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Columbia Economic Development Corporation

MINUTES
COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION
Tuesday, April 23, 2023
Kozel's Route 9H, West Ghent, NY 12534

Please take notice that the Columbia Economic Development Corporation will hold its annual meeting on April 23, 2023 with registration beginning at 7:30am at Kozel's Route 9H, West Ghent, NY 12534, for the purpose of discussing any matters that may be presented to the Corporation for consideration.

List of attendees is attached.

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 a.m. by David Fingar, Chair. He welcomed the attendees to the 2023 CEDC Annual Meeting. Mr. Fingar recognized the meeting sponsors, then introduced Hudson Valley Creamery's Jean-Claude Bruneau, who thanked CEDC for their assistance over the last 10 years. He gave an overview of the company and their product. He stated he hoped to nearly double their business and employees in the upcoming year.

Mr. Fingar recognized the attending elected officials. He noted over the past year CEDC had reviewed the strategic plan for the corporation, briefly reviewing the pillars. He recognized Mr. Tucker and the CEDC staff for their work over the past year. He announced changes in titles for Mrs. Gabriel and Ms. Lane. Mr. Fingar announced Mrs. Gabriel's title had been changed to Vice-President of Economic Development and Ms. Lane's had been changed to Vice-President of Business Development. Mr. Fingar thanked the Board for their dedication and shared vision over the past year, and recognized CEDC's success tied to their many partnerships in government, business and not-for profit sectors.

Mr. Fingar introduced Chairman of the Board of Supervisors: Matt Murell, Mayor of the City of Hudson, Kamal Johnson and Mike Yevoli, Regional Director of Empire State Development. Chairman Murell reviewed the Columbia Comeback program, formed during 2020 as a joint project with Columbia Economic Development Corporation and the Chamber of Commerce. He stated the first mission was to assist the re-opening of small businesses under Covid-19 guidelines. He stated the latest collaboration is the work of the Columbia County Housing Task Force. He stated slightly over a year ago the Board of Supervisors and CEDC held a virtual forum to discuss the Columbia County Housing Brief. Last September, the Board of Supervisors approved a three year contract with CEDC to further the development of affordable housing. In November the Board of Supervisors announced the formation of an Affordable Housing Task Force and an Advisory Resource Committee co-chaired by Supervisors Ron Knott and Brenda Adams. The appointment of Chris Brown as Affordable Housing Coordinator followed a month later.

Chair Murell noted the Columbia Forward program began in June 2022. The program is a \$500,000 initiative to assist small businesses and strengthen local economic development committees. CEDC and the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce have partnered to implement and manage the 3 year \$450,000 program. Additionally, CEDC was charged with beginning a new grant program with \$50,000 of ARPA funding. He stated Columbia County and CEDC have worked jointly to extend broadband access to county residents. The recent efforts have identified unserved and underserved areas in the County.

Chair Murell noted the 2023 budget shows a tax decrease of 7.5% for County residents. He noted the budget reflected a balance of needed services and maintaining an affordable place to live for its residents.

Mayor Johnson stated CEDC has assisted putting community back into the County. He noted the City has needed a partner and had that with the County and CEDC. He thanked Mr. Tucker, stating he looked forward to another year of progressing projects.

Mike Yevoli introduced himself, noting it was a couple of years since he had attended the breakfast. He noted his territory was diverse, but Columbia County stands out. He noted it had more members on the regional council than any other county in the region. He stated Mr. Tucker worked hard to bring the dollars back to the county. He stated there would be more rounds of CFA funding and more rounds of Downtown Revitalization Initiatives, NY Forward and Restore NY funding.

Mr. Tucker reviewed the Corporation's mission statement. He stated the organization was well positioned to continue to sustain, support and grow the economy of Columbia County. He outlined the ways CEDC can and did help, including providing resources and supporting strong partnerships with Columbia-Greene Community College, Questar III, the county school districts, as well as the county employers. He noted one area has been broadband accessibility. He noted the effort to reduce the number of unserved County homes from 8000, to the current 800 began more than 7 years ago. He noted work continued to reduce that amount with the help of federal and state funding.

He noted CEDC works with project sponsors on business opportunities as well as all sizes of development projects. He noted CEDC administers the City of Hudson IDA, the County IDA and the Capital Resource Corporation. He noted CEDC also partnered and collaborated with regional organizations such as the Center for Economic Growth, Patterns for Progress as well as the Governor's Capital Region Economic Development Council and Empire State Development. He noted over the past 12 years since the formation of the Regional Council, Columbia County had been awarded over 120 awards totaling more than \$50 million in state funding.

Mr. Tucker stated CEDC also has partnered with the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation for work on targeted initiatives to support small businesses, broad band coverage and business training. He stated he was asking Martha Lane, Vice-President of Business Development, Chris Brown, Affordable Housing Coordinator and Jessica Gabriel, Vice-President of Economic Development to highlight some of the work they are doing. He thanked the CEDC staff for their work. He thanked the Columbia County Board of Supervisors, City of Hudson, long time partners and members for their continued support and leadership.

Mr. Tucker then introduced Martha Lane, Vice-President of Business Development. Ms. Lane gave a brief overview of the CEDC loan program, noting the current value of the program was \$3.3 million, including loans disbursed and monies to lend. She noted CEDC had applied for a new loan from the SBA, ensuring enough loan funding for 2 years. She stated the 2023 annual technical assistance grant was just announced and CEDC qualified for \$275,000. She stated that funding helps pay for the consultants and trainers for the small businesses assisted. Ms. Lane thanked Jeffrey Boice from the SBA Upstate business office. Ms. Lane stated CEDC makes Microloans generally of \$50,000 or less. She noted CEDC doesn't handle other SBA products and doesn't offer lines of credit. She stated she would refer clients requesting those products to other lenders, and in return they referred microloan and technical assistance clients to CEDC. Ms. Lane introduced Chris Brown, CEDC's Affordable Housing Coordinator.

Mr. Brown gave the background of the formation of his newly created position, noting it originated from a CEDC report commissioned from Pattern For Progress. This report, *Columbia County Housing Brief*, was the beginning of discussions that resulted in a County hosted Housing Forum in March of 2022. The Housing Forum resulted in two recommendations: 1) to create a Housing Task Force and 2) to create the Housing Development Coordinator position. Mr. Brown noted that due to the dedication of the Chair and the Board of Supervisors both recommendations were implemented. Mr. Brown stated the Task Force included co-chairs, Supervisors Adams (Canaan) and Knott (Stuyvesant), and a number of motivated stakeholders. The Housing Task Force has



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created three sub-committees: Outreach, Policy, Pre-Development and established goals of: *Preserving and expanding housing affordability, attainability and availability throughout Columbia County; Engaging and energizing communities and stakeholders to increase awareness and create responses to housing issues; Developing and providing to towns and villages resources to help them achieve their housing goals.*

Mr. Brown explained the task force is supported by an advisory Board made up of housing and community development professionals, including Eric Pierson (Pattern for Progress), Michelle Tullo (City of Hudson's Housing Justice Director), and Al Bellenchia (Columbia County Habitat for Humanity's Executive Director).

Mr. Brown noted the task force is also incorporating recommendations from Pattern for Progress's Housing Brief and the Columbia County Housing forum: supporting a county-wide housing organization (ie: Community Land Trust or Housing Trust Fund) and creating a county-wide infrastructure plan. Mr. Brown wrapped up by noting this is a natural extension of CEDC's scope of work, noting local businesses depend on local labor which requires housing. Mr. Brown turned the meeting over to Mrs. Gabriel.

Mrs. Gabriel reviewed the Columbia Forward program, a county wide initiative created to strengthen local economic activity. She stated the program targeted small business impacted by the pandemic, providing support with Loans, technical assistance, grants and training. She informed the attendees the program had assisted 96 entrepreneurs to date. She thanked William Gerlach and the Chamber staff for their partnership and assistance.

Mrs. Gabriel pointed out that there were over 1900 small business in the county, of which over 90 employed 25 or fewer employees. The Columbia Forward program was begun by the Board of Supervisors to support and assist small businesses in the county. She stated 16 federal and NYS grant applications had been supported and 4 training and business workshops had been held in 2022. She noted CEDC had set aside \$500,000 for Columbia Forward loans and Columbia County had provided \$50,000 from County ARPA funds for grants which would be used for grants for qualifying businesses. To date \$222,000 in loans and \$17,000 in grants had been provided.

Mrs. Gabriel noted the Columbia Forward program allowed CEDC and the Chamber to expand their reach throughout the county. She stated next week April 30th to May 6th had been proclaimed Small Business Week in Columbia County. She stated the Shop Small/Shop Local campaign would begin during the week. Mrs. Gabriel thanked the County and Supervisors for their support.

Mr. Tucker introduced Dr. Dorothy Urschel, DNP President CEO of Columbia Memorial Health as the event's key note speaker. Dr. Urschel addressed the offerings of Columbia Memorial Health and noted that for the services not offered by the hospital, those services were offered by their partner, Albany Medical Center Hospital. She noted CMH was a multi campus healthcare system, serving over 100,000 persons in Columbia and Greene Counties through over 40 care centers. She reviewed several of the awards received by CMH. She noted the focus of her presentation was the Intersection of Healthcare, Work Force and Affordable Housing. She noted healthcare created jobs and needed a strong economy with an associated workforce of insured patients. Housing was required for both patients and hospital employees and all were dependent upon the other. She noted that health was a broader definition than merely physical health. She noted that socioeconomic factors and physical environment is more important than clinical care and genetic characteristics. She noted over the years the questions asked of patients have changed to more social questions instead of clinical questions. Housing conditions impact individual health as well as the ability to recruit hospital staff. She addressed housing issues and healthcare, noting they were directly related. She noted CMH had case managers to assist with temporary

housing. She addressed the hospital recruiting efforts and stated housing did affect the efforts. She stated there was sufficient housing for hospital staff. She noted that the NYS Labor Department February 2023 report shows that health services and private education constitutes nearly 20% of jobs in NYS. She noted CMH had a program with Columbia Greene Community College for nursing students, but noted that after the initial term, the majority of students leave the area.

She noted very large health systems had financed nearby housing, but in a smaller community it wasn't feasible to develop their own housing. She noted finances were used for replacing equipment. She reviewed population density and mortality, noting higher worker density, better work quality, professional education, gender equality and a higher income improved the population's health and survival. She noted this spoke to rural areas. She reviewed the map showing the current locations of the CMH facilities. She noted these would not be able to be maintained forever, and some would need to be combined. She reviewed CMH statistics noting CMH maintained 42 Care Centers, 1400 employees, 330 providers. CMH had 420,000 outpatient visits, 3,700 annual surgeries, and 3,500 hospital admissions annually. She noted that inpatient service is shrinking currently at 65 beds. She noted that there were currently nearly 60 medical, physician assistant, nursing staff and pharmacy students in the hospital. She stated CMH is the only hospital in the Hudson Valley Corridor between Albany and Rhinebeck and its strengths are specialty services, including psychiatry. CMH has a certified inpatient unit of 22 beds as well as the availability of out-patient psychiatry and behavioral help imbedded in the Care Centers.

Dr. Urschel noted that healthcare had changed over the past few years. She noted over the last two years since the pandemic has changed health care. She noted in the past 2 decades there had been upward pressures on quality, downward pressures on cost and services migrating out of the traditional hospital setting. She noted the past decade had seen rural hospital closures and a 75% reduction in obstetric services. She noted the worst operating year ever had been 2022 due to workforce and volume of patients, noting that there had been no rebound to date. She noted that addressing this was difficult as there is no precedent

She reviewed the economic impact of rural hospital closure, noting that it adversely impacts employment, income, labor force participation, establishments, population, rents and the unemployment rate. She noted the closure of a sole hospital in a community reduces the per-capita income by 1.5% and increases the unemployment rate by 1.6 percent. She cited the CMH payor mix for inpatient and all services:

	<u>Inpatient</u>	<u>All Services</u>
Medicare	64%	48%
Medicaid	22%	25%
Commercial	13%	24%
Self pay	<1%	1%
All Other	1%	2%
	100%	100%

She noted CMH had total operating expenses of \$173.8 million, \$7 million in unreimbursed and unpaid medical care provided free to those in need, \$6 million invested in hospital facilities and equipment in 2022 with approximately \$61 million invested over the past 10 years, with a net patient revenue of \$147.1 million.

Dr. Urschel stated it was an honor and privilege to serve all present and she looked forward to working with you all. Mr. Fingar thanked Dr. Urschel for her time.

Chair Fingar turned to the business portion of the meeting. He introduced CEDC Treasurer Tarah Gay to give the Treasurer's Report for 2022. Ms. Gay reviewed the report, noting it had been included in the Annual Report distributed at each of the place settings. Mr. Fingar introduced Sarah Sterling, CEDC Secretary. She presented the slate of directors up for election. Joseph Benson – Shadowbrook Farm, Anand Balasar – A&C Custom Apparel, Richard Cummings – Mulhern Gas, Michael Johnston – Michael S. Johnston Bus Company, Kenneth Leggett – Ken Leggett Contracting, Bryan Mahoney – Columbia Memorial Health, Sean Sawyer – The Olana



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Partnership. James Calvin made a motion, seconded by Tarah Gay. All present voted in favor of electing the presented Slate of Directors.

Mr. Fingar thanked the attendees and the elected officials for supporting CEDC and attending the meeting. The meeting adjourned at 9:13 am, with no further business to come before the Members.

Respectfully submitted by Lisa Drahusiuk.