

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES – JANUARY 25, 2022

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS
PRESENT: Griffith, Campbell, Hicks, O'Brien, Shaw, Skellie, Ferguson

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS
ABSENT: None.

SUPERVISORS: Hall, Henke, Fedler, Clary

Debra Prehoda, Clerk of the Board

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director

Melissa Fitch, County Administrator

Al Nolette, County Treasurer

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Accept Minutes – November 23, 2021
- 3) 2021 Review – HVADC, Todd Erling
- 4) 2021 Review – LCLGRP, Beth Gilles
- 5) Other Business
- 6) Adjournment

Chairman Griffith called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

A motion to accept the minutes of the November 23, 2021 meeting was moved by Mr. O'Brien, seconded by Mr. Skellie, and adopted.

2021 REVIEW – Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation (HVADC), Todd Erling, Executive Director, presented a report to Washington County on HVADC 2021 Activities, attached. Historically, they have worked with individual businesses in Washington County and also work with other counties with their incubator without walls program and have had an accelerator program with some businesses. Some of the businesses that they have had a historical relationship with include the following: Battenkill Fibers – Mary Jean Packard, working with some generational transfer matters with Booths Blend Compost, Comfort Food Community and Kilcoyne Farms – meat processing facility. They do have a loan fund and the Hudson Valley Bounty program which matches farms and market opportunities (farm to table matchmaking program). They issue a monthly newsletter, The Cultivator, that has included articles on various Washington County businesses – Locust Grove Smokehouse, Battenkill Fibers, Lavenlair Farm and Argyle Cheese Farmer. Work on regional opportunities and at the federal level addressing leadership. The Economic Development Director requested a resolution to extend the HVADC contract. A motion to extend contract for three years with Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corporation and request waiver from the Procurement Policy was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. Skellie, O'Brien, and Ferguson, and adopted.

2021 REVIEW – Lake Champlain Lake George Regional Planning Board (LCLGRP), Beth Gilles, Director, presented a 2021 Summary of Activities – Washington County, attached. Highlighted items accomplished in 2021, authored 35 grants and secured \$5.2M, working on broadband, four loans made to Washington County businesses in 2021 totaling \$268,000 in capital and nine Washington County loans in their portfolio totaling \$842,000 in capital. The Treasurer stated under Chairman O'Brien's and Beth Gilles, Director, leadership the LCLGRP have stabilized the operating fund going from \$180,000 in operating funds in 2018 to about \$500,000 as of 12/31/21 and congratulated them on their work. The Economic Development Director praised the LCLGRP for their significant help.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Laura Oswald, Economic Development Director, addressed the following items:

- Broadband – Previously had a presentation from ECC on the final report but were lacking a list of unserved by address and the LCLGRP stepped up with the funding to get this data. The town of Easton was also gathering data on unserved addresses which was sent to Slic and Slic contacted the Economic Development Director due to differences with the data collected by ECC. She plans to send each of the towns the data which is the addresses as provided by ECC to ensure the actual physical address is correct and then compare the two list to get a more accurate list and be better prepared for the next round of funding. The State budget has earmarked \$1B for the Connect All program to subsidize and create affordable internet and fund new infrastructure. Program announcements will probably not start until next year but she wants Washington County prepared as possible with lists of those unserved.
- Tourism – Trying to address the possibility of executing an agreement with Vrbo to start doing voluntary occupancy tax collection but they have declined to enter into an agreement with Washington County however they are aware that there is some legislation that is pending at the state level that might require them on a statewide basis to collect occupancy tax. The Governor's proposed budget did include a vacation rental sales tax collection requirement and Vrbo and Airbnb's would have to collect state and local sales tax. Also proposed is an additional \$1.50 fee to be collected for convention center in NYC and unsure if it applies to all rental properties across the state or just the city.
- Washington County Fair – The stimulus committee and this committee have discussed the possibility of supporting the Washington County Fair with their infrastructure, septic/waste water and broadband needs. The Economic Development Director has worked with them on an application for funding but they were not successful in securing the funding. There is some federal funding left but requires some preliminary elements such as engineering, etc. which the fair believes they have but in this funding application the non-profit can apply for it but it has to be in cooperation with a municipality and the available funds are between \$100,000 to \$10M and requires a 20% match and she has informed the fair that they would have to commit to the match. This would require a resolution or letter from the County stating that the fair is acting in cooperation with a municipal entity, the County, and the application and cost would all remain the fair's responsibility. The County would basically be stating we are working with the fair and we support the project. A motion to support the fair in the application for funding that requires in cooperation with a municipality, the County, as presented was moved by Mr. Campbell and seconded by Messrs. O'Brien, Shaw, and Ferguson. Discussion. The Economic Development Director is waiting to get specifics from the fair and there are two things they are looking at including broadband and septic and wastewater system and have the engineering for the wastewater and noted there may be more projects and she has to confirm with the fair. This is EDA funding. With federal funding allocated it would help the fair recover from COVID and need to invest in infrastructure. Chairman Griffith stated the motion to be the lead for the Washington County fair for this 80/20 grant project outlined by the Economic Development Director was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Messrs. O'Brien, Shaw, and Ferguson, and adopted.

Mask Mandate – Tim Hardy, Deputy Public Safety Director, stated as a follow up to the mask mandate issued by the Governor and mentioned at the Government Operation committee meeting stating that it is going to the appellate division this afternoon and the mandate applies to all not just schools. From a Public Health aspect right now, they are continuing to advise everyone that they should be following the CDC guidance which recommends masking in indoor public spaces.

Chairman Griffith displayed the new flyer promoting our region and praised the marketing team for a great job. This is a good presentation of information. Flyers are available to take back to town halls. The Economic Development Director stated a distribution fulfillment company was hired to put the flyer in some rest stops.

Next month's meeting will focus on a year-end summary of tourism and review the budget and activities for this year.

The meeting adjourned at 2:04 P.M.

Debra Prehoda, Clerk
Washington County Board of Supervisors

Report to Washington County on HVADC 2021 Activities

Program Goals

To enhance the agricultural sector in Washington County by assisting both new and existing agri-businesses and supporting policies and regulations that recognize and support the Hudson Valley's agricultural economy. Our services are designed to promote Washington County as an integral part of the Hudson Valley as an attractive, viable region for agriculture and to foster growth and development of the agricultural sector through a creative program or marketing, promotion and the provision and coordination of financial and other resources.

Scope of Services

- 1.) Technical assistance to farmers and farm-related/farm-dependent businesses applying for funding or implementing awards from various public and private sources to include but not limited to USDA Value Added Grant, USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grants, SBA, EDA, NYS Consolidated Funding Applications, etc.
- 2.) Business planning services to local farmers and farm-related/farm-dependent businesses seeking to diversify production.
- 3.) Business expansion counseling to a local farmers and farm-related/farm-dependent businesses seeking to add process capacity and expand operations to make room for next generation.
- 4.) New farm and farm-related/farm-dependent businesses referrals for site search selection opportunities to locate in the county.
- 5.) Referrals to Washington County of viable agribusiness projects for consideration of funding support.
- 6.) Representation and technical support to ensure farms and farm-related/farm-dependent business interests are included in NYS Regional Economic Development Councils' plans and implementation.
- 7.) Local farm product sourcing for Hudson Valley Harvest, Field Goods and other regional commercial and institutional buyers.
- 8.) Development and promotion of farm and local business sourcing to support agri/culinary-tourism and educate the community members and markets of the role local sourcing plays in economic development through the Hudson Valley Bounty Program and regional branding.

HVADC

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HVADC 2021 Programming Updates

Incubator Without Walls (IWW)

Incubator without Walls is a key feature of HVADC where new and existing agriculture-related businesses apply to receive individualized assistance. Qualified businesses that are admitted into our IWW program can tap into a wide range of services to accelerate their growth and increase their chances of long-term success. These services can include business and financial planning, value-added infrastructure services, financing and networking. Through IWW, HVADC has been able to assist over 270 farms and businesses since 2007. The various types of services HVADC has provided through IWW include general business planning, strategic planning for growth and development, financial analysis, marketing and promotion through print, media, Facebook and Twitter, project planning, matchmaking services (i.e. referrals for consumer/chefs to appropriate farm businesses), food safety certification/planning and permitting.

Applicants to the program complete an in-take form to provide basic information about their business. HVADC staff then meets with the applicant to review and conduct an assessment of their needs. Upon completion of the assessment, HVADC develops an individualized program of services for the client. This process results in a highly effective and timely delivery of services designed to accommodate the varying schedules and availability of our clients.

IWW Clients

Battenkill Fibers; Mary Jean Packer; Greenwich

This fiber mill is ready to begin the transition to its next owner/operator. Mary Jean came to HVADC in need of valuation services in order to document the equipment and business worth. This documentation was prepared by Rose Wilson and has been successfully completed.

Booth's Blend Compost; JoAnne and R. Harry Booth; Greenwich

This composting and cattle business needed access to BTA for transition of their business and estate to the next generation. Booth's Blend Compost is now successfully transferred to their son, Kevin Booth. JoAnne and R. Harry Booth remain officers of the Corporation and are continuing to assist though they do not own the Corporation. They also have an active land holding LLC now and an irrevocable trust which will assist them with transfer of land and other assets upon their deaths and protect the same from potential liens during their lives. This legal work has been successfully completed.

Comfort Clothweaving; Eric and Teegan Frisino; Greenwich

Eric and Teegan are interested in expanding this business to include fiber milling and not just weaving and distribution. They came to HVADC with hopes of receiving business technical assistance to secure necessary financing for this project and to guide their future plans. Brian Zweig is helping Eric develop a business plan and financial projections for the business.

Comfort Food Community; Devin Bulger; Greenwich

This non-profit has secured significant financing to start their Food Hub and agricultural support work space, but is looking for technical assistance to prepare documentation including a business plan and marketing analysis. Comfort Food Community is working with Brian Zweig and Donna Williams to further develop their business model.

Kilcoyne Farms; Cody Kilcoyne; Hudson Falls

Kilcoyne Farms is a family owned and operated business dedicated to providing customers with quality New York State beef. All cattle are New York State sourced and processed and contain no hormones or antibiotics. Retail sales began in June of 2005 to a very limited number of accounts. The business has grown from a small farm servicing only a few accounts, to a larger operation servicing many restaurants and institutions in the Adirondacks, Catskills, Hudson Valley, as well as the Green Mountains of Vermont. HVADC is working on planning and reviewing the business model with Kilcoyne including determining appropriate scale, financing and competition analysis.

Moxie Ridge; Lee Hennessey; Argyle

Lee's diversified livestock & creamery business realized they had missed out on federal dollars because of errors in their tax returns and documentation. They desperately needed help sorting out their accounting records and implementing new systems and received those services with CBH Business Services, Inc. Lee also requested assistance with the preparation of the Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center Marketing and Branding grant. Jim Gage, grant writer, worked with Lee and submitted a successful application. Moxie Ridge was awarded \$30K+ for marketing purposes. The work has been completed.

HVADC Agricultural Loan Fund

HVADC has been operating this fund since 2020 as an intermediary lender for the New York Job Development Authority (JDA), which operates under Empire State Development (ESD). The Agriculture Loan Fund Program is another tool to help provide access to capital for small agribusinesses that otherwise may face limited opportunities, not only supporting the success of these businesses but also improving the economic outlook for rural and surrounding communities.

Eligible borrowers of program funds include value-added processors, food distribution companies, food aggregators, wineries, breweries, distilleries, cider producers, farms and Food Hub participants. Projects qualifying for loans primarily include the purchase of machinery and equipment used in support of the New York State agricultural industry.

Application materials for the loan fund are available at <https://www.hvadc.org/hvadc-agriculture-loan-fund-program>.

Hudson Valley Bounty (HVB)

Hudson Valley Bounty (HVB) remains the region's most comprehensive local farm and food portal. HVADC continues to successfully use the Hudson Valley Bounty program to promote its farmer and chef members, including those in Columbia County. With an average of 2,000 site users per month, the website is actively providing consumer exposure to our nearly 500 business members.

Due to HVADC's multi-year investment in HVB, it is a well-recognized brand in the Hudson Valley. In addition to bringing producer-members important information such as grant opportunities and education/training sessions, we have developed a consumer-facing newsletter to alert the region to the many happenings at our farms and restaurants.

Participation in Hudson Valley Bounty is free, and farms and food businesses may submit their information at hudsonvalleybounty.com. As the region's go-to-resource for local food and farm offerings, Hudson Valley Bounty provides participants with exposure on its high-traffic website used by local consumers, tourists, chefs, farmers, wholesalers, and institutional buyers; the opportunity to be featured on Hudson Valley

Bounty social media, email newsletters, and blog; and access to Hudson Valley Bounty's curated newsletters containing information on grant and financing opportunities, training workshops, events, and opportunities to promote their business or sell their product.

The Cultivator

HVADC launched a monthly newsletter in 2017 that provides insights on the work we do, our clients, our partners and other information pertinent to the work we do with farms and food related businesses. The Cultivator has featured articles on several Washington County clients and partners in 2021 including Booth Blend Composting, Tiashoke Farms and Laura Oswald. Past articles include South Dominion Vineyard, Locust Grove Smokehouse, Battenkill Fibers, Agricultural Stewardship Association, Owl Wood Farm and Lavenlair Farm and Argyle Cheese Farmer for the SUNY Adirondack Business Plan competition. Please see HVADC's website (www.hvadc.org) to review past articles and to sign up to receive the **Cultivator** in your inbox.

Regional Opportunities for HVADC Partner Counties

HVADC staff participate in the opportunities and activities below in support of regional food systems and development of HVADC program offerings. Some activities offer direct opportunities for farms and food business in our footprints and others serve to raise awareness and promote the concept of business technical assistance for farm and food entrepreneurs. All are designed to enhance economic opportunity within the counties we serve.

Northern Border Regional Commission

HVADC is a founding member of a collaboration between the Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, The Carrot Project, The Joyce and Irving Goldman Family Foundation, The John Merck Fund, and more than 50 organizations that came together to create The Blueprint for New England and New York's Hudson Valley. This network applied for funding to pursue a project that advances the agricultural economy by launching an alliance of northeast agricultural business assistance providers (the Alliance), described in The Blueprint: Building a Business Assistance Network for Farm and Food Businesses (June 2018).

In 2020, HVADC was awarded funding from the Northern Border Regional Commission through the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board's Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program (VF&FVP) to provide business technical assistance for farm and food businesses Rensselaer, Sullivan, Washington, Greene and Saratoga Counties. HVADC has assisted six businesses through our IWW program as described above. The funding is available through June of 2022.

Agricultural Viability Alliance

HVADC is excited to announce its involvement as a founding collaborator of the newly formed Agricultural Viability Alliance, formerly known as "The Blueprint" described above. The Alliance, which brings together agricultural agencies and service providers from across the Northeast, is enthusiastically focused on bringing diverse world-class Business Technical Assistance (BTA) to the farmers and food producers who need it to maintain, grow, and transition their businesses in an ever-changing world.

Business Technical Assistance is a catch-all term covering a wide range of one-to-one services offered to farm and food business by non-profits, state agencies, private consultants, and extension services. Customized to meet the unique needs of individual businesses, these services provide coaching, skill

development, and planning around financial and labor management, marketing and business strategies, farm transfer and succession, and access to new land and capital. BTA services give businesses the skills and support needed to achieve long-term success.

At the onset of the pandemic, many food businesses lost markets overnight, while others saw demand skyrocket beyond their capacity. Businesses who received BTA over the past year were far more equipped to pivot their operations to access new markets, meet new demand, address customer and employee safety, and improve financial record keeping in order to access relief funding and make informed decisions.

While some of the Alliance entities do provide BTA services to their constituencies, currently, there is no single-source program specifically dedicated to funding BTA for farm and food businesses. Rather, service providers such as HVADC generally rely on smaller, short-term sources of funding offered through a wide array of programs. This leaves many businesses which could benefit from BTA services without the direct, sustained support they need to succeed.

Along with its hard-court press to secure new and additional funding for BTA, the Alliance member organizations are also working to deepen their bench of core service providers and expand their rolodex of the best and brightest business professionals.

Todd Erling Testimony Before the US Congress Subcommittee of the House Agricultural Committee Chaired by Congressman Antonio Delgado (NY-19), the Committee met with the task of “Examining Opportunities for Growth and Investment in Rural America.” This testimony builds on work that HVADC and the Agricultural Viability Alliance have done to promote \$300 million in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act stimulus funding through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), dedicated to new programs that will bring vital one-on-one BTA to farmers and agriculture businesses throughout the Hudson Valley, the Northeast and beyond.

Erling testified on behalf of HVADC and the Alliance. It was a crucial opportunity for him to explain the need for BTA on a national stage. Erling’s testimony stressed the value of supporting BTA services with Federal funding through the USDA, particularly through long-term Rural Development programs that can be administered by non-profits like HVADC and its Alliance partners.

During his testimony and questioning by subcommittee members, Erling spoke to the issue of how the Rebuild Rural America Act introduced in both houses of Congress earlier this year (in the House of Representatives by Representative Delgado and in the Senate by Senator Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY)) could provide a roadmap for sustained strategic investment in our rural communities that could be modeled after existing successful programs aiding urban areas.

COVID-19 Support and Relief Efforts

Since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, HVADC undertook efforts to support the agricultural industry. HVADC assisted business with the federal relief programs, such as the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), the Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL) and the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP). HVADC currently monitors Federal efforts on the American Rescue Plan Act and the Build Back Better bill to understand opportunities through the USDA and other Federal agencies for farm and food businesses.

Hudson Valley Farmlink Network

Agriculture and conservation groups came together to create the Hudson Valley Farmlink Network in response to farmland loss, the challenges faced by farmers in accessing farmland, and the difficulties faced by families as they try to transfer their farms. The Hudson Valley Farmlink Network is a partnership of 17 organizations, coordinated by American Farmland Trust, which offers the Hudson Valley Farmland Finder website, training and networking events, and one-on-one assistance for farmers and landowners. HVADC joined the network in 2018 and will be providing technical assistance to farmers. This effort has led to referrals from partnering organizations such as the Ag Stewardship Association to provide the services needed to reduce farmland loss and increase access to farmland for beginning farmers.

The Hudson Valley Farmlink Network serves 13 counties: Albany, Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Orange, Putnam, Rensselaer, Rockland, Saratoga, Sullivan, Ulster, Washington, and Westchester.

Hudson Valley Food Systems Coalition

The Hudson Valley Food Systems Coalition (HVFSC) is a transdisciplinary & regional coalition with representatives from Agriculture, Government, Community, Processing, Distribution, Health, Education, Food Access, Food Business, Environment, Funding, and the Culinary Arts. The mission is to realize a more equitable and regenerative Hudson Valley food system by connecting food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management practices while encouraging the use of our region's food resources to ensure the long-term health and sustainability of our community. The HVFSC is open to all interested in the Hudson Valley's regional food system. HVADC is a founding member and HVADC Deputy Director Mary Ann Johnson is current facilitator of the Land and Agriculture interest group.

National Farm Viability Conference

The fifth biannual National Farm Viability Conference (NFVC) was a virtual affair in October 2021, and HVADC joined a community of over 400 national agribusiness development and policy leaders coming together to take part in dozens of workshops and conversations that will define policy and planning in years to come. As a former host of the conference, HVADC Executive Director Todd Erling noted that the digital platform increased the number of workshops and participants this year.

U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy, U.S. Representative Antonio Delgado, and United States Under Secretary of Agriculture for Marketing and Regulatory Programs Jennifer Moffitt participated with Erling in a session on the urgent necessity for the funding of BTA. The importance of reiterating HVADC's programmatic values in meetings with these key policy makers and senior members of their staff is a core benefit of the conference and leads to lasting productive relationships for HVADC and all other attendees.

Erling also participated in a session centered on ways to build the Agricultural Viability Alliance into a national presence. Erling is a co-founding executive committee member as well as co-chair of the Alliance's policy group. He impressed upon attendees the power of regional collaboration. He said the success of the conference itself is proof that the industry works best when it is working together. Pooling resources and advocating for BTA with one voice has brought the Alliance to the national stage in a matter of months. Erling said the Alliance can be an example for regional programs coast to coast.

Grown and Certified Producer Grants

The Hudson Mohawk Resource Conservation Development Council partnered with HVADC to administer funds to assist producers in the Capital Region offset capital costs associated with meeting Good Agricultural Practices certification and participation in the New York State Grown & Certified program.

HMRCDC will create a one- stop-shop to deploy grant funds and other financing, combined with partner involvement in promotion and technical assistance. Funding for this program was made available through the 2018 CFA awards in the amount of \$500,000. HVADC received seventeen applications requesting more than \$630,000 and to date has received approval for thirteen farms. This included full approvals for two Washington County farms totaling nearly \$23,643 in project funding and the projects were completed in 2020.



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2021 SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES

WASHINGTON COUNTY

LCLGRP staff submitted 35 grants on behalf of the region in 2021 and to date has secured \$5.1 million in grant funding.

Washington County Grants Secured

- Washington County Brine Maker (\$132,000)
- Washington County Culvert Replacement Program (\$508,000)
- Washington County Erosion and Sediment Control Program (\$527,000)
- Town of Hebron Community Vision and Strategy (\$10,000)

Washington County Grants Managed

- Washington County MS4 Mapping and Enhanced Pollution Reduction (\$272,500)
- Washington County Erosion Projects (\$103,000)

Broadband Initiatives

- Assisted with cost of ECC Technologies for Washington County Broadband Mapping and BAAT Program
- Secured \$220,000 from the Northern Border Regional Commission to develop a Regional Broadband Deployment Strategy
- Authored \$20 million NTIA broadband application

Planning Efforts

- Completed *Forward Together: Economic Resiliency Plan*
- Village of Whitehall Green Infrastructure Plan and Project Implementation
- Submitted EPA Outdoor Recreation Economy grant for Village of Granville
- Assisted Warren – Washington IDA with Canalside Energy Park Feasibility Study and Congressional Appropriation application
- NYSDOS funded Lake George Action Plan
- Assisting Town of Hebron with a USDA Rural Development application
- Washington County Planning Agency

Loan Program

- Four loans made to Washington County businesses in 2021 totaling \$268,000 in capital
- Nine loans in our portfolio totaling \$842,000 in capital

