

**Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation
Appointed Directors Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

The Appointed Directors of the Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation held their board meeting on Thursday, May 1, 2025 in the board room at 800 Starbuck Avenue, Watertown, NY.

Present: Lisa L'Huillier, Robert Aiken, William Johnson
Zoom: John Condino

Excused: Paul Smith, David Converse

Absent: Joseph Cook

Also Present: Marshall Weir, Jay Matteson, Peggy Sampson, Robin Stephenson
Zoom: Sarah Bullock (Town of Wilna), Susan Caruvana and Lisa Nagle (EDR Consultants), Todd Poole (4Ward Planning)

I. Call to Order: Mr. Weir called the meeting to order at 9:26 a.m.

Mr. Weir introduced the attendees who joined via Zoom.

II. Minutes: Minutes of the meeting held on March 6, 2025 were not voted on.

III. Committee Reports: None.

IV. Unfinished Business:

- 1. Brownfield Opportunity Area (BOA) update** – Sarah Bullock made introductions. She said she is from the Town of Wilna, Lisa Nagle and Susan Caruvana are from EDR, the consultants that were selected through the process for BOA funding to do a nomination study, and Todd Poole from 4Ward Planning, who is a subcontractor working with EDR to do the market strategies.

Lisa Nagle shared some PowerPoint presentation slides and provided a project status update. She said they have had steering committee meetings, a tour, and said there will be one more public workshop, which will probably be a virtual survey this summer. The final nomination and application designation will occur in early Fall 2025. One slide was for the framework plan, which includes environmental conditions, physical conditions, planning issues, and economic issues, and another slide shared the vision and goals for each framework plan. She said Todd has been part of the team doing some analysis, and he will share his presentation. She said they are setting the framework for BOA so we can get additional dollars in the future.

Todd Poole said his role was to perform a market analysis and then, ultimately, based on findings from the market analysis, show market opportunities that the community might take advantage of, depending on what their interest is for land use. He said they started out by becoming familiar with the area, which they were able to walk last year. They looked at different geographies for the market analysis for comparison purposes.

Susan Caruvana joined the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

**Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation
Appointed Directors Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

BOA update continued –

Key Findings

Socio-Economic Trends Analysis:

Relatively young regional population in the primary market area – He said this is being influenced by Fort Drum.

High entertainment and recreation spending levels in the state - He said that because of the recreational nature, they identified that there is high entertainment and recreation spending levels. He said people want to spend money on experiences rather than on things.

Affordable rental housing appealing to cost-burdened households – He said, like everywhere else in the country, affordable housing is a challenge, but there is opportunity in land. He said building of smaller housing would be well received in this area.

Residential Real Estate:

Shortage of small housing units, relative to household size – He said there is a seasonal housing demand.

Demand for between 18 to 365 units by 2032 - He said this is the North Country, so outdoor recreation is a thing.

Non-Residential Real Estate:

Outdoor recreation market in the North Country region – He said that some of the opportunities they identified and did research involved looking at the development of glamping facilities and meeting the needs of ecotourism.

Agriculture and food production is a targeted sector in the county – He said that they looked at agriculture and food production, more particularly, aquaponics, as well as hydroponics.

Logistics/warehousing uses in demand along I-81 corridor – He said that they looked at logistics/warehouse uses, unfortunately, given the location of the site, it is not a light industrial warehousing location too far off the beaten path, so that was ruled out.

Competitive Inventory:

Glamping (luxury camping) businesses in NYS – He said there are more folks discovering it and more small businesses catering to it, and we have the property to do it. He said to keep in mind it is seasonal, but could be a good revenue generator.

Tiny Home rental communities in the state (300 to 400 square feet) – He said this phenomenon has also been growing and has a strong following, and could be used seasonally. He said there are developers that have built tiny house villages (15 to 20) because they are not overwhelming in size, and they don't need to connect to a public water/sewer system and can be stationary or portable.

**Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation
Appointed Directors Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

BOA update continued –

Aquaponic Fish Farms & Greenhouses – He said that they talked about what could be produced and where it could be sold. He highlighted the competitive areas where it is currently taking place, which are pretty far away.

He provided a matrix identifying what the opportunities are for a Tiny Home Community, Glamping Business & Facility, and Aquaponic Fish Farm & Aquaponic Greenhouse for market opportunity, competitive supply, and what we think can be captured locally. He said these are not the only opportunities to do something with the grounds, but they feel they are compelling and also would be complementary to what is currently at Deferiet, without overwhelming the community.

Ms. Nagle said all of the information that Todd shared will be in the report as an appendix but will also be summarized in the body of the document. She shared an implementation matrix they put together. It covers the description of the next steps, who the project champion is, potential partners, and funding. She said they went through it in detail with the committee. She highlighted what they think the DRC can be doing (i.e. continue to partner with EPA, establish funding mechanisms for remediation funding, continue to partner with NYS DOS, etc.)

Ms. L’Huillier left the meeting at 9:48 a.m.

Ms. Nagle highlighted other areas, such as establishing an inter-agency working group and implementing the 2023 Restore NY grant. She asked if we are working with DANC on that grant. Mr. Weir said DANC is the applicant. He said our day-to-day with them is minimal until the site has been remediated. He said he received an update from Jacob Jacques recently that everything is going smoothly and expects the remediation to be completed by Fall.

Ms. Nagle said that once there is a clearer picture of what buildings are staying, remaining or remediation, the DRC can do a hyper-focused reuse plan for those lands, and she said that is something the DOS could fund in that next step (the village/town would have to be the applicant). Two other areas of the matrix that were highlighted were to partner with federal, state, and local agencies to educate the public and potential developers about different funding incentives, and prepare a market feasibility study to become an outdoor recreation and tourism destination.

She said that she added a recommendation to do a dissolution study for the village and the town, which is also fundable from the DOS.

Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation
Appointed Directors Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025

BOA update continued –

DRC Next Steps

1. Prepare Business Plan and Budget
2. Hire PT Staff (or use JCLDC staff)
3. Seek BOA Implementation Grant for Detailed DRC-owned Master Plan (Village or Town must be the applicant)
4. Prepare a targeted Market Feasibility Study/Reuse Plan/Fiscal Impact Analysis for DRC-owned lands
 - a. Begin with identified opportunities in BOA Nomination Study and General Framework Plan
 - b. Consider integrating Brownfield Tax Credits, Historic Tax Credits, and Housing Tax Credits in Market Study
5. Establish Ground Lease Program to generate revenue
6. Establish Inter-Agency Working Group and schedule 2-4 meetings per year
7. Obtain EPA Assessment Funding

Ongoing – coordinate with DANC on implementing the Restore NY grant.

She said these were the immediate next steps they saw for the DRC, and then thinking about how to resource it (i.e. money for staffing to do these plans, the ground lease, and getting grants)

Todd left the meeting at 9:56 a.m.

Ms. Nagle shared some images of the study area. The land ownership map shows the DRC-owned lands, privately owned lands, and lands identified by Barton & Loguidice as restrictive and potential environmental conditions. She said they were playing around with trails. They were looking at village owned properties in terms of reuse and the baseball field and the gateway over by the current park. They were looking at areas where glamping, destination RV's or tiny homes could happen. She said they talked about a Microgrid potentially for energy. She said that she is hopeful that this gives a good direction where the actual improvement could potentially take place, but an environmental investigation will still have to be done.

Mr. Aiken asked how community participation has been up to this point. Ms. Nagle showed a slide for next steps:

- EDR to facilitate a Public Workshop or Virtual Study to gather feedback on BOA recommendations (Summer 2025)
- Finalize draft BOA nomination and share with BOA Steering Committee for review (Summer 2025)
- Submit Draft BOA Nomination for Village of Deferiet, Town of Wilna, and NYS DOS review (Summer 2025)
- Town Board to adopt BOA Nomination and submit to the NYS Secretary of State (Fall 2025)
- SEQR (Fall 2025)
- Designation by NYS Secretary of State (2026)
- Apply for implementation funding via NYS Consolidated Funding Application (Summer 2026)

**Deferiet Redevelopment Corporation
Appointed Directors Board Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2025**

BOA update continued –

Ms. Nagle said the community participation thus far has been very lackluster and indicated that Ms. Bullock actually went door to door with the last survey. She said they are open to recommendations. Ms. Bullock said it has been a struggle. She said the committee started off very strong and had some participation from the community (the mayor, a trustee and a couple of residents), but as time went on, participation continued to decrease. She said the community was aware of it initially. She said it would be good if there were a way to partner with a community activity. She said the most engagement they had was when she attended an ice cream social to tell them about the project and get their feedback. She said it should be done again, whether it be a chicken BBQ or an ice cream social. She believes a good opportunity would be the community picnic they have in June or July.

Mr. Aiken asked if they have good marketing material for those types of events. She said yes, they have the BOA website and used a lot of those materials. Ms. Nagle said that she will send the implementation matrix to the DRC group to get feedback. Mr. Weir said that he will share it and get feedback. Ms. Bullock said that she reports on the progress to the Town of Wilna every month. She said the DRC group is going to be pivotal to what happens with the site going forward, once the demolition is finalized and the Restore NY project is finished. Ms. Bullock said it is a small community and it's hard to get an engaged group to sit down and buy-in and noted that it's not the same community – Deferiet used to be all families, people who knew each other and were all related to the Mill, and that is not the case anymore. She said it's a somewhat transient community because there are a lot of Fort Drum soldiers who come in for a couple of years, and they don't have the buy-in to the community that others might, so getting engagement is difficult. Mr. Aiken asked if anyone from the base is on the committee. Ms. Bullock said no. Ms. Nagle said they do have a gentleman from Tug Hill who is retired military. Ms. Bullock said that he is also working to update the comprehensive plan for the Town of Wilna and the Villages of Deferiet and Carthage. Ms. Nagle said that he and the planning director at Tug Hill have rewritten the village's zoning ordinance because all of the plans were showing industrial. She said if the village adopts it, the zoning will be changed and in place for the DRC to move forward with these properties.

Mr. Weir said that if he hears anything about the remediation process from DANC, he will report. Ms. Nagle said the plan can be updated when the post office is officially gone or if anything else changes.

V. New Business: None.

VI. Adjournment: With no further business before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Aiken, seconded by Mr. Johnson. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Peggy Sampson