



**Meeting of the Board of Directors  
February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022, at 4:00pm**

**Board of Supervisors Boardroom  
40 McMaster St.  
Ballston Spa, NY 12020**

**Public Phone Line: 1-978-990-5145  
Access Code: 1840389**

## **Minutes**

**Board Members Present:** Justin Baker, Phil Barrett, Steve Bulger, Eric Butler, Jeremy Connors, Jake DeVito, Treasurer Rocco Ferraro, Jeff Jones, David Karpinski, Todd Kusnierz, Chairwoman Maria Moran, Scott Ostrander, Timothy Szczepaniak, David Wood

**Board Members Absent:** Mark Hammond

**Saratoga Partnership Staff & Guests:** Consultant Tim Dunn, Matthew Rose

**Guests:** N/A

Chair Maria Moran called the meeting to order at 4:06pm

### **Adoption of Minutes**

#### **January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, Board Meeting**

Mr. Szczepaniak noted that he was present at the last meeting, however his name was not included on the list of board members present. Mr. Szczepaniak would like the proposed change to be reflected in the approved minutes.

Steve Bulger made a motion to accept the January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2022, minutes with the proposed amendment, seconded by Maria Moran. No further discussion was made. On a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

### **Treasurer's Report – Rocco Ferraro**

#### **Financial Report**

Mr. Ferraro expressed he would like to discuss a couple items. Included in January's expenditures was the credit card, which was reconciled and addressed. Bills associated with the credit card were automatic payments and those were reconciled in order for the old card to be closed out. There are some expenditures related to 2021 that are showing in the January 2022 reports. These will also be reconciled, and a reverse entry will be made in order to avoid any double booking. Mr. Ferraro also wanted to note that the Occupancy tax revenue showing in January's report was in fact the third quarter payment from 2021. Going forward that amount will be \$87,500 for quarterly payments in 2022.

Jeremy Connors made a motion to accept the Treasurer's report, seconded by Phil Barrett. No further discussion was made. On a voice vote the motion passed unanimously.

### **Audit Update – Matthew Rose**

Mr. Rose provided the Board with an update to the ongoing Audit. Mr. Rose has been working with Amy from West and Co. over the past month. West and Co. is currently going through the documentation and information Mr. Rose has already provided. West and Co. will be requesting further information as the audit proceeds and Mr. Rose will make sure to get West and Co. what they need in order to complete the audit.

Mr. Rose gave a brief reminder to those board of directors who have not yet submitted their compliance paperwork to do so. Mr. Rose will send out a reminder in the coming week, as these documents will be required for the annual report submission.

### **Discussion of 2022 Plans**

Mr. Kusnierz shared that as Secretary of the Partnership that he has received signed correspondence from several members of the Board, including the Chair of the Saratoga County Economic Development committee, which has recommendations for the Partnership. Mr. Kusnierz asked if Mr. Barrett could elaborate on the correspondence. Mr. Rose handed out copies of the correspondence to all Board of Directors in attendance.

Mr. Barrett stated that the Partnership has had a fairly short and tumultuous existence. The Partnership, through legislation, is slated to receive half of the County's bed tax each year. Over 4 million has been spent on the operations of the Partnership to this point. In 2019 the roles and responsibilities of SCPP and SEDC were defined to eliminate competition between both organizations. There has been a tremendous amount of competition, and this has been a deterrent to providing a successful economic development program. The current situation includes scarce resources, new tourism opportunities on the horizon, and a foreseeable limited role for the Partnership in the future. Mr. Barrett along with those who signed the correspondence believe it is time to suspend the operations of the Partnership. The timing of this action correlates with the expiration of a contract with Dunn Strategies.

Mr. Barret provided some brief historical context to the recommendation. Last summer the two remaining employees of the Partnership resigned and left the organization with no employees. It was determined at that time not to pursue a new president until there was more visibility regarding the Partnership's future. Mr. Dunn and Dunn Strategies were brought on board to maintain operational viability and ensure the organization was fulfilling its responsibilities. Mr. Barret stated Mr. Dunn has done an admirable job to maintain the operations. Mr. Barrett shared that this contract will be concluding at the end of march. Mr. Barrett and others believe that conducting a search for a new president would again be a disservice to that person and the organization.

Mr. Barrett highlighted all key elements of the recommendation provided in the correspondence.

- 1) The SCPP will not hire any new employees
- 2) All operational responsibilities of the SCPP will be transferred to the County's Planning and Economic Development Department.
- 3) all remaining funds of the SCPP will be transferred to the County's economic development and tourism account to support County initiatives.

- 4) The SCPP Board will decide the programs that will continue and those that will be unwound and discontinued.
- 5) The SCPP Board will continue to meet when necessary to maintain operational viability.
- 6) SCPP was created through enabling legislation by the New York State Legislature. Therefore, the organization can only be eradicated following the home rule process.

Mr. Barrett concluded that the Partnership should cease operations. There will be no employees, or consultants, or active programs. Responsibilities will be shifted to the County but the organization itself would continue to live on until the home rule process were to shut down the Partnership completely. Mr. Barrett shared that if this recommendation is accepted by the board of directors there may be occasional meetings of the board as needed, possibly on a quarterly basis. Mr. Barret shared that the history of the Partnership has been marked by millions of dollars spent, dubious results, unnecessary competition with fellow organizations serving the County, and it has been a frequent source of division among the County Board of Supervisors. Much of the division on the County Board of Supervisors can be traced back to the creation of the Partnership. It is time to cease operations and cease spending taxpayer money. Saratoga County has a history of success and a great story to tell. Mr. Barrett stated that sometimes adjustments are needed as time goes on and to divert funding to more successful programs which will help accomplish economic development goals. Mr. Barrett suggested that as the board goes forward the board needs to continue assessing what is working and focus less money and attention on what doesn't work. Mr. Barrett expressed he is open to any questions regarding the recommendation.

Ms. Moran thanked Mr. Barrett for his thorough review of the background and history related to the recommendation. Ms. Moran stated that any current contracts of the Partnership would continue to be followed and overseen by County staff.

Mr. Kusnierz provided a follow up statement to Mr. Barrett's comments. Mr. Kusnierz was previously appointed to the Unity Committee in the past. Mr. Kusnierz realized during that time that the efforts of the Unity Committee would not come to fruition. Mr. Kusnierz stated he is a signatory on today's recommendations. This is in the best interest of the residents of Saratoga County to have a unified economic development front considering the upcoming challenges on the international and national stages. Those challenges will need to be met with a financial house that is in order and provide the taxpayers with the most bang for their buck. Mr. Kusnierz added the framework of today's recommendation is an ideal path to accomplish those goals.

Mr. Ferraro asked if there has been discussion amongst the Board of Supervisors regarding the recommendation.

Mr. Barret shared that there has been tremendous discussion about the Partnership's viability for the future. These talks have been ongoing since 2019 when the roles were redefined to eliminate competition. Mr. Barrett expressed that over the past couple years the Partnership is continuing to have to regroup and move forward after major changes. At this point, it appears there is no path forward and now is the time to move forward in a different direction.

Mr. Bulger offered a motion that the board accepts the recommendation in the letter received from the County Board of Supervisors with the expectation that Dunn strategies and County personnel will work together to get this implemented by March 31<sup>st</sup> and bring this to fruition.

Ms. Moran opened to the floor to any other comments or questions.

Mr. Ferraro asked if there would be efforts to pursue the elimination of the Partnership at the state level through the home rule process.

Mr. Barrett shared there is no recommendation to pursue the elimination of the Partnership through the home rule process in the correspondence. Mr. Barrett expressed the timing of this process may not be achievable due to the timing of state processes.

Mr. DeVito asked what will happen with any ongoing tasks of the Partnership.

Mr. Barrett expressed that any processes or tasks would be completed by County staff in the Planning and Economic Development department.

Mr. Kusnierz expressed he would like to follow up on Mr. Ferraro's question. Currently, the state is in the process of redistricting and the legislature will be pursuing budget negotiations shortly. Mr. Kusnierz believes the current time constraint and tasks needed to present the needed legislation at the state level is not possible at this time.

Mr. Ferraro asked when the home rule process would be pursued.

Mr. Barrett shared there is no recommendation to pursue that at this time and the Board of Supervisors would need to approve that decision. If everything was in place to pursue home rule legislation, it could hypothetically be accomplished next year or the year after that.

Mr. Kusnierz added that he is not aware of any conversations regarding the Partnerships elimination through the home rule process.

Ms. Moran thanked the board members for the information and background they were able to provide.

Mr. Barrett added that he would like to thank Mr. Dunn for stepping in under difficult circumstances. Mr. Barrett also thanked Mr. Bulger and Mr. Rose for assisting Mr. Dunn over the past six months and getting the board to this point where they were able to make a decision. Mr. Barrett also thanked his fellow board members for the work they've put in.

Mr. Bulger expressed that he also would like to thank Mr. Dunn for his great work under the challenging circumstances. Mr. Bulger stated he would like to thank Mr. Ferraro as well for his service as Treasurer. It has not been easy with the pandemic coupled with the departure of staff.

Ms. Moran stated it appeared the board was ready to vote on Mr. Bulger's motion. This motion was seconded by Mr. Connors. On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Barrett made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Bulger. On a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.