

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

The Jefferson County Local Development Corporation held its board meeting on Thursday, May 1, 2025, in the board room at 800 Starbuck Avenue, Watertown, NY.

Present: Robert E. Aliasso, Jr., W. Edward Walldroff, Paul Warneck, William Johnson, Rob Aiken, Dr. Gregory A. Gardner, Lisa L’Huillier, Dawn Robinson, Charles Capone
Zoom: John Condino

Excused: David Converse

Absent: None

Also Present: Mark Wladis (Wladis Law Firm)

Staff Present: Marshall Weir, Jay Matteson, Lyle Eaton, Peggy Sampson, Robin Stephenson

- I. Call to Order:** Chairman Aliasso called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m.
- II. Pledge of Allegiance**
- III. Privilege of the Floor:** No one spoke.
- IV. Minutes:** Minutes of the meeting held on April 3, 2025 were presented. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Mr. Johnson, seconded by Mr. Aiken. All in favor. Carried.
- V. Treasurer’s Report:** Mr. Warneck reviewed the financials for the period ending April 30, 2025. He said that we didn’t budget anything for the workforce development or the events sponsorship line items in the Marketing Program, nor the dairy parade in the Ag Program, and there were expenses this month. He asked Mr. Eaton if it was an error that we didn’t budget for those line items. Mr. Eaton said he will look into it. Mr. Matteson said the dairy parade would be on his shoulders and indicated that he typically gets sponsors to cover those costs, or we’ll move money from the annual meeting if there is money left over. Mr. Warneck said he is not concerned about the cost, but normally, we budget an appropriation and estimated revenues. Chairman Aliasso said he has the same comment for the Manufacturing Program because we always seem to under budget and overspend.

A motion was made by Mr. Warneck to accept the financial report as presented, seconded by Mr. Walldroff. All in favor. Carried.
- VI. Committee Reports:** None.
- VII. Council Reports:**
 - a. Ag –** Mr. Matteson reported that immigration is a huge issue which is impacting the workforce in agriculture across the state and nation, and we have been involved in it here in Jefferson County. He said that we are a little bit involved behind the scenes to help develop a farm guest worker program. He and Ron Robbins have been involved in leading a group of people who are concerned that nothing is happening, but it needs to happen.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

Ag continued –

Mr. Matteson invited board members to attend Rotary as his guests on June 4th to hear Dr. Richard Stupp, from Cornell University, speak about the issue of foreign workers on our farms. He said on June 11th, he will have Alex Walsh, from Northeast Dairy Foods Alliance, speak about the Empire State Dairy Processing Revolution. He is excited about the dairy processing revolution and the opportunity for farms to grow here in New York State.

Mr. Matteson said that he continues to work on the upcoming dairy parade.

Mr. Matteson said that Mr. Weir asked him to attend two meetings on the MICRON/Semiconductor opportunities. He admits that he is somewhat of a skeptic on how much opportunity Jefferson County will see out of this, but he does believe we need to position ourselves to take advantage of this. He said the first meeting was with Ryan McMahon at the county board of legislators meeting. He said it was interesting to hear about his experience he had with getting Onondaga County positioned for MICRON. Some of the lessons were about the need for sites to offer, which were critical, and he is hoping we are able to do that here in Jefferson County. He said workforce development is going to be important, and there are roles for all the agencies and educational institutions to prepare the workforce.

Mr. Matteson said Mr. Weir asked him to attend a presentation by the GO-SEMI task force from Empire State Development regarding the semiconductor industry across the state. He said that he sat in on the site development subgroup and had a conversation with Eric Wagenaar, City of Watertown Manager, and said that DANC was there. He said one of the things he took away was establishing the conduit to the GO-SEMI group and getting information back to them about sites and resources that we have. He said something that caught his attention, was that the thousands of construction workers who will need to find temporary homes. He said Onondaga County is facing that, and we can be one of those end destinations if we prepare ourselves. He said one of the things that was said yesterday is that they don't have parking room for all of those construction workers, so logistically, there needs to be a plan to get them to the site. He said we have bus services that could position themselves to help take advantage of that. He said that he is a little bit more excited about it, but still a skeptic, but a lot more excited about the opportunity. He said there is a lot of work to do, and we need to move as quickly as possible, and in the end, his perspective is that the investment is worth it, whether it's for MICRON or it will benefit something else.

Mr. Warneck said we had an energy ad hoc committee meeting and one of the things they talked about was trying to direct projects to appropriate locations and we've all been concerned about ag land usage for solar and now we have this increased demand for land to meet agriculture needs for these plans and wondered if it is going to increase our concern on solar development on agricultural lands. Mr. Matteson said it does increase his concern for protecting agricultural land. He said it is part of the equation, and he can be that person who will say we need to look at this site versus this site because of prime ag land versus marginal ag land. He said that we need to make sure that we balance the two because we have two huge opportunities in NY – dairy and semiconductors, and we need to make sure we are balancing the needs of both.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

Ag continued –

Mr. Walldroff said we may not be able to get the solar out with the demand for capacity. He said if you look at all the grid system right now, every three-phase line in Jefferson County, with the exception of one or two, are already full and can't handle any more. He said even with the new build-out the projects that are on the ground right now are going to fill the capacity. He said there won't be room unless a new transmission line is built from the southern part of the county to Oswego.

Strategic Development Specialists, LLC Presentation – Mark Wladis (Wladis Law Firm) said that we retained SDS to help us with the MICRON project. He said MICRON is definitely coming. He said MICRON has talked to the president, and the staff said they are on board and may tweak the CHIPS bill a little bit, and Governor Hochul is putting a ton of money into MICRON. He said Onondaga County will have more money into it than you can even fathom. He said MICRON puts a pin where they are building, and they draw a 100-mile radius, and Jefferson County is right there. He said Jefferson County is positioned well for a tertiary supplier or two and housing. He said not to lose sight of housing because it is very important. He said when they talk to the building trades, they are saying they are going to have 4,500 people working on that project. He said we don't have 4,500 building trades with the Interstate 81 and Turning Stone projects and everything else going on. He said the people will come from other parts of the country to come here to do work. He said Onondaga County doesn't have the housing. He did note that their housing prices are booming, and we are going to boom next. He said we are so well-positioned to do this.

Attorney Wladis said there is a working group made up of Mr. Weir, Ryan Piche (Jefferson County Administrator), William Johnson (Jefferson County Board of Legislature Chairman), Assemblyman Scott Gray, and Dan Dupee (Jefferson Community College). He said they have had a number of meetings and try to meet every month. He said one of the things that came up was tourism.

Attorney Wladis mentioned Greg Lancet, who is head of the Central NY-Northern NY building trades, who is the guy that goes directly to the governor and helped MICRON come to NY, and has been very strong in helping Jefferson County behind the scenes. He said that Greg came to us and said he has 3,000 people coming here from across the country and wondered what they will do on the weekends. Attorney Wladis said they held a meeting with Corey Fram to talk about tourism and what we could do as a group to get them up here and expose all these people to Jefferson County and all we have to offer. He said they came up with four different tourism items: 1) a fishing trip (6/20 in Henderson Harbor) for the building trades, 2) a wine tour, 3) a family day at Boldt Castle, and 4) a Dry Hill ski night. He said they are going to do a dry run of these events. He said there is a meeting on 5/21 with the building trades to present what we are doing and use their local guys as the guinea pigs as the people this year, so if we have a hiccup, we fix it for the out-of-town people.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

Strategic Development Specialists, LLC Presentation continued –

Mr. Aiken asked if a PLE agreement had been done. Attorney Wladis said it was signed a year ago. He said he doesn't believe they picked a construction firm yet. He said they are working with Assemblyman Gray, who hands out his executive summary in Albany, which is very positive, and he has been helpful across the lines and educates the governor's staff. He said one of the most important things they are doing is working with the County to try to find sites. He said it's not just sites for tertiary suppliers – they have to bring in a lot of stuff by airplane and ships. He said our airport is primarily positioned as long as we can get some warehouse space. He said the Ogdensburg Port Authority is well-positioned for the ships coming in from overseas. He said it helps Jefferson County because there are more hotels, and they will fill up their gas and eat in Jefferson County. He said they are working on a site map right now, and it will be shared with board members, the governor's staff, MICRON, Ryan McMahon, and site selectors when it's done to show them what we have to offer. He said the idea is to get a tertiary supplier. He said they are trying to expand because we don't have a lot of housing developers up here. They brought in a group from Syracuse that works with housing developers. He said to continue the discussion with them to see what else we can do and identify some sites.

Attorney Wladis said they have reviewed several marketing documents that are being put together to entice the supply chain companies servicing MICRON to locate here. He said they are going to keep pushing the building trades. He said tourism is a great place to start until we get a tertiary supplier.

Ms. L'Huillier asked how competitive the other neighboring counties are. He said there is another county trying to compete, but he said they are not as user-friendly as Jefferson County is. He said that we are very fortunate in the team that we have. Attorney Wladis said we have a tremendous opportunity with the City of Watertown because it is a very walkable city. Ms. L'Huillier said the planning department has, over the years, been focusing on the river, the trails, and downtown housing (i.e., the Globe building will have market-rate apartments). Attorney Wladis said that we have a very good newspaper in the sense that the governor looks at the Watertown Daily Times, as did past governors; he said it is a very well-read paper in Albany.

Mr. Warneck asked if getting permits and sewer and water distribution approved through DEC would be less restrictive in order not to drag it out for years for these developments. Attorney Wladis said that he can help us with that when the time comes. Mr. Matteson said the Region 6 DEC director was at the meeting yesterday, and he encouraged as much as possible to work with DEC in advance of proposing a project on a site to get preapprovals done as much as possible.

Mr. Walldroff said the real demand is going to be for rural building lots for higher-value homes. He said the values are coming in at \$20,000 an acre, and farmers are going to start selling land fast and furious. Mr. Weir said that regarding the housing, there are a couple of spots that we have identified for housing development in the southern part of the county, and one of them specifically has infrastructure and is pretty well positioned there.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

Strategic Development Specialists, LLC Presentation continued –

Mr. Warneck said years ago, there was a county-wide water district study done tying all the smaller plants together to create a county-wide water district. He said it might be worth pulling that out to see how it would play into it.

Ms. Robinson said that she is really excited that President Dupee is part of the team. She asked what plans he has for the tourism aspect, as far as the educational side. Attorney Wladis said they have not discussed that in the group. Ms. Robinson said it should be worth discussing to see where the college could help out. Attorney Wladis said President Dupee is very forward-thinking and he brings a lot to the table. Mr. Weir agreed and said he has been proactive and helpful. He said for education, he feels like President Dupee is gathering the facts and how best to react. He said it's been more about how to serve the MICRON project itself so far. Ms. Robinson said it will help the region's community that is living here now with employment and economic development.

Chairman Aliasso said Jefferson County is the newest marine sanctuary that the federal government awarded. He said it is supposed to attract additional tourism and money, and there could be a visitors center and museum.

Attorney Wladis said that he has never seen a group pull together and all be moving in the same direction as our working group.

Mr. Walldroff asked if the group is trying to solve the housing issue. He mentioned the 801 housing that was created as a result of the army base that used taxpayer dollars to build those apartment units, and today they are privatized and accommodate a lot of the population. Attorney Wladis said NYS can help, but we have to get the developers first.

Attorney Wladis left the meeting at 8:44 a.m.

b. Manufacturing – No report.

c. Marketing – Mr. Weir reported that he attended the River Area Council of Governments meeting yesterday, which was put on by the Tug Hill Commission. He said the focus was on economic visioning, and he was a presenter.

VIII. Unfinished Business:

- 1. ARPA Fund Reports (Round One and Two) –** Updated spreadsheets showing the grant fund activities were provided in the board packet. Ms. Stephenson said reimbursements are being made, and we may see more activity next month as grant recipients finish their projects.

IX. Counsel: None.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

X. New Business:

1. ARPA Small Business Productivity Improvement Grant Recommendation –

The Scrub Hub, LLC \$4,744

Mr. Stephenson said the grant will increase their productivity for on-site sales at hospitals. They will be purchasing a computer and new racks. Mr. Weir said the racks were initially hard to justify until they described it to us more about the way they deploy offsite and how much easier and quicker it gets set up.

A motion was made by Mr. Warneck to approve the recommendation, seconded by Ms. Robinson. All in favor. Carried.

XI. Adjournment: With no further business before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Walldroff, seconded by Mr. Johnson. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:49 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Sampson