part of the Summary Table because it is outside the three county region. As done with the Town of Gouverneur, we will be utilizing the village code enforcement officer.

Upon a motion by F. Carter, and seconded by D. Mastascusa, Resolution No. 2021-05-81, Authorizing Technical Services Agreement, Village of Tupper Lake, Affordable Housing Corporation Grant, was unanimously approved.

#### 10. Materials Management -

- a. Resolution No. 2021-05-82, authorizes to implement said rules, applications, permits, and fees attached to the resolution effective May 20, 2021.

C. Tuttle stated that the updates made were primarily related to insurance requirements, safety requirements, the list of unacceptable waste that is allowed to be received, and the current procedures for accepting special waste approval.

Upon a motion by M. Murray, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-82, authorizing Operating Permit Rules and Requirements, Materials Management Facility, Revision, was unanimously approved.

#### 11. Water Quality -

- a. Resolution No. 2021-05-83, authorizes the Executive Director to enter into an amended Sewer Service Agreement with the Town of LeRay for Sewer Districts 1, 2, and 4.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-83, authorizing Sewer Service Agreement Amendment No. 1, Town of LeRay, Sewer Districts No. 1, 2, and 4, was unanimously approved.

- b. Resolution No. 2021-05-84, authorizes the Executive Director to enter into an Amended Water Service Agreement with the Town of Pamela for Water Districts 1, 2, and Consolidated 1. It is further resolved that the Executive Director is authorized to execute Permanent Easements for Water Supply Facilities with the Town of Pamela.

Upon a motion by M. Murray, and seconded by A. Calligaris, Resolution No. 2021-05-84, authorizing Water Service Agreement Amendment No. 1, Town of Pamela, Water Districts No. 1, 2, and Consolidated 1, was unanimously approved.

#### 12. Additional Resolution –

- a. Resolution No. 2021-05-85, authorizes the Executive Director to respond to the RFP, and if successful execute a 20 year IRU agreement with NYPA for the construction and maintenance of a dark fiber network, and further authorizes an agreement with UNITI and Crown Castle for an IRU in fiber between Plattsburgh and Albany to complete said NYPA project. It is further resolved to authorize the Comptroller to establish a capital project in the amount of \$1,000,000 (NYPA Dark Fiber Project), with said funds from the telecommunications capital reserve.

D. Wolf stated that the Authority costs would be about \$30,000 to \$40,000 with the majority of the money going to UNITI and Crown Castle. Because we are familiar with the complicated online process, they have asked the Authority to be the lead.

F. Carter asked if the Authority was getting in to the situation where we're bidding against private companies. D. Wolf replied that 90-95% of this would be the Authority working with private companies, we would just be the lead. Yes we are bidding against them, because NYPA asked us to so they had more than one quote to review.

F. Carter then asked why the Authority couldn't work with them at a cost to allow them to hook into our system without bidding against private industries. D. Wolf responded

this was because the Authority has leased fiber in that footprint and have electronics on both ends, but does not have the dark fiber they require for their security and network management as they want to create their own private network and keep it separate from any connections to electronics.

F. Carter asked if the two companies we are dealing with are not bidding on this. D. Wolf replied that they are not because only one of them has fiber in the Albany area. The other owns fiber on Route 87 but they were not invited to bid, and they are not able to complete the job in time. Because of this they have asked for the Authority to help with the project and be the lead.

F. Carter asked if there are any other private companies along Route 87 that could bid on this. D. Wolf replied that there are others who have fiber but they lease it from UNITI. Another company that is selling it has some fiber on the railroad system that goes from Albany to Plattsburgh, but they are working with us as well. We have also been requested to get the last ten miles north of Plattsburgh to the substation because nobody else wants to build it. There isn't anybody that we are aware of that NYPA would consider for this job.

J. Johnson asked if the dark fiber for NYPA will not have anyone on it until it is ready. D. Wolf replied that the only use will be for their internal use with their electronics on the ends just like they did on the Authority dark fiber. J. Johnson commented that this would help prevent a "Colonial Pipeline" type of problem. D. Wolf confirmed that and further stated there would be no cyber security attacks. A. MacKinnon asked if this dark fiber is not connected to the internet in any way. D. Wolf confirmed and stated it cannot be touched or hacked.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by M. Murray, Resolution No. 2021-05-85, authorizing Capital Project, Telecommunications, New York Power Authority RFP, was unanimously approved.

### 13. North Country Recycles Advertisement –

L. Marr introduced the new North Country Recycles commercial. She stated that the Recycling Promotion Committee has been working on some new advertisements and three have been in production. This first one is timely involving packaging materials that would be delivered with the recent increase in online ordering. The basic premise behind each ad is to direct people to the North Country Recycles website where all information can be found broken down by county. The one being shown today has not been on TV yet because we are waiting to run all three, so they can run on a rotation and not saturate the viewing market.

### 14. Broadband Presentation – DMW/LAM –

C. Farone introduced D. Wolf and L. Marr to present on the Lewis County Broadband Survey. Lewis County has been completed, Jefferson and St. Lawrence are in the process of being completed but are not yet finalized.

L. Marr discussed that this has been going on since last fall when the Authority partnered with the three counties and ECC Technologies to conduct broadband studies in the three individual counties. In each county there was an inventory portion and a

resident/business portion. L. Marr stated she will present on the resident portion while D. Wolf will discuss the inventory portion and show what can be done with the collected data.

L. Marr continued by explaining this was a web based survey of residents and businesses, and many were asking why we wanted to find out who has internet access. The survey could be done electronically on a phone, tablet, or any kind of device. This could also be done from a public location if need be. If they did not have electronic access, the county planning departments provided paper surveys, or people could cold call their office and they would complete the survey with them over the phone. A speed test was also part of the survey to access how quickly they were able to download and upload information. L. Marr promoted the survey within the three counties by using paid advertising, putting up flyers on telephone poles and in shops and places locals would congregate. Flyers with QR codes were handed out to people at COVID testing sites and vaccination clinics as they opened. Many organizations included the survey information with mailings to their members or sent email blasts with a link. An online portal was made available and many organizations made the link available on their own portal. Social media was used. School districts worked with us to use their electronic means of communicating with parents to send information out and encourage people to do the survey. Lewis County had 1,352 total responses. 91% of those responses were residential, and 23% reported they had no access to broadband or only had DSL or dial up. If you also include those who only have satellite or cellular hotspot it increases to 49% meaning that 49% are unserved or underserved. The people in Lewis County were very passionate about this issue and had over 460 comments that people took the time to write on their surveys. These comments provide great feedback for the county legislators to help develop a path forward. For those who reported they do have access, many cannot purchase the speed they need and this was made very clear during COVID while working and schooling from home. 73% of the people said this was simply because the needed internet speeds were not available. Some said it was too expensive. Every question's response information is mapped and graphed.

D. Wolf began by expressing his appreciation to Mr. Johnson by saying that over his 13 years with the Authority he has been in awe of his knowledge, both historic and current of the communities we serve, as well as his understanding of the Authority. He further expressed that he is sure we can all say we appreciate his support of the Development Authority as he has always been very kind to us all.

D. Wolf continued with broadband inventory stating it was developed as a wireline inventory meaning we are only looking at wired connections like fiber and coax. With the assistance of the Authority's GIS group a last mile dashboard was developed and has been shared with our county partners. D. Wolf went on to explain the mapped images with sharing the graphical information on some statistics which can be changed if need be. It currently shows the New York State Broadband award winners as well as federal government and rural development opportunity fund winners. By clicking on each county, this information repopulates based on which is selected. The view can be changed to street level or topography. Each map is also divided into layers to show school district boundaries, the Rural Development Fund Award winners and New York State Broadband Award locations which is important so we can see who has been awarded funding and will be served in the very near future. This all allows us to see those areas still left for funding so we don't duplicate efforts. Regarding inventory, items such as 911 towers, telephone company fiber, cable TV, cell towers, fiber, and coax are plotted on the map showing that service on routes 12 and 26 corridor are well served.

Around the outside there are few services that are available. Homes are represented by pink dots and counted as parcels rather than structures so we can see if underserved areas have residents in them. Using road data, the GIS department was able to help us see where things are not by showing unserved areas in yellow clearly showing the target areas such as Copenhagen. Lewis County shows a lot of yellow, Jefferson County has very little yellow, and St. Lawrence is well covered in the north but the southern part has fewer people and they are much less served and could use more help. Fiber to the home would be best and Lewis County has committed money to help fill this gap.

M. Doheny asked if we had wireless coverage maps. D. Wolf responded this was left off because the coverage maps are more speculative. Instead our consultant drove every single road in each of the counties and looked for where there was fiber and where it or coaxial cable was going into home. Satellite coverage can be very slow and not as useful for those working from home. Newer satellite coverage is difficult to map as it changes daily and is still more spotty than constant and is still being debated as to if it will be good broadband. It is also expensive costing about \$500 up front and \$99 per month.

J. Johnson asked if all the customers are electrified. D. Wolf responded yes that he believes they have electricity. J. Johnson commented that they were electrified in the depression during the rural electrification effort which transformed this whole country. He further asked if this doesn't begin to point the way with some sort of similar effort for rural America to make sure broadband is there. D. Wolf responded that there is much debate and funding about this right now. With all the new technologies coming out it will be an interesting few years and we are only hoping that we choose the right technologies and solutions.

F. Carter asked if the children being educated in rural areas have high speed technology when the project is complete. D. Wolf responded that in 37% of those who did the speed test, half had less than 25 Mbps. There are still many old DSL lines in Lewis County that don't even get that speed. Most of the funding coming out now addresses that and upgrades need to be able to demonstrate they are providing 100 megabits per second. Our recommendation when speaking with each of the counties will be to get 100 MB service as it is important to the kids and those working from home.

F. Carter asked if we were lobbying for grant funding or are we using state aid. D. Wolf responded that we have not yet because we haven't done residential last mile. We have worked with Lewis County on one NBRC Grant, but right now we are mostly in an advisory role with the counties and communities. If they then want to ask us to get involved we would find a for-profit service provider to manage that project but with us involved they wouldn't need to have that big capital cost up front. We have infrastructure in a lot of these areas our role might be to continue to help with the infrastructure piece. We would then only get a small piece of the revenue to build, service, and maintain the fiber. We are not in this to grow the Authority.

C. Farone stated that part of doing this analysis was to prepare for that by gathering the details. We will have actual proof about the underserved areas. When we met with Lewis County they immediately approved \$1 million in funding to support broadband. Now they are working with M. Capone and D. Wolf at a committee level to help Lewis County prepare the grant applications they have.

F. Carter stated he does not want to miss out on grant and federal funding to get what we need to help. C. Farone responded that we will be applying when we can. Some we

can't because we already have the grant. M. Capone is well apprised of the grant opportunities that are out there and we will be applying for grants in collaboration with the counties.

A. MacKinnon commented that these things, like the Rural Electrification Act John mentioned, do work. He further stated that he has (Verizon) FiOS at his house in rural St. Lawrence County that was installed as part of the grant application that came through for last mile providers and Verizon put in FiOS providing him with 200 Mbps. He added that if there is a telephone pole the line is there just like the Rural Electrification Act, and that is what is going to happen. In those days the farmers had to place the pole in the middle of their field, because they were the most direct route for pole placement, then the company came in and ran the line. That is what is going to have to happen with this particular grant sometimes there would be 25 Verizon crews stringing wire in parts of town. This is what is going to have to happen, in fact it is happening, it is just going to take time. F. Carter commented that the bottom line is the kids needs the high speed internet.

L. Marr asked what can be done with all of this survey information, what are the next steps. L. Marr and D. Wolf went to Lewis County to present the survey findings to the legislature at the meeting. They were so excited by this that they committed \$1 million and their county manager created an ad hoc committee to drive the broadband solutions forward. This committee will include some legislators and M. Capone and D. Wolf from the Authority. Brainstorming began immediately. First they needed to decide where they wanted to focus. This is where the counties get to take all the provided information and decide their own destiny. Lewis County chose the Town of Denmark which was one of the places that we saw on the map where they needed a lot of help. Jefferson County's data analysis is almost completed and L. Marr is waiting to receive the draft report. They had over 1200 surveys completed. The sense of urgency was not the same in Jefferson County as more people already have this service. St. Lawrence County's surveys just closed last week with over 1800 completed. We should have their draft final report by mid-June.

M. Doheny asked if the Jefferson County schools had their own information from this. L. Marr responded that she didn't believe so because during COVID, some of the schools decided to do something while others didn't leaving a lot of the data incomplete with much inconsistency. Rather than just have the districts do something on the district level, we asked them to help get the word out for our survey. When St. Lawrence County began with their survey L. Marr had school superintendents calling her about the survey and giving information on the number of families they wanted to get the survey out to. There was also a person from the St. Lawrence County BOCES office which was involved in trying to help get service to homes so they were very helpful too.

M. Doheny asked if the state was going to require an emergency broadband provider. D. Wolf responded that the emergency broadband program is a federal government provided service and that beginning May 12<sup>th</sup> individuals could go online to apply. If there is a provider in their area and they are approved, there is \$50 per month payment federally for broadband. This link has been shared with the counties and BOCES. This funding allocated through this program will likely run out in six months. The state has mandated the \$15 monthly fee, although Verizon is contesting because if they are forced to do this they may end up abandoning service to whole towns because they can't afford to continue at this cost. However if they only have below 20,000 subscribers they would be exempt from providing at this price.

A. MacKinnon commented that the service in his area is so clear they were able to watch the Syracuse game streamed through his niece's phone in the family sugar shack just like it was regular TV.

J. Johnson commented this may be a new sales approach for real estate.

M. Doheny commented that this is a very important issue.

F. Carter stated that they hope to have more information from survey results by the September Strategic Planning meeting

15. Next Board Meeting Date – June 24, 2021

16. Upon a motion by A. MacKinnon, and seconded by M. Murray, the meeting was adjourned at 11:35 AM.

Respectfully submitted,



Dennis Mastascusa  
Board Secretary