



## **Driving Economic Growth: Empire State Development Shares Vision for Capital Region at 2025 CEDC Annual Meeting**

Hudson, NY – A series of speakers discussed the local and national economy at the Columbia Economic Development Corporation’s (CEDC) annual meeting at Columbia- Greene Community College on Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup>. 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 as CEDC's Board Chair. Calvin was elected chair in January 2024. James Calvin recognized President of Columbia- Greene Community College, Dr. Carlee Drummer, for her leadership on the CEDC Board of Director’s and congratulated her on her upcoming retirement. Dr. Carlee Drummer also welcomed the crowd and spoke on the accomplishments of Columbia- Greene Community College.

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, and the Plant Manager of Hudson Valley Creamery, a lead sponsor of the event.

The meeting’s keynote speaker, Mike Yevoli, Regional District Director of Empire State Development (ESD), presented an overview of ESD’s mission to foster a strong and inclusive state economy. His remarks focused on ESD’s core priorities—placemaking, workforce development, innovation, and support for tradeable sectors—and how they are being implemented through targeted programs and incentives.

Yevoli also highlighted the role of the Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs), emphasizing their community-driven, bottom-up approach to directing state investments across ten regions in New York. The Capital Region’s strategic vision was outlined, focusing on social and economic integration, economic growth, and community vibrancy. Several high-impact local projects were showcased, including Art Omi Pavilions, Klocke Estates, Crandell Theatre Restoration, Olana- Frederic Church Center and Shaker Museum. Yevoli concluded with an outlook on the upcoming FY 2025–2026 REDC funding cycle, noting the anticipated continuation of grant programs alongside a new \$50 million regional competition.

CEDC President & CEO, F. Michael Tucker presented on the accomplishments for 2024 and the initiatives for 2025. He also outlined CEDC’s recent Strategic Plan update, highlighting Business

Growth as CEDC's core function, along with Infrastructure, quality of life and sustainability and workforce and education, areas where CEDC plays a supporting role.

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 \$4 million, including loans disbursed and monies to lend. Over the past decade, CEDC has distributed \$5.8 million in loans to more than 250 Columbia County businesses, with 40 microloans totaling nearly \$800,000 issued just last year alone.

Chris Brown, CEDC's Housing Development Coordinator, reported on CEDC's efforts towards affordable housing. He discussed the partnership with the Board of Supervisors and the county-wide key initiatives of 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, with Columbia County being the first County in New York State to have all towns and villages start that process. 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, 2028:

- James Calvin – Calvin Communications
- Michael S. Johnston – Michael S. Johnston LLC
- Kenneth Leggett – Ken Leggett Contracting
- Rachel Levine – Patricia A. Hinkein Realty
- Christine Hinz – Coldwell Banker Village Green Realty

The following was elected to complete an open term ending on May 1, 2027 are:

- Gary Graziano- Hudson valley Resource Group/ HISS LLC

CEDC's 2024 Audit was reviewed and the 2024 Annual Meeting minutes were also accepted during the business portion of the meeting.

**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.*