

## LAKES REGION PLANNING COMMISSION

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**MINUTES**  
**LRPC COMMISSION MEETING**  
 Laconia Middle School - Multi-Purpose Room  
 Laconia, NH  
**March 28, 2011**

**PRESIDING:** Stan Bean

**CALL TO ORDER:** 6:00 p.m.

**QUORUM:** Yes

**COMMUNITIES PRESENT:** 12

**MEMBERS PRESENT:**

**REPRESENTATIVES:**

Nancy Teach (Andover)	Peter Bolster, Alton
John Cotton (Andover)	Dexter Hecifa, LRPA
David Kerr (Barnstead)	Francis Vardare, Barnstead
Robert Oram (Freedom)	Mark Scarano, GCEDC (Speaker)
Scott Dunn (Gilford)	Michael Capone, Bristol
Dick Waitt (Gilford)	Joe Denning, Bristol
Stanley Bean (Gilmanton)	Bob Ward, Sanbornton
Mitch Manseau (Hebron)	Denise Roy-Palmer, WEDCO
Warren Hutchins (Laconia)	Carmen Lorentz, BCEDC (Speaker)
William Bayard (Meredith)	Kathy Barnard, Wolfeboro
Herbert Vadney (Meredith)	Stacie Pope, Wolfeboro
Barbara Perry (Moultonborough)	Elizabeth Hackett, Gilmanton
Wayne Crowley (Northfield)	Samuel Perry, Moultonborough
Douglas Read (Northfield)	John O'Brien, Gilford
Pat Jones (Ossipee)	Sen. John Forsythe, District 4
Roger ter Kuile (Ossipee)	Jane Wood, BCEDC
Joseph Jesseman (Tilton)	Others

**1. Welcome and Introduction**

S. Bean called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. A motion to declare a quorum for the purpose of conducting business was made and unanimously approved. *M/S/P Waitt/Perry*. S. Bean welcomed everyone and asked those in attendance to introduce themselves.

**2. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the January 24, 2011 Commission meeting was made and unanimously approved. *M/S/P Hutchins/Waitt*

**3. Economic Development and Economic Forecast for the State of New Hampshire and the Lakes Region.**

The Planning Commission has been looking long term at economic development for a number of years, and at the last Board meeting the Commissioners expressed that they wanted to hear more about the facts regarding the current state of the New Hampshire economy, and what the trends are moving forward. They are also interested in knowing who is providing hands on assistance and trying to offer economic development in our region. K. Koulet introduced the speakers for the evening: Dennis Delay, Economist, New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies and New Hampshire Forecast Director, New England Economic Partnership; Mark Scarano, Executive Director, Grafton County Economic Development Council; and Carmen Lorentz, Executive Director, Belknap County Economic Development Council.

Speaker Dennis Delay gave an overview of the New Hampshire Center for Public Policy Studies and its mission to inform and educate, but not to advocate. His presentation touched on the following:

- The national economy is in recovery.
- The credit quality at the household and commercial levels is improving.
- The Federal Reserve Bank of Boston reports improving economic conditions in New England and is moderately positive going forward.
- Initial claims for unemployment compensation are down.
- Although the current period is called the "Great Recession" at the national and international level, New Hampshire had its great recession in the late 80's and early 90's, when companies such as Digital Equipment lost market share, followed by the collapse of the real estate market.
- Jobs lost in New England and New Hampshire from December 2007 to late 2009 were about 4 1/2 - 5%, while the national unemployment base fell about 6 1/2%.
- Job creation has been slower at the national, New England, and New Hampshire level.
- The Chairman of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston predicts it will be another four years before the level of jobs at the beginning of the recession is reached, and there will be a 2% increase in core inflation over that time period. He believes the current level of accommodation for monetary and fiscal policy is probably appropriate given the strength of the economy overall.
- Belknap County is powered by manufacturing, retail trade, and tourism.
- The 2007 CEDS cluster identified the types of industries to think about from an economic development perspective in the Lakes Region: (1) industries that are already here, but might be struggling, such as wood products, machinery and electrical equipment and appliances; (2) high technology industries that are present, but do not have a large presence, such as motion picture, sound recording, and telecommunications; and (3) other high paying, high value added industries that require workforce development efforts.
- There is evidence of stabilization in local real estate markets.
- Homes are being built in the Lakes Region, but not at the same rate as in the 80's.
- The relationship between rents and home value is getting close to normalcy.
- Foreclosures are still high, but slowing.
- There are reasons for optimism: corporations are profitable and balance sheets are strong, credit quality is improving, consumers are deleveraging, financial institutions are in good shape, exports will be strong because the U.S. is cost competitive in comparison to the rest of the world, when adjusted for the quality of the merchandise we export.
- Challenges ahead include oil prices, foreclosures, possible 5% drop in housing prices, state and local financing problems could be disruptive to national economy.
- New Hampshire is one of the most livable states in the country.
- Important industries for Belknap and Carroll County include leisure and hospitality, retail trade, healthcare and social assistance, arts, entertainment, and recreation.

- Limited data from the 2010 census was recently released. While the general population of the towns in the area has increased by 6,307, the school aged population (under 18) has decreased by 2,099. There are 9,729 additional housing units in the Lakes Region since 2000. The Hispanic and Latino population has increased by 549.

Mr. Delay talked about the governor's proposed budget, and its impact on local areas, including cut backs on catastrophic aid, school building aid, teacher retirement, police and fire retirement, and fixed revenue sharing.

J. Cotton asked Mr. Delay to clarify what Eric Rosengren of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston means by "the current level of accommodation from monetary and fiscal policy is appropriate". Mr. Delay explained that Mr. Rosengren is saying that the federal government has responded appropriately to stimulate the economy.

Senator Jim Forsythe reported on the House budget. Catastrophic and school building aid is back up close to where it was last year.

2. Mark Scarano, Executive Director of the Grafton County Economic Development Council (GCEDC), explained that there are four distinct labor markets in Grafton County: Upper Valley, Lebanon/Hanover area, Plymouth, Littleton, and Haverhill. Grafton County has grown faster than any other county in New Hampshire since 2001. Education and Health Services make up over 30% of the county's jobs. The manufacturing sector declined by 20% between 2002 and 2009. The GCEDC provides financing to businesses through grant writing and other sources, and is involved in a partnership between students and local businesses in northern Grafton County where students learn marketable skills, get involved in the community, and have the opportunity for future employment. GCEDC encourages entrepreneurship through its business incubator program, by providing assistance to start up businesses. The program has created 210 jobs since late 2006. GCEDC is currently partnering with Plymouth State University in creating an incubator called the Enterprise Center at Plymouth, which will provide existing or start up businesses with marketing, financial, sales skill development, and real estate assistance. The Enterprise Center has identified 149 Main St. as an ideal location, and there are plans underway to making the structurally sound building a two-story structure. The top floor will house incubator tenants, and the ground floor will offer service providers. As the enterprises graduate from the incubator every two to four years, they make way for other businesses. In addition, Mr. Scarano reported on the Main Street revitalization program in Ashland and Bristol. Bristol has been through the New Hampshire Charette programs, and has raised over \$1 million for downtown improvements and traffic calming measures. In closing, Mr. Scarano expressed concerns with the loss of clean jobs in the New Hampshire biomass industry, and called for some sort of focus by PSNH on the problem.

3. Carmen Lorentz, Executive Director of the Belknap County Economic Development Council introduced herself to the Commissioners. She is a New Hampshire native who has returned to Belknap County after having attended college and worked outside the state for over 10 years. She comes to BCEDC with considerable experience in public policy, working with foundations, and grant making. BCEDC is a resource for helping local businesses grow and expand, and persons looking for assistance should be sent her way. BCEDC partners with the Lakes Region Chapter of the Service Corporation of Retired Executives, to provide free technical, business planning, and other assistance. She explained some of the projects she has become involved with during the two week period she has been on the job, including assisting the committee working on the Colonial Theatre, securing grant funding for the Boys and Girls Club to purchase the Citizens Bank building for its permanent home, working on a business retention survey, and meeting with town administrators and governing bodies in Belknap County communities.

Representative Peter Bolster of Alton reported that The Belknap County Delegation authorized the \$1.5 million bond for Gunstock to move forward with an array of summer activities, including the longest zip line in the continental U.S., by a vote of 15-1. It is anticipated that the multiplier effect of those activities will produce between \$7 and \$9 million for the local economy. In addition, he noted another young lady was elected as the County Attorney. Representative Bolster expressed concerns with the cuts in the governor's budget that affect transportation infrastructure, social services, and public employees.

K. Koulet reported that the next Commission meeting is scheduled for April 25, and the annual meeting is scheduled for June 27. He notified town planners, Gunstock, and The Lakes Region Facility of Congressman Guinta's planned tour of our region with the EDA administrator from Philadelphia, and the opportunity for projects that meet EDA requirements to benefit from 50% financing. At the invitation of K. Koulet, Denise Roy Palmer, Executive Director of WEDCO, explained that WEDCO provides debt financing like other RPC's in the state and works with businesses and communities on specific tasks they are interested in.

In closing, Carmen Lorentz informed the Commission that BCEDC has \$12,000 in tax credits that are available for purchase until the end of March. Interested parties should contact the BCEDC office.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:40 p.m.