

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2026**

The Jefferson County Local Development Corporation held its board meeting on Thursday, February 5, 2026, in the board room at 800 Starbuck Avenue, Watertown, NY.

Present: Robert E. Aliasso, Jr., William Johnson, Paul Warneck, John Condino, Rob Aiken, Dr. Gregory A. Gardner, W. Edward Walldroff, David Converse
Zoom: Dr. Dawn M. Robinson

Excused: Lisa L’Huillier, Charles Capone

Absent: None

Also Present: Ryan Piche (Jefferson County Administrator)
Zoom: Justin Miller, Esq. (Harris Beach), Craig Fox (Watertown Daily Times)

Staff Present: Marshall Weir, Jay Matteson, Dorena Kimball, 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 January 8, 2026 were presented. A motion to approve the minutes as presented was made by Mr. Aiken, seconded by Dr. Gardner. All in favor. Carried.
- V. Treasurer’s Report:** Mr. Warneck reviewed the financials for the period ending January 31, 2026. He mentioned that Ms. Kimball added a page to the financials related to loan balances and payoff information. A motion was made by Mr. Warneck to accept the financial report as presented, seconded by Mr. Converse. All in favor. Carried.
- VI. Committee Reports:** None.
- VII. Council Reports:**
 - a. Ag – Mr. Matteson reported on the following:**
 - **Annual Ag Conference** – to be held on March 27th at the Hilton Garden Inn.
 - o First presentation – Richard Ball, NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets Commissioner – speaking on agriculture economic development efforts in NYS.
 - o Second presentation – Dr. Todd Schmitt – will give an update on the analysis of the economic impact of agriculture on Jefferson, Lewis, St. Lawrence and Oswego counties.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2026**

Ag Council Report – continued

- Panel of three presentations which will focus generally on the impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on agriculture. Panelists will be:
 - i. Dr. Julio Giordano, expert at Cornell University on the use of AI in animal health.
 - ii. Kelsey O’Shea, American Dairy Northeast, grassroots level on how farms can use ChatGPT to improve their messaging to the community to help them make decisions.
 - iii. Paul Barton, Barton Consulting Group, LLC, will be talking about AI with a broader view on what the developments in AI are and how it will impact business decision making processes going forward.
 - Break for lunch
 - Town hall discussion for any topic in agriculture involving the speakers.
 - **ARPA Grant Recipient** – Northrop Farms expressed their appreciation for the grant they received to purchase equipment that significantly improved their efficiency to easily move the animals that are contracted out to solar farms.
 - **Agrivoltaics** – the state senate has legislation that they are considering that defines agrivoltaics and they are talking about removing sheep from agrivoltaics. Mr. Matteson said that he will follow that discussion.
- b. Manufacturing** – Mr. Weir said he had the opportunity to participate with the JLI manufacturing day event recently. He said they visited Knowlton Technologies and New York Air Brake (NYAB). He said Knowlton is going strong and was having new equipment installed and noted that NYAB is bringing a new manufacturing line to Watertown from their commercial division which will create ten jobs with the possibility of adding more with the success of the line.
- c. Marketing** – Ms. Stephenson said there has been a good response to our most recent newsletter and that we will be working on marketing this spring.

Mr. Weir said that the Jefferson County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy is being phased out and replaced with a strategic plan for the county.

Mr. Matteson mentioned that he will be scheduling a workshop for public relations/public image and dealing with the news media.

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 we hope to have the money expedited before the end of the year. Chairman Aliasso said we could market it since there is an uncommitted balance and can move the funds around if there is a greater need for one of the categories. Staff agreed.

**Jefferson County Local Development Corporation
Board Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2026**

- 2. Childcare Training Contract Amendment with JCC and OCC** – Ms. Stephenson explained that the previous agreement was based on individual cohorts but now they are using ongoing enrollments and using the grant money to advertise. She said the dates have been extended to December 2026. A motion was made by Mr. Warneck to approve the amendment, seconded by Mr. Condino. All in favor. Carried.
- 3. Board Strategic Session** – Ms. Stephenson said the strategic session will be held on March 25th at the Hilton Garden Inn from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

IX. Counsel: None.

X. New Business: None.

XI. Adjournment: With no further business before the board, a motion to adjourn was made by Mr. Aiken, seconded by Dr. Gardner. All in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 8:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Peggy Sampson