



# Onondaga County Legislature

**JAMIE McNAMARA**  
Clerk

**JAMES J. ROWLEY**  
Chairman

**TAMMY BARBER**  
Deputy Clerk

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## PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES – DECEMBER 12, 2023 TIMOTHY T. BURTIS, CHAIR

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mr. Knapp, Ms. Kuhn, Mr. Olson, Mr. Garland  
**ALSO ATTENDING:** Ms. Cody, Mr. Ryan, Mr. McCarron, Mrs. Ervin; see attached list

Chair Burtis called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m., and the previous meeting’s minutes were approved.

1. **PLANNING DEPARTMENT:** Daniel Kwasnowski, Director; Martin Skahen, Director, Community Development
  - a. **Amending the 2023 County Budget to Provide for the Appropriation of General Fund Balance in Furtherance of Onondaga County Comprehensive Plan Implementation (\$30,000,000)**  
(Sponsored by Mr. May)

Planning:

- Funding for implementing Plan Onondaga; great opportunity – proactively implementing plan
- Implementation of countywide plan has not been done for a while
- Have not had argument from town or anyone to put money in, based on funding that has been put in so far; they did not want a handout; wanted to put in as much money as the county was going to give
- When county acts, others act in-kind; inspires response

*Comprehensive Plan Implementation Package*

*\$30 million dollars from Fund Balance to be allocated toward projects and programs to support implementation of Plan Onondaga.*

*Allocation by theme:*

**Strong Centers** – \$8,000,000

*In addition to existing planning programs in local communities, these funds will drive local investment in villages, hamlets, town centers and Syracuse.*

### Community Development

*\$5M Main Street Program – The county will continue to invest in our highly successful main street program initiative. This comprehensive grant program provides funding for local revitalization efforts to grow retail business districts. Revitalization examples include improving business facades, acquiring a property that is an eyesore, demolition of a property that is an eyesore, performing streetscape improvements and more.*

### Economic Development

*\$3M Small Business Micro Loans – Targeted loans with below-market interest rates and favorable terms to local businesses in mixed use centers to provide gap financing for small business expansion, start-up, property acquisition, renovation, furniture, fixtures equipment and related expenses.*

- 1. Main Street program
  - Fixing up main streets to make them a more attractive place for people to visit
  - Important for communities to have their own sense of identity and way to express it
  - i.e. Village of Marcellus has benefited greatly from this program
- 2. Small business microloans
- These programs and others help local businesses get started

- Supporting local businesses helps the money stay in community
- Huge influx of discretionary spending of \$5B projected in next 4 years
  - Discretionary income supports local business and drives (i.e.) restaurants and bike shops
  - Discretionary spending/income based on Micron

#### **Questions/Comments from the committee:**

- Echoing comment about villages and towns; this helps incentivize local business and towns/villages to work together to enhance the main streets
- Will there be some equity with Main Street; (i.e.) Manlius got great deal
- How is the program operational in terms of the broader community?
  - Community Development:
    - Whenever get round of funding, send out application package to every municipality
    - CD works with municipalities to put together application and submit them; applications are then reviewed and money is dispersed
    - Open to every municipality; (i.e.) DeWitt received one in 2021
- In terms of the county as a whole, is that taken into consideration when looking at those that have applied?
  - Community Development:
    - What is taken into consideration is the impact of application
    - Dense proposals that will have real impact are liked; (i.e.) village of Liverpool, which has been transitioned between the NY and County Main Street Grants
    - Also look at awards given to see how the municipalities are progressing with their projects; if they are slow spending, it can weigh in
    - Look at what the businesses are putting in; ask for minimum of 25% match
    - (i.e.) Marcellus makes business put in more based on how much they want; Mayor created sliding scale and put in match of 45% to what county was giving, which increases the impact
- Where is the county with the first round of funds for Main Street?
  - Community Development:
    - Have done 3 rounds
    - Not everything has been spent
    - 2021 – no one could get a contractor and/or had issues with supplies; catching up
    - 2023 awarded at the beginning of construction this year; number of projects have taken place, and people are lining up for next construction season
- Is there money leftover that will add to this?
  - Community Development:
    - There is money that has not been reimbursed to municipalities for the work done
    - All money given by the Legislature has been awarded
- Southside/Salina Street getting positive input; please clarify how municipalities are handling this and are a pass-through
  - Community Development:
    - Municipalities solicit proposals, put together bid package and send to county for review
    - County rewards funds to municipality
    - Contractor does work for property owner, property owner will then tell mayor/supervisor the job is done, and the paperwork is submitted; county will then cut check to village or town
- What does LDC stand for?
  - Economic Development:
    - Local Development Corporation
- Who creates the board, and who is on it?
  - Economic Development:
    - LDC has yet to be formed; planning to form through Economic Development Office
    - Believe will be 5 person board that will run LDC appointed by County Executive

- LDC will be an entity that exists; board will be created and operate the LDC
- Law:
  - Have experience creating LDCs; there are bylaws and state process
  - County currently has LDCs
- Finance:
  - Tobacco Corporation is an LDC; OCDC is an LDC
- Legal Counsel:
  - LDCs are created under the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law; a type of not-for-profit corporation
  - LDCs can be formed by County Executive
  - OCDC probably most successful county has
  - There is a process to form it, and depending on its function, it may or may not need legislative review
- Will the LDC be advised by a board appointed by the County Executive?
  - Legal Counsel:
    - Generally yes
  - Finance:
    - Most functional LDC with most activity is Tobacco Asset Corporation (OTASC); all appointments are under County Executive with 2 Legislators on board (WMS chair and another)
  - Economic Development:
    - Plan to have one Legislator on the LDC board

### ***Housing and Neighborhoods - \$12,000,000***

*To further the creation of a variety of housing in centers and build upon the Onondaga County Housing Incentive Program and implementation of the Onondaga County Housing Study being conducted now.*

#### *Community Development*

*\$5M toward addressing critical infrastructure issues that present a unique barrier to infill development in mixed-use centers.*

*\$5M toward the creation of expanded forms of Senior Housing including cottage homes, condominium and other senior living communities.*

*\$2M expansion of the O-CHIP program targeting the creation of mixed-use, mixed income and affordable housing.*

#### Planning:

- Continuation of O-CHIP
- Senior Housing
  - Right now have senior apartment projects, but looking to do condos and senior living communities
  - Will help seniors downsize and save costs
- Infrastructure Issues
  - Still narrowing in on it
  - (i.e.) When Camillus redeveloped the cutlery building; when taking an industrial building and redeveloping the site, there is lot of differences in sewage and water to be able to reuse and retain the building
  - (i.e.) Electrical grid often needs infrastructure improvements that are expensive
  - Increasingly difficult to do any building let alone new, redevelopment, etc.

#### Community Development:

- It is not targeted to run sewers where there is no building; it is for infill projects
- (i.e.) Proposal in Salina where they want to build 6 story buildings with 50 units each; no sewer connection to site, so developer has to put in new pump station, which town then takes over
- That property is in busy part of Liverpool, but site was not residential
- There are no maximums set for the infrastructure or senior housing programs; there will be conversations, same as O-CHIP; want it to be most effective for those that need the money
- O-CHIP is \$5,000 per unit for up to 50 units (max of \$250,000 for one developer)
- 29% of the money given out for O-CHIP is for affordable housing
- Feel these programs will be the same as O-CHIP, but will have discussions to ensure the program works
- Also will give \$750,000 awards to regionally significant projects; projects with multiple facets for overall economic

impact through mixed use, housing and professional offices (i.e. proposal at Shoppingtown)

### Questions/Comments from the committee:

- Has Planning or Community Development looked at the senior housing study done by the FOCUS group?
  - Community Development:
    - Senior funding is designed towards the concept of an all-inclusive senior housing
    - It is not like (i.e.) what COR is proposing for senior apartments in Inner Harbor (only apartments for seniors)
    - This money is targeting (i.e.) Red Mill Manor in Baldwinsville – an all-inclusive senior housing with people who do laundry, central kitchens, programs, facilities, transportation, etc.
- What if seniors are ready to move out of a larger house, but do not want to go into something like that?
  - Community Development:
    - Can come to O-CIHP program as well; these are buckets for specializing certain things
  - Planning:
    - Hoping development community brings in proposals; want seniors to stay in community and transition here
- When the housing study is done, is there money to implement those things?
  - Planning:
    - Planning Department does the organizing and putting all in one place
    - See need for data management
    - Finding ways to show what the county is doing well, and where falling short
    - Market will come through with housing; communities excited about plans and developing centers/housing
- Will there be a housing study before moving forward on this?
  - Planning:
    - One housing study will be done in April
  - Community Development:
    - Will start this before housing study
    - Study will show what will happen going forward
    - Can proceed with programs, as they know what is needed
- What is the idea of “affordable” senior housing?
  - Community Development:
    - It is what the developers are willing to build and county can assist with
- Is there a financial cut off for affording housing?
  - Community Development:
    - Do not have one, but there are developers that are doing that who come to county
- When a builder comes to county with 10-20% of their housing noted as affordable, there is no number attached as to what affordable means?
  - Community Development:
    - Affordable is usually 80% AMI (Area Median Income) or lower
    - i.e. One developer proposing project on Fayette Street behind gear factory
      - Currently an abandoned building there, and next door will be Syracuse Police Department
      - Looking to do certain number of units 50% AMI and certain number at 80% AMI
- There was a developer that was going to change the old Holiday Inn on Electronics Parkway into senior apartments, but the plan fell through, which is usually about funding; did the developer reach out to Community Development?
  - Community Development:
    - Was not about funding, but did not move forward; not aware of who the developers were
    - Told it was something someone was going to do, but did not get to stage of putting together project
- Would that space (on Electronics Pkwy) be a possibility for this program?
  - Community Development:
    - Yes, still available; but also need hotels

- Is \$5M enough for senior housing and infrastructure? It is a starting point and market will assist; as the programs are formed, will find out

### ***Greenways and Blueways - \$5,000,000***

#### *Department of Planning*

*\$5M toward implementation of planning objectives relative to development and improvement of greenway and blueway programming and facilities. These projects may be county projects, but will also include potential funding to municipalities, and possibly even private interests to further greenway and blueway development. Where possible, these funds will be matched with other funding sources.*

#### Planning:

- When developed plan, wanted local buy in and greenways and blueways to be part of local identity
- \$5M a lot, but (i.e.) it covers 1/3 of cost of bridge over CSX tracks for loop the lake, which is part of greenways system
- Looking to use funding to develop larger list with local communities; see how they can improve greenways
  - i.e. Stream restoration or new trail
- Blueways program
  - Lot of blueway improvements are on shore
  - Orienting people to the water, how to get off water, where bathrooms are, where food is, how long trails are, etc.
- When look to communities to do natural resource inventories, how to access greenways, or flood prevention, it is always better when there is “skin in the game”
- Want to make sure county and communities lists are compatible and interests the same
- Want people to have access to greenway resources wherever they live in the county
- Can come up with list, but does not mean it is enough; they are hard to implement
- Gives reason to get into communities and find the projects which will have the most impact
- Back in fall, had list of feasibility studies to get basic idea of how it will work and how much it will cost
- Do feasibility studies knowing there is money behind it to back it up
- Greenways are not things people think about, but are a huge driver with property levels, attracting people to live here
- Important program to create outreach and encourage people to think about these things, move on projects and develop ones they can apply for grants for
- Who will be administering this program?
  - Planning
- Is there a max?
  - Not right now; might have a project that has to happen and costs \$1M, but will see value
  - Might be bridge, trail or anything, or match for a grant
- Very aspirational; coming back to Legislature with specific projects; greenways and blueways are awesome
  - Can come back with list of projects
  - Have funded Empire State Trail; also has list of projects with costs; template of what looking to do
  - Will have local input and feedback
  - Have template in place, and want to show how everything can be connected
- Has the developer that bought Lakeshore reached out in regard to access?
  - Planning:
    - Great idea, had not thought about it
    - They are proposing mixed use center, but have not reached out
    - Interesting greenway, as Oneida Lake is in Oswego County, but the shoreline is Onondaga County
    - Part of this is water quality with county beaches, and part will go towards figuring these things out

**Agriculture - \$5,000,000***Department of Planning*

*\$5M toward implementation of planning objectives found in Plan Onondaga and the Agriculture and Farmland Protection Plan centering on agritourism, farmland protection, and Regional Market improvements.*

**Planning:**

- Farmland protection
  - Working on agriculture program; plan to reach out to local operators and aspiring operators with ag business (small or large) to figure out how it impacts community
  - Projects could be roadway safety, landing area in hotspots with agritourism, etc.
- Regional Market
  - Bundle of improvements they need to make
  - Working with them to see how the county may be able to assist them
  - Very important, not only as quality of life with fresh fruits and vegetables, but also warehousing and ability to process foods
  - Type of ag development county wants to pursue
  - Idea of ag business park to locate food processing in Syracuse
- Lot going on with agriculture and helping farmers be viable, stay in business, the market, how can the county grow more and consume more here; dairy is the top crop, but can do more
- Farmland protection – successfully protecting over 13,000 acres; have large farms wanting to be in program – very well supported at state level
- Smaller farms cannot compete with larger farms to protect farmland; those small farms are very successful and important to community
  - Would like to explore a local farmland protection plan
  - Feasibility, how it would work, what is the target, how much will it cost, where would the money come from

**Questions/Comments from the committee:**

- Would this be the Nelson Farm idea where they have a kitchen someone can use to create their product?
  - Planning:
    - Yes, would be great
- Would OCC be a good partner for that, as they have the facilities and food service program?
- Ag Council talked about a food hub concept (pre-COVID); school districts or university, who buy a lot for cafeterias, do not want to call 14 farms to get vegetables; food hub would have processing and packaging for small producers
- County needs to support itself; do not want scarcity when things can be grown locally
  - Planning:
    - Idea of co-packing: have certified kitchen, and people grow specialty crop
    - i.e. Person grows peppers and buys from local, then makes hot sauce and sells online
    - Instead of each farmer having a certified kitchen, people can rent time at a certified kitchen, cook their food and have local grown food to market
- Ag Council helped landowners who were older and retired, but wanted to keep their land agricultural; landowners voluntarily gave up development rights to it, so Ag Council helped with fees, as it is a very expensive process
  - Planning:
    - Capacity of local land trusts struggling to meet demand
- As far as Regional Market and state property
  - It is not only a state property, but a State Authority, which are supposed to be self-sustaining, which is why they are not eligible for NYS grants
  - Trying to find a way for them
  - Very important part of the community; important facility

- Please talk about Agritourism
  - Small, regular farm stands; even in plan had model of farm and all things it takes to keep farm viable
  - Selling local products at farm stand is very important part of the business
  - Not subject to markets or whims of markets; can sell things at retail and make money on it
  - Some planning – local communities struggling with popularity of agritourism
  - i.e. Beak and Skiff adjusting and getting used to it
  - Local planning needs to happen
  - Not only does Onondaga County do more, but the capacity to do more is high
  - Bordering on agritourism and mass tourism in the county
  - Keeps farms in agriculture; provides identity and quality of life
  - Had popup booth for the county plan at Apple Festival; very surprised at how many people came from outside the county making comments that it is beautiful and no one does anything like this

***Community Mobility*** – No transfer from Fund Balance is necessary for this theme at this time. \

**Planning:**

- \$450,000 grant from FHWA (Federal Highway Administration)
- Kicking off in next year, which will give countywide area plan; makes county, towns and villages eligible for \$30M/year
- Working with SMTC on corridor plan project from Van Buren to Cicero
  - Looking at what the Rt. 31 corridor look like, what development will be needed to support certain levels of transit
  - Work with towns to find out what they want it to look like; can look however they want
  - NYS DOT partner in that; contract awarded to Santech
- Money coming in from other places; greenway covers as well; could be federal eligible road
- Did not see needing to put local money towards it

**Request:**

**List of the money that was given out for Main Street, and where it went**

- Community Development:
  - List was sent to Ms. Lesniak; overall gave out \$15.4M in funding; matching funds of \$13.7M
  - Total of investment in three rounds of almost \$30M public/private
  - Ms. Lesniak has a spreadsheet showing awards and municipalities; working on a project by project one now
- Planning:
  - When they get housing study and phase 2 of study program, will start looking at how to implement it
  - Idea to work with local communities on it; lot of comp plans funded
  - Next phase is subarea planning, where they drive development in certain places in the county, according to the plan
  - Helping local communities to do deep planning will lay groundwork for building

**Questions/Comments from the committee:**

- Currently have issues with affordable housing, and concerned that new development will be small percentages, most out of the range for people
  - Planning:
    - Working with city and writing policy for affordable housing - read that minimum requirements will not solve affordable housing, but they do help
    - 10-15% really hits the bigger projects; what is needed is to get into the neighborhoods
    - i.e. Can take 2 duplexes next to each other and expand it to up to 8 units; as long as a portion of units affordable
    - Small developer is not getting equity; program like this is the only one out there that can give \$5,000/unit
- What has been the response from communities outside the city for affordable housing?
  - Planning:
    - Mixed; it is not that it does not exist
    - Take transit line with one story commercial and mix in apartments, will see dramatic increase in property value
    - If people working in commercial/retail businesses and can live nearby, they are saving money
    - Selling point that it is the place where it can be done
    - i.e. Erie Boulevard is the perfect place for affordable housing; on transit line, not in anyone's backyard, near

where people work; those corridors are where communities can introduce the housing types

- Is there a plan to encourage this?
  - Community Development:
    - Program works on side of developer coming to county and bringing plan
  - Planning:
    - Comprehensive planning doing with towns and villages is part of it
    - Subarea planning is mostly in those corridors; creating town center where it does not exist
    - Projects taking commercial property and making mixed use will be coming up in the next year

Chair Burtis did not call for a vote on the item.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:40 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



JAMIE McNAMARA, Clerk  
Onondaga County Legislature

### ATTENDANCE

COMMITTEE: **PLANNING & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE**

DATE: **DECEMBER 12, 2023**

NAME (Please Print)	DEPARTMENT/AGENCY
Patricia Gonzalez	Comptroller
Deanne Laghlin	Comptroller's
Tim Tschybaluk	Comp.
Darcie Lesniak	Leg
Nate Stevens	Econ Dev
Bob Petrovich	Econ Dev
MB	CE
Dan Kwasnowski	OCPOP
Mindy Skelton	CI
MOISE LAUB	Finance
Jason Dean	Finance
KEVIN J. MEAKER	CL
MO BROWN	OCL
Jim Beebe	Jug
John Desantis	Jur
Tim Fratocchi	Jes.