



CEDC Annual Meeting 2024: Strengthening Small Businesses through SBA Partnership and Community Development

Hudson, NY – A series of speakers discussed the local and national economy at the Columbia Economic Development Corporation’s (CEDC) annual meeting at The Greenport on Tuesday, April 30. The event highlighted CEDC’s unprecedented engagement in advancing the county’s economic development strategy with more than 125 representatives from businesses, government, education and the non-profit sectors.

James Calvin welcomed the crowd in his first annual meeting as CEDC's Board Chair. Calvin was elected chair in January, succeeding former Chair David Fingar, who retired earlier this year.

CEDC’s efforts and successes in advancing Columbia County’s economy were acknowledged in remarks by Columbia County Board of Supervisors Chair Matt Murrell, Hudson Mayor Kamal Johnson, Empire State Development Economic Development Specialist Joseph Landy and Jean Claude Bruneau, the General Manager of Hudson Valley Creamery, a lead sponsor of the event.

The meeting’s keynote speaker, Daniel Rickman, Upstate New York District Director of the U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), presented on the SBA partnership with CEDC and the growth of small businesses in Columbia County. Daniel Rickman is an entrepreneur, a veteran and a leader focused on small business development throughout Upstate, New York.

Mr. Rickman discussed the mission and successes of the SBA, stating that the SBA continues to help small business owners and entrepreneurs pursue the American dream. He mentioned that the SBA is a resource for small businesses by providing counseling, capital, and contracting expertise for small businesses. He highlighted how the partnership between the SBA and CEDC enhances economic development throughout Columbia County. He discussed how small business were impacted by the COVID pandemic, and the efforts to support the local economy during that time. He noted that small businesses supported the relief efforts and created many jobs following the pandemic. He stated that this week is National Small Business Week, in which the SBA acknowledges the critical contributions of small business owners and recognizes their contributions to the economy.

James Calvin recognized outgoing Directors Ruth Adams and Sarah Sterling. He also presented a gift to the outgoing Chair of the Board of Directors, David Fingar, for all the hard-work and dedication he demonstrated while serving as Chair on the Board of Directors for the last 6 years. “Dave’s tenure as Chair included the COVID period, which inflicted enormous challenges and pressures on our organization,” said CEDC Board Chair James Calvin, “Amidst those dark

clouds, CEDC emerged as a beacon and a lifeline for the small businesses that drive our local economy, thanks largely to Dave’s steady hand and stalwart commitment to Columbia County’s economic well-being.”

“Over the past year, CEDC has taken great strides in our strategic initiatives, reflecting our focus and engagement in strengthening Columbia County’s economy,” reported President and CEO F. Michael Tucker. He highlighted CEDC's strategic focus areas, achievements, collaborative efforts, and appreciation for stakeholders in driving economic development and growth in Columbia County.

Mr. Tucker noted that CEDC provided over \$1 million in small business loans to 42 businesses in 2023, helping them grow and expand, which in turn fosters job creation and stability throughout the County. He stated that CEDC is making strides in expanding broadband access, supporting affordable housing and childcare initiatives, and partnering with education institutions on workforce development. He noted other organizations CEDC partnered with on a variety of programs and initiatives. He mentioned that CEDC also provides support and assistance for projects seeking state funding. He stated that in 2023, 12 Columbia County projects received over \$5.7 million through the Governor’s Regional Economic Development Council, which was the most of any county in the Capital Region. He emphasized CEDC's collaborative approach, working closely with businesses, government, non-profits, and residents.

Martha Lane, Vice President of Business Development, reported on CEDC microbusiness programs, along with technical assistance provided to small businesses throughout the County. She noted the current value of the loan program was over \$5 million, including loans disbursed and monies to lend. She stated the 2024 annual technical assistance grant was just announced and CEDC will receive \$261,000, enabling CEDC to engage consultants and trainers to assist small businesses. She also noted that CEDC offers an annual Microbusiness Seminar series in which 19 entrepreneurs are enrolled in the current series. She gave an update on the Columbia Forward Program. She stated that in 2022, the Board of Supervisors allocated \$500,000 in ARPA funds to foster economic activity in the county by creating a partnership between CEDC and the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce to deliver programs to small business owners and support economic development activities at the local level. She stated that the loan and grant program remain a benefit of the Columbia Forward initiative, noting that the County provided \$50,000 from its American Rescue Plan Act to be awarded as grants to complement CEDC and SBA microloans. To date, CEDC has loaned \$360,000 and granted \$36,000 to small business that meet the Columbia Forward guidelines. She reported on the \$300,000 Microenterprise Grant recently awarded to the County by New York State and noted that CEDC is currently working with a Grant committee to review the applications and award the grants.

Chris Brown, CEDC’s Affordable Housing Coordinator, reported on CEDC’s efforts towards affordable housing. He discussed the key initiatives of the Board of Supervisors county-wide Housing Task Force. Chris mentioned that CEDC also assisted the Board of Supervisor’s with the creation of the Columbia County Land Bank. He noted CEDC supported the efforts of several communities to become Pro-Housing Certified. He stated that in partnership with the Board of

Supervisors and RUPCO, a \$2,000,000 grant was awarded from NYS Homes & Community Renewal to help residents create Accessory Dwelling Units.

During the business portion of the meeting, the following slate of Board Members were elected to a three-year term expiring on May 1, 2027:

- Tarah Gay – Public Sale Auction
- Derek Grout – Owner, Harvest Spirits
- Christian Lopez – Owner, Coyote Flaco
- Richard Nesbitt – President, Johnny Walker Insurance
- Sean Sawyer – President, The Olana Partnership

The following slate of Directors were elected to complete a partial term ending on May 1, 2026 are:

- Rachel Puckett – Mid-Hudson Cablevision
- Justin Goldman – The Bank of Greene County

The following slate of Directors were elected to complete a partial term ending on May 1, 2025 are:

- Kenneth Leggett – Ken Leggett Contracting

“We are fortunate to have a terrific Board of Directors.” said CEDC Board Chair James Calvin. “They care deeply about Columbia County’s future and they are fully engaged in pursuing our objectives.”

CEDC’s 2023 Audit was reviewed and the 2023 Annual Meeting minutes were accepted during the business portion of the meeting. Proposed By-Law Amendments were reviewed and accepted during the business portion of the meeting as well.

About CEDC: *Columbia Economic Development Corporation is the lead economic development organization for Columbia County, New York. Our mission is to strengthen the area’s tax base through economic development and job creation, to assist businesses to locate and expand within the County, and to promote Columbia County as a premier spot for both business investment and personal opportunity.*