



MINUTES
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
Thursday, September 22, 2022 – 10:30 AM
Northern New York Community Foundation
Conference Room One and Zoom Videoconference
131 Washington Street, Watertown, New York

The Development Authority of the North Country Board of Directors met in regular session in person and via Zoom Videoconference at the Northern New York Community Foundation, 131 Washington Street,, Watertown, New York on Thursday, September 22, 2022 at 10:30 AM.

Members Present

Voting

Margaret Murray, Chairperson
Thomas Hefferon
Alex MacKinnon
Dennis Mastascusa
Mary Doheny
Mark Hall
Eric Virkler

Non-Voting

Nancy Henry
James Hollenbeck*
Stephen Hunt
Brian McGrath*

*Attended via videoconferencing.

Members Absent

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 of Regional Development
Kevin Feuka, Director of Engineering
Kate Mangan, Director of Materials Management
Laurie Marr, Director of Communications and Public Affairs
Brian Nutting, Director of Water Quality
Regina Rybka-Lagattuta, Director of Human Resources
David Wolf, Director of Telecommunications
Angela Marra, Executive Assistant
Sonja Brown, Administrative Assistant

Guests:

Jennifer Granzow, Counsel, Wladis Law Firm
Mark Borte, Telecommunications Division
P. Hickey
Dan Dalin

1. Chairperson Murray called the meeting to order at 10:31 AM.
2. Privilege of the Floor was offered.
3. Chairperson's Report
 - a. Chairperson Murray thanked the Northern New York Community Foundation for allowing us to use their meeting space today.
 - b. The next meeting will be held Thursday, October 27, 2022.
4. Executive Director's Report
 - a. Army Water Line – EPA Administration Order –
C. Farone and C. Tuttle met with the City of Watertown at their quarterly stakeholders meeting. The City of Watertown is on track with having the two pilots installed next week. They will have results from these pilots in December, which will keep the project on track with reporting in January. The next stakeholders meeting will be held at the water treatment plant, where we will be able to see the pilots.
 - b. Harrisville Update –
The purchase agreement was signed by Geiter Done yesterday, and has been countersigned and returned to them. It is specified within the purchase agreement the Development Authority will continue operating the facility until December 31, even if the closing should take place sooner.
 - c. Household Hazardous Waste Events –
The first event took place in St. Lawrence County on September 17th with 311 households participating. This is an increase of 33% and could be due to "COVID Cleaning" and that we are now accepting latex paints as per a request from DEC. There are two events remaining, one in Lewis County on September 24th and another in Jefferson County on October 1st.
 - d. Newmark Housing Study –
Newmark has been retained to complete the housing study. The study should be done by mid-October.
5. A quorum of voting and non-voting members was established.
6. Upon a motion by M. Hall, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, the minutes from the August 25, 2022 Board Meeting, were approved.
7. Telecommunications –
 - a. Resolution No. 2022-09-71, authorizing the Executive Director or designee to submit an application in the amount of \$24,450,000 to the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) Middle Mile Grant Program. If awarded, the Executive Director is authorized to execute all documents necessary to accept and implement the Middle Mile Grant Program project, to include establishing a NTIA Middle Mile Capital Project for \$24,450,000. It is further resolved that the Development Authority of the

North Country authorizes the Executive Director to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with National Grid and other private Internet Service Providers detailing the roles and responsibilities of each party should the grant be awarded.

C. Farone explained the detail of the last mile connectivity map.

M. Hall asked if everything we use is funneled through Syracuse. D. Wolf responded that we interconnect between Syracuse and Albany where we connect cell towers to over 25 internet service providers such as Verizon and AT&T. It is important to have both Syracuse and Albany in case there is a break, everything re-routes in the other direction.

M. Hall asked if the survey that was done in each county helped to show this need. C. Farone responded yes.

B. McGrath stated this is an exciting proposal for the Authority. The Telecommunications Committee has met to review this proposal and asked many detailed questions with D. Wolf, C. Farone and C. Tuttle. This proposal is a testament to the importance of the Telecom Division to the Authority, and the value that the Authority brings to the tri-county region and beyond. The subcommittee unanimously approved this proposal.

A. MacKinnon stated this is the same model used since this was initiated years ago. This is a testament for private public partnerships for rural upstate areas. It is also a testament to the Authority, the work they have done, to where now the Authority is the area expert in this kind of work in rural areas.

C. Farone stated this is still contingent on National Grid's approval. The grant application is due next Thursday.

M. Doheny asked if the grant was otherwise ready. C. Farone responded that it would be complete by next Thursday.

Upon a motion by A. MacKinnon and seconded by M. Hall, Resolution No. 2022-09-71, Authorizing Application to be Submitted, National Telecommunications and Information Administration Middle Mile Grant Program, was unanimously approved.

8. Regional Development -

- a. Resolution No. 2022-09-72, modifying the commitment for its loan of \$250,000 to Cambray Housing Corporation from the Affordable Rental Housing Program to be subordinated to the NYS Homes and Community Renewal loan at the attached terms and conditions, and authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all necessary documentation. It is further resolved that the Development Authority of the North Country accepts the action of the Village of Gouverneur Planning Board taken under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and affirms a negative declaration for this project.

C. Farone asked that if within a typical transaction, are we typically subordinate. M. Capone stated that it depends, as there is no formal policy. From Home and Community

Renewal's perspective, in their underwriting they always consider the Development Authority subordinate. M. Capone further stated that from her underwriting perspective, she disagrees. We have been co-proportional second with the state on numerous occasions, and have had to push back when they have tried to push us behind on those as well. M. Capone did not feel there was a good reason why we should subordinate to them on this program, and we have been able to agree on a good compromise.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by A. MacKinnon, Resolution No. 2022-09-72, approving Affordable Rental Housing Program, Cambray Housing Corporation, Loan Modification, was unanimously approved.

- b. Resolution No. 2022-09-73, approving a loan up to \$65,000 for Hermon Housing Development Fund Company from the Affordable Rental Housing Program at the terms and conditions attached to the resolution, and authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all necessary documentation. It is further resolved that this is a Type II Unlisted Action under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA).

Upon a motion by T. Hefferon, and seconded by E. Virkler, Resolution No. 2022-09-73, approving Affordable Rental Housing Program, Hermon Housing Development Fund Company, was unanimously approved.

- c. Resolution No. 2022-09-74, authorizing the ratification of a loan in the amount of \$250,000 from the Regional Tourism Transformational Community Revolving Loan Fund to Sally Port View LLC at the terms and conditions attached to the resolution, and authorizes the Executive Director or Chief Financial Officer to execute all necessary documents to make the loan. It is further resolved that Development Authority accepts the action of the Town of Lyme Planning Board taken under the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQRA) and affirms a negative declaration for this project.

Upon a motion by T. Hefferon, and seconded by M. Hall, Resolution No. 2022-09-74, approving Regional Tourism Transformational Community Revolving Loan Fund, Sally Port View LLC, Loan Ratification, was unanimously approved.

9. Water Quality

- a. Resolution No. 2022-09-75, authorizing the Chief Financial Officer to increase the budget for Capital Project 41063 (WPS Building Modifications) from \$366,000 to \$422,000.

A. MacKinnon asked how the new meeting room would compare to the one we are meeting in today. C. Tuttle stated that it would be very similar and big enough for Board Meetings. She further stated the administration area would be reconfigured to be utilized more efficiently. C. Farone stated we would be procuring two monitors and a sound system, to be used during meetings for projecting the materials and displaying videoconferencing. A. MacKinnon stated there has always been a sound issue, and he hopes the state of the art equipment will correct this.

Upon a motion by D. Mastascusa, and seconded by M. Hall, Resolution No. 2022-09-75, authorizing Water Quality Division, FY2022-2023 Capital Budget Amendment, Warneck Pump Station Building Modification Project, was unanimously approved.

10. Next Board Meeting Date – October 27, 2022, location is to be determined.

B. McGrath asked if the official portion of the meeting has concluded so if he needed to turn off his video it would not cause a quorum issue. C. Farone stated this was correct.

The Strategic Planning portion of the meeting began at 11:09 AM.

11. FY 24 Strategic Planning Session

a. Telecommunications Update PowerPoint – M. Borte

M. Borte presented a telecommunications update about what is going on in the industry, as well as a brief overview of who we are and what we do, and how we have affected the communities that we serve. The technology industry is ever changing, and the Telecommunications Division is changing to meet those new challenges. He also reviewed various strategic partnerships, and concluded with discussing how we are well positioned for the future, and how he sees the need for the Telecommunications Division will be greatest not only now but also in the next five to ten years.

S. Hunt asked if by last mile broadband access, if that meant fiber optic. M. Borte responded no, but means whatever can get the job done.

A. MacKinnon stated that he resides in the Town of Fowler, where they have Verizon FIOS. He asked if this is hooked into DANC's network. M. Borte stated that Verizon is our largest customer, but most of the work that the Authority does for them is backhauling their cellular services from cell towers from Syracuse to Albany. Based on that information, the FIOS portion of Verizon is more than likely not utilizing the DANC network. A. MacKinnon stated that anywhere there was telephone lines they strung fiber. They had loads of trucks working to install these lines. The cost is massive and without government involvement, this project would not have happened. M. Borte stated this is an economic development focus and there is a financial reality of what a project of this size would cost meaning, it can only be done with an infusion of cash at the state and federal level.

A. MacKinnon also asked about senior citizens and the internet citing his wife's cousin as an example of need. M. Borte agreed digital literacy and access are very serious problems. Access is the first step, but then you still need to be able to afford the service, and then they need to be able to utilize the service, but many are still intimidated by it. A. MacKinnon stated that it is frustrating because this is the way progress is going, and it is proving difficult for senior citizens. M. Borte agreed this is the future and we are not going back.

M. Doheny asked for a deeper explanation of wireless solutions. M. Borte stated wireless solutions are two options, cellular or fixed wireless such as an antenna that can broadcast a signal. The signal is not great quality service, but it does offer a great solution for now. M. Doheny asked if we own the antenna. M. Borte replied that we do not typically own any of the infrastructure. We are acting largely as consultants or as

grant writers, more for the fiber optic side to help determine the unserved, help write the application for the grant, help oversee the project and ensure that the grant is administered properly, and provide testing to ensure that they have received what they purchased. D. Wolf stated that we are the backhaul provider with the fiber to the antenna. This provides the latest technology allowing up to 5G type services. We do not do anything with the antennas, the wireless, or the home; but we are connecting them from their rural location to Albany. M. Borte stated that we stay in the middle mile space and are able to offer choices and access services. We have no intention in being the last mile provider; we simply want to help solve the problem.

M. Hall suggested the slogan should be “we make the products you buy work.” M. Borte stated that this started with the Authority not wanting to be in the telecom business. They saw a need and fixed it. M. Hall then asked how many people are being delivered broadband by cell towers versus fiber. D. Wolf replied that the survey revealed it to be less than 5%. M. Hall asked if we do anything with small cells. D. Wolf responded that small cell is providing connectivity of dark fiber on a big tower to small tower, and yes we do provide that but we do not construct small cell.

M. Borte mentioned the potential solution of satellite. He further stated that in 2020 the FCC awarded Starlink \$886 million to provide broadband and internet to over 30 states. This funding was recently pulled back because they have not proven this technology will deliver the minimum standards required. We want to be forward looking in making sure that we are solving the problem of today but also looking forward to be positioned for the future.

A brief break was taken at 11:58 AM.

b. Strategic Planning PowerPoint –

C. Farone, C. Tuttle and M. Capone presented on the strategic planning for fiscal year ending 2024. The Authority is unique in that it is small enough that we can be agile, but large enough that we can look at the larger issues effecting the three county region.

They continued by reviewing objectives 1 through 11, covering topics such as; investing in human resources, enhancing information technology resiliency, maximizing materials management resources, increasing waste diversion, increasing telecom capabilities, meeting municipal demand within water quality, environmental stewardship and sustainability, providing engineering support services, enhancing the working relationship with Fort Drum, assisting municipal partners with housing stock improvements, and utilizing loan funds to spur investment in the north country.

B. McGrath asked what measures we have in place to allow staff to connect to public Wi-Fi with the new hackings and the creation of fake public Wi-Fi networks. S. Bohmer responded that we rely heavily on training; we also require employees to VPN into the network if using a public Wi-Fi. C. Farone stated that staff could connect, but our policy specifies they are to use the VPN. S. Bohmer stated that it is possible to lock this down. D. Wolf clarified that our network cannot be accessed without using the VPN. B. McGrath asked if anything was stored locally and someone were hacked, could that become compromised. Steve and Dave responded yes that is possible.

T. Hefferon asked if we could sell carbon credits if methane destruction is classified as voluntary. C. Farone stated that our current permit requires methane destruction, but should be voluntary and we are working on the process to change the permit so that the sale of carbon credits would be available in the future. C. Tuttle stated that this change was made due to some routine testing we had done detecting high levels of vinyl chloride, but is below the threshold resulting in being a non-issue. There is new legislation under the Climate Leadership Community Protection Act (CLCPA) entailing a new analysis for all landfills. We are uncertain how this will affect our current permit and need to work through this first. T. Hefferon commented that there are millions available in carbon credits. C. Farone stated that this would be in our best interest to work through this process.

S. Hunt asked if the waterline from Cape Vincent was an asset, and stated that he has heard that the quality of water could be better. C. Tuttle responded that the regional water line is about 22 miles. The water is purchased from Cape Vincent and then sold to the communities along the line. These communities have their own distribution systems, and some actually have their own wells. This results in them selling their own well water, or using a blended version of the well water and regional water line water. We are not aware of any current water quality issues. More research would be required into the areas reporting possible problems to understand their water source. S. Hunt said that thinking strategically, what is the next big step. T. Hefferon asked of the comments have been about water taste, as he would think the water would taste better coming out of Lake Ontario but has heard the opposite. S. Hunt stated it seems to be more a question of quality, and asked if quality can be better are we thinking about strategic investment to make it as good as it can possibly be. C. Tuttle stated that with any regional waterline system, the more users you have on the system the better the water quality because the water is fresher. The regional waterline has a great deal of excess capacity that is not being used, and an increase in users would improve the quality because the water age would be lower. This has not happened as we had hoped it would since it was built in the mid 1990's.

M. Hall stated that as a water operator, he is complimented often that he has the best water people have ever tasted and he also gets complaints that the water is terrible.

S. Hunt stated that he perceived the issue not to be taste but particles. C. Tuttle stated that there are no NCL's on the regional waterline, there are no maximum containment level violations. There are areas that require flushing because of disinfection byproducts, but there are no issues because we stay on top of managing the waterline.

M. Doheny asked if there was a correlation with weather such as big rains or low water levels. C. Tuttle stated yes, and that during certain times such as when the snow melts resulting in higher turbidity, the source water coming in is still meeting all the regulatory requirements. We do not have control over the Village of Cape Vincent because they own and operate their treatment plant. They provide us with water that meets the regulatory requirements, but we have a limited amount of influence as to how they run their facility.

C. Farone commented that big projects that may present themselves such as the study being done in St. Lawrence County regarding sludge and its uses as well as the Authority's role in the operation of that system. M. Capone commented on renewable energy as a huge goal for state and federal government and diverse energy requirements. They are also not recognizing hydro as renewable energy.

A. MacKinnon stated that in looking at the future, when he was in elementary school the notion of a computer was never even thought of, so within the next 70 years things that we have never thought of will be controlling our lives.

12. Upon a motion by A. MacKinnon, and seconded by M. Doheny, the meeting was adjourned at 1:04 PM.

Respectfully submitted,



Dennis Mastascusa
Board Secretary