

STEBEN COUNTY AGRICULTURE, INDUSTRY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Special Meeting

Wednesday, January 21, 2026

8:30 a.m.

The Main Place, 251 Main Street

Hornell, New York

****MINUTES****

COMMITTEE: K. Michael Hanna, Chair Shannon Logsdon Kelly H. Fitzpatrick

STAFF: Jack K. Wheeler Tim Rosell

LEGISLATORS: Paul E. Van Caesele Debbie Shannon

ABSENT: Hilda Lando, Vice Chair Robert V. Nichols Michael Volino

OTHERS: Ed Flaitz, EDS Computers
Jill Staats, Deputy Director, Steuben County Industrial Development Agency
Valorie Whitehill, Hornell Partners for Growth
David Woolever, C&N Bank
Mike McCumiskey, Maple City Savings Bank
Todd Strong, First Heritage Credit Union
Phyllis Balliett, CSS Workforce NY
James Johnson, Executive Director, Steuben County Industrial Development Agency
Eddie Van Stine, Steuben County Public Information Specialist
Sean Boyer, Hornell Furniture Outlet and Hybrid Fitness
Mike Davidson, Davidson’s Furniture and Hornell Furniture Outlet
Mike Nisbet, City of Hornell Industrial Development Agency
Michael Herceg, REDEC/RRC
Lindsay Wolf, REDEC/RRC
Ashleigh Madison, IncubatorWorks
Dan Warriner, Clean Plus and Legislator – District 1
Bob Nixon, Diversity Matters 2 US, LLC
Kevin Peterson, President, Steuben County Conference & Visitors’ Bureau
John Buckley, Mayor, City of Hornell
Jessica Cleveland, Deputy Mayor, City of Hornell

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mr. Hanna called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. He stated the Legislature is aware of how businesses are critical to the economy of the County, and we are here today to listen and learn from you. This is the third roundtable meeting we have held, and we have learned a lot. Mr. Van Caesele stated thank you for coming and we appreciate you taking the time to join us. Communication is key and networking is important for any small business owner. It is important to keep communication open between small businesses and the County. This is an opportunity for you to share the things that the County can do to assist you with things that we are not currently doing.

Concerns/Issues

- Labor shortage
- Financial support
- Power/electric needs

- We do not have a good handle on power needs now and what the power needs will be going into the future.
- Infrastructure
 - What are they doing now and how long will it take?
- Minimum wage increases
- Cost of benefits for employees
 - Huge cost driver for business owners
- Building owners are not keeping up the property and are charging high rent
- Transportation
 - One cab company in the City of Hornell (only 3 – 4 drivers)
 - High cost (\$12 - \$15) to go three blocks
 - One bus service (HATS)
 - Difficulty finding and hiring drivers
- Housing
 - Need more traditional, single-family homes
 - Demand for homes in the \$300,000 - \$400,000 range

City of Hornell

- Provided assistance to small businesses through DRI and NY Main Street Grants
 - Lack of participation
 - Aging business owners
 - Lack of interest
 - Financial restrictions
 - Codes requirements/restrictions
- Short-term rentals are increasing
 - Addressing in City Codes
 - Requiring inspections every six months

Financing

The SBA (Small Business Administration) now has fees on loans. However, they are helpful for loans under \$150,000. The requirement is that the business must have 10 percent of the total cost of the loan. This is a good option for start-up businesses.

Tourism

- Steuben County is a respite destination for travelers
- Need to develop tourism around the needs of our residents.

CSS Workforce NY

- Eligible businesses can apply to get up to \$20,000 to offset the cost of wages
- Customized Training Funding
 - Provides businesses with opportunity to update the skills of one or more employees
 - Up to 50 percent of the cost of training may be available for reimbursement
- On-the-Job Funding
 - Provides businesses with the opportunity to improve the skillset of an individual employee or support the skill development of a “new hire”
 - Offset a portion of the wages during that identified training period
 - Up to 50 percent of the pay rate of each employee in training may be reimbursed for a maximum of \$2,000 per contract
- Annual job fair for the area and free for businesses to attend and set up

Mr. Van Caesele stated he will contact everyone after the meeting to continue to get the word out about the various programs that are offered. We will continue to market this information to small business owners to keep them involved and informed.

Suggestions for moving forward

- Hold another small business roundtable, or similar event, after-hours and/or via Zoom
- Vendor fair for businesses to attract workers
 - Online job fair planned for March/April to attract part-time/seasonal workers
 - Department of Labor will be doing more virtual job fairs
 - CSS Workforce NY holds an annual job fair; free for businesses to attend and set up
 - Hornell Partners for Growth holding annual job fair; free for any organization that wants to attend and set up

Ms. Fitzpatrick stated I think that one thing the County can do is aggressively market our area, not just for tourism, but simply as a great place to live. She stated she would like the Legislature to come up with priorities to promote the County and make it a great place to live. The County recently invested in the production of the View Point video and that promotes our area as a great place to live. Ms. Fitzpatrick stated we are seeing housing developments taking up green space and she would like to look at County land to provide greenspace and improve the environment. We must get local buy-in as well; we have to spend money here in order for our downtowns to thrive. Some additional items that she would like to discuss are transportation and high-speed internet. We also need to involve our local Chambers of Commerce.

Mr. Van Caesele commented AI will influence all businesses in the future. If there is no workforce, we may need to turn to AI, even though we don't want to. I believe that this technology will develop over the next 20 years.

Mr. Hanna thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature