

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING TOURISM/AGRICULTURE LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING February 3, 2026

ATTENDEES:

Legislators: Ron Ciotoli, Keith Flesher, Jake Brown, David Cantella, Tracy Monell, Jo Ellen Rose

Staff: Brittany Woodburn, Linda Sampson, Cathy Haskell, Jackson Bailey, Pete DeWind

Guests: Becca Maffei, Tioga County Tourism Director

Committee Chair, Ron Ciotoli, called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & PLANNING (ED&P): Agenda and attachments previously emailed.

I. MINUTES

- A. Approval of minutes from January 6, 2026 – Committee Chair Ron Ciotoli asked for approval of the minutes from the January 6, 2026, meeting. Legislator Brown made a motion to accept the minutes from the January 6, 2026, meeting, seconded by Legislator Cantella. All were in favor.

Ms. Woodburn reported the following:

II. FINANCIAL

- A. 2026 Budget
 1. Economic Development
 - Year-to-Date Budget is tracking.
 2. Planning
 - Year-to-Date Budget is tracking.
 3. Sustainability Management
 - Year-to-Date Budget is tracking.

III. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

A. Reports

1. Tioga County Tourism – Becca Maffei – Monthly report previously emailed and is in the Committee packet. Ms. Maffei, Tioga County Tourism Director, was in attendance and reviewed her monthly report highlighting the Multiview Digital Advertising Campaign, America 250 Campaign, Eat Local Restaurant Week and Finger Lakes Farm Country. Ms. Maffei gave an overview of what the Tourism Office does for the new committee member, Legislator Cantella.

2. Tioga County Soil & Water Conservation District – No report this month.
3. Cornell Cooperative Extension – Monthly report previously emailed and is in the committee packet.

B. Grants

1. Active Grants – See attached EDP Grant Tracking spreadsheet. Ms. Woodburn highlighted the following:
 - a. EPA Brownfield Assessment Grant
The \$500,000.00 grant application was submitted and will be used to hire a consultant to conduct assessments of brownfields, properties suspect of contamination, abandoned gas stations, reclaimed mining pits, abandoned commercial or industrial properties, such as the old ladder factory site in Newark Valley. This opens up other opportunities for additional federal funds through the Environment Protection Agency to help evaluate and remediate sites and return properties to productive reuse. There is no match requirement for the County. Program delivery fees are included
 - b. CDBG Public Facilities – Catholic Charities
This is the mobile food truck project. Ms. Woodburn had pictures on display. The truck was delivered last week. A ribbon cutting event is being held Friday, February 6th, 11:00AM at 932 West River Road, Nichols. The staff is being trained by JP Food Trucks. The truck won't be launched until later this month. The project came in under budget. With the leftover CDBG funds, they may be able to do a budget amendment for working capital, marketing or inventory. ED&P will continue to work with Catholic Charities and Ms. Woodburn will keep the committee informed.
 - c. CDBG Microenterprise
This program continues, ED&P just received another disbursement from the State and are getting closer to closing out two more projects. ED&P applied for renewal funding and is waiting on award announcement.
 - d. ARC READY – George Smith Park Master Park Plan
Barton & Loguidice, the engineering firm, delivered the draft plan and it was reviewed by the Berkshire Steering Committee. The final plan should be delivered this month. The Town Hall IT services and computer equipment have been updated, and the Town website is in development. ED&P is assisting in looking for resources for development of the park.
 - e. NY PLAYS Grant
This is a new grant program from the State; \$67.5M in capital funding to help expand and renovate public playgrounds across New York State. The Village of Waverly intends to apply for East Waverly Park to potentially match NY Forward grant funds. Hunt Engineering will be assisting with this. ED&P may be assisting the Village of Owego for Hyde and Woodlawn Parks and would like to explore using this funding for George Smith Park as well.
 - f. CDBG Public Facilities – A potential application
Liz Myers, Department of Social Services, has been inquiring about doing something with the stone house next to the Health and Human Services building that is no longer being used. ED&P toured the building. Ms. Woodburn reported

this could be a good fit for the CDBG Public Facilities grant program. It's possible to get up to \$2M, no match requirement from the County and program delivery fees are included. This would help with renovation work and structural issues. The stone house was built in the 1800's. Gary Hammond believes he has a report on the building and will locate it for use. If the committee agrees, Ms. Woodburn will continue to work with Ms. Myers who has plans for making use of the building once it is renovated. The committee agrees to further investigate to see if this grant is a good fit for this project.

- g. NYSCA Capital Grant – Ms. Norton assisted the Arts Council with a grant application. The grant is a capital improvement program that will help make needed improvements to their building. There is no match requirement. This would help free up their reserves for other operational and programmatic opportunities. Ms. Woodburn reported a technical assistance resolution will be sent after this meeting and will be added to the grant tracking spreadsheet next month.

C. Economic/Community Development

1. Community Connections – This is an organization in Newark Valley looking for grant opportunities for building renovations and mountain bike trails. The mountain bike trails would connect into the trout ponds in Newark Valley. Ms. Norton is meeting with and assisting the organization with looking for grant opportunities.
2. Funding panel for non-profits – Ms. Norton is working on this panel in partnership with the Chamber of Commerce. Several foundations will present programs and funding priorities for the year.
3. DRI – Owego – Two original projects are still open; one project is close to closing out. ED&P continues to work with the State to reallocate the funds from Applied Technology. This has been a slow process.
4. NY Forward – Village of Waverly
 - a. Small Projects Fund – Only two applications received for the small project fund of \$200,000.00. Thoma Development will conduct another round of marketing.
 - b. Public Projects – There was a kick-off meeting with the Village of Waverly and their steering committee and Hunt Engineering for the East Waverly Park and Broad Street streetscape enhancement projects. There will be several site visits over the next couple of weeks to look at different components of the projects.

D. Land Bank

1. 2025 Annual Report – A couple copies of the annual report were on display for anybody to look at.
2. 247 Main Street, Owego – This is the house in Owego across from the Methodist Church. The first schematic design draft was completed. Expecting the full schematic design drawing at the end of this month.
3. 121 Providence Street, Waverly – The construction is underway.
4. Vacant Rental Program – TCPDC – The \$750,000.00 grant application was submitted to help support repairs and rehab of vacant rental units for landlords with smaller portfolios: 5 units and under in one building, or no more than 20 units in their portfolio. The Land Bank will receive the funds and subgrant to eligible property owners.

5. Community Foundation of South-Central NY Women's Fund – The first class was held on January 17th and there were 9 women in attendance. They focused on practical everyday home maintenance skills, basic plumbing, electrical safety, trouble shooting simple wall repair techniques, etc. Owego Apalachin Central School District hosted the class and the construction management firm the Land Bank uses instructed the class. It was a success. At the end of the class the participants took home a bucket of tools. Because of the great response, they will conduct 2, maybe 3, more classes.
6. Board of Directors updates – Ralph Kelsey, stepped down as Chair of the TCPDC Board and Hannah Murray, who served as the Vice-Chair, was elected as the new Chair.

E. Workforce Development

1. Twin Tiers Regional Job Fair – Waverly School District is holding the Twin Tiers Regional Job Fair on March 20th. Ms. Norton is helping with outreach.

F. Planning

1. 239 Reviews –

- a. 2026-001: Town of Tioga, Site Plan Review, Bullrock Tioga V, LLC – The applicant plans to construct a 5 MWac solar photovoltaic system at 481 Glenmary Drive that will encompass 28 acres on a hillside. This new project will be adjacent to another existing solar system. Staff recommended approval of the site plan review with the conditions that the applicant obtain a US Army Corp jurisdictional permit if wetlands will be impacted, that the applicant provide a decommissioning agreement and plan with adequate financial means, and the applicant meets with the respective fire and EMS services to develop an emergency response plan. The County Planning Board voted to recommend approval of the site plan review with these conditions.
- b. 2026-002: Village of Owego, Rezoning, Tioga County Agricultural Society – Applicant is petitioning the Village of Owego Board of Trustees to rezone their 6-acre parcel at the Fairgrounds site from Residential 3 (R3) to Business (B) to allow more flexibility with what they can do on the property other than residential uses. Staff advised the County Planning Board to recommend approval of the rezoning request with the condition that the Village of Owego develops a rezoning local law and the Village Board of Trustees adopts it. The County Planning Board voted unanimously to recommend approval of the rezoning with the condition noted.
2. NYS American Farmland Trust – All farmer workshops have been held. The group is planning for the American Farmland Trust to submit another NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets grant application to hold more workshops focused on farm succession and transition in the future.
3. 2026 Annual Agricultural Districts inclusion requests – One request was received and is in the committee packet. The request came from landowner Eric Johnson for 270.60 acres to be included in the Owego/Nichols Agricultural District #2 with the farm description of cash crop/grain-rye, wheat and corn. There is a resolution listed below to schedule a public hearing for the 2026 Annual Agricultural District

Inclusion request. Ms. Haskell reported the public hearing will be held at the Worksession on February 19th, adding a quorum will be necessary.

G. Sustainability Management

1. Battery Management & Disposal – Dr. Pratt is updating her website with enhanced guidance on battery management and disposal. She is also pushing out a lot of information on social media.
2. Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling State Assistance Program – A resolution is listed below.
3. Household Hazardous Waste State Assistance Program application – A resolution is listed below.
4. 2026 YTD –

a. Paid to Broome County	2026	2025
i. HHW	\$ 0.00	\$11,239.55
ii. E-Waste	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,006.25
b. Towns/County(E-waste)	\$ 0.00	\$ 1,167.25

H. IDA

1. 2025 Annual Report – A couple of copies of the annual report were on display for anybody to look at.
2. OPRHP EPF – Northern Tioga Rail-with-Trail Pre-Engineering- A \$450,000.00 grant awarded to the IDA through the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Environmental Protection Fund (OPRHP EPF) program to conduct a pre-engineering study to assess the feasibility of developing a Northern Tioga Rail-with-Trail alongside the existing Owego & Harford Railway (OHRY) freight railway in the northern part of Tioga County, about 26.5 miles of track that the IDA owns. They have an operating agreement with RJ Corman to use the railway. It's an active freight line.

While this committee raised some concerns, Ms. Woodburn reported the following:

- The IDA applied for and was awarded the \$450,000.00 for this study.
- The proposed study area is 7.5 miles from the Newark Valley Fire Station to George Smith Park in Berkshire.
- It is a preliminary engineering study only and will not result in construction drawings or capital funds to construct the trail.
- Next steps for the IDA with this grant is the execution of a grant agreement once it is issued.
- The IDA will begin working on drafting an RFP for engineering services to hire a firm with specific rail trail engineering experience to conduct the study.
- The IDA will begin working on forming a steering committee to guide the preliminary engineering process consisting of a representative from the Town of Newark Valley, Village of Newark Valley, Town of Berkshire, RJ Corman, Wendy Walsh, an IDA Board Member and the Planning Director.
- The IDA will likely not be ready to hire a firm until mid-summer 2026.
- The engineers will start by doing on-site field visits to assess the viability of the 7.5 miles.
- The IDA will have the ability to revise portions of the scope of work based on this assessment.

- The engineering firm will also conduct robust community engagement including impacted landowner roundtable discussions.
- They will evaluate wetlands, bridges/culverts, environmental concerns and the concerns resulting from landowner/community input, cultural impacts and historic impacts, with the addition of construction estimates, etc.
- A complete survey of the entire trail is something the IDA does not have now.
- They will have a survey done that includes Right of Way and easement mapping.
- The final report will include a set of recommendations for various trail segments and priorities.
- We have received some opposition to the preliminary engineering study. Legislator Ciotoli and Ms. Woodburn visited a farm located along the proposed study area and listened to the property owners' concerns. We will pass those concerns on directly to the engineering firm and make sure the concerned citizen has an opportunity to provide input during the landowner engagement portion of the process.
- Last Friday, a resident of Newark Valley dropped off 52 letters of support for the study from landowners, residents, businesses and local organizations, so all of these will be taken into consideration as the IDA moves forward with the study.
- It's likely this will not be a whole contiguous 7.5-mile trail. There may be segments of the study area that the engineering firm does not recommend.

Other possible segments developed or anything else this study could potentially address:

- Possible segment developed in Downtown Newark Valley from the fire station to the high school.
- There could be an opportunity for them to propose on-road segments in certain areas or DOT Right of Way.
- Rural connectivity: Richford and Berkshire are food deserts, this would help with connection to downtown.
- The lack of safe transportation between high school and elementary/middle school, preventing fatalities.
- Enhance outdoor recreation, community development, economic development for local businesses,
- Possible connections of the Ladder Factory site (EPA grant), Trout Ponds, Skate park, businesses, historical society, Peyper Field campground, high school, etc.
- Comprehensive plans for all impacted municipalities were researched, and all identify outdoor recreation, trail development and bikeable areas as a priority need within their communities.

Ms. Woodburn hopes this answers some questions and offered to speak with anyone inquiring about this project

1. FAST NY application – Looking at a couple sites in Loundsberry for IDA to apply to the FAST NY program to do a pre-engineering study with a possible acquisition down the road after the results of the pre-engineering study. The IDA has to get site control affidavits from the property owners. We received two of the three affidavits. Once the third affidavit is received, we can submit the application.

IV. PERSONNEL

- A. Administrative Coordinator – New employee, Lisa Williams, is starting Monday, February 9th.
- B. County Planning Director – incumbent retirement - Ms. Jardine will be retiring February 28th. There is a resolution listed below to be read by Legislator Ciotoli at the Legislative meeting recognizing Ms. Jardine's 30 years of service to Tioga County.
- C. County Planning Director – new appointment – Resolution listed below to appoint Ms. Zubalsky-Peer as the new County Planning Director position.
- D. Leadership Tioga – Ms. Patton, Housing Development Specialist, and Ms. Norton, Community Development Specialist, are registered for this year's Leadership Training.
- E. Salary ranges for department positions – Ms. Woodburn has been speaking with Personnel regarding salary ranges. Possibly adjusting salaries of the Community Development Specialist and the Deputy Director. Several positions in the department were part of the salary study a couple of years ago, putting some positions in line with the Deputy Director salary range. Personnel has agreed to look into making adjustments.

Not on the agenda, Ms. Woodburn reported working on the Work from Home Renewal Forms and should have them completed by the end of the week. Ms. Woodburn looked for approval from this committee for her to work from home as needed. The committee approved her work from home status.

V. RESOLUTIONS

- B04-Set Public Hearing for 2026 Annual Agricultural District Inclusions
- B28-Request for Reimbursement for Municipal Waste Reduction and Recycling State Assistance Program
- B30-Filing of an Application for State Assistance HHW for 2025
- B39-Recognize Elaine Jardine's 30 Years of Dedicated Service to Tioga County
- B40-Authorize Appointment (Zubalsky-Peer) to Tioga Co Planning Director
- B41-Re-Appoint Member (J Harris) to the TCLDC Board
- B42-Re-Appoint Member (J Case) to the TCLDC Board

After reviewing the above resolutions, Ms. Woodburn asked this committee for support to move the resolutions forward. The vote to support the above resolution follows:

- Legislator Ciotoli – yes
- Legislator Flesher – yes
- Legislator Brown – yes
- Legislator Cantella – yes

VI. PROCLAMATIONS - N/A

VII. ADJOURNMENT

With no further topics of discussion or questions, the meeting was adjourned at 2:05 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted,

Linda Sampson

Administrative Assistant, Economic Development & Planning