

Tucker takes the helm at CEDC

By Katie Kocijanski Columbia-Greene Media | Posted: Wednesday, July 29, 2015 12:15 am

GREENPORT — The Columbia Economic Development Corporation Board of Directors officially welcomed its interim Executive Director F. Michael Tucker at its Tuesday meeting.

Acting through his consulting firm, Tucker Strategies, he met with 11 of the board members as the corporation begins to reorganize over the next couple of months. Five members were not present at the meeting.

Tucker replaced former part-time Executive Director Ken Flood. As Tucker takes the reins at the corporation for the next four months, board President David Crawford stepped down from his position on the board.

Crawford was given a bottle of gin by fellow board member Greg Fingar to thank him for his 25 years of service to the board.

“Thank you for the confidence in my company,” Tucker said. “I hope to accomplish three things while I am here at CEDC, one being resolving any questions regarding the April ABO (Authorities Budget Office) report.”

With the Columbia County Board of Supervisors temporarily suspending funding to the corporation, board attorney Andy Howard said Tucker would be paid \$6,000 a month, a salary much less than Flood had been making. Flood had been paid by the county.

Tucker is the former head of Albany’s Center for Economic Growth. He acting as the president and CEO from March 2007 to June 2015, after which he formed his consulting company.

Due to Crawford resigning and the restructuring of the organization, new officers will be elected at the August meeting. Crawford directed any board members who were interested in running to email current board Secretary Sarah Sterling.



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Mary Bartolotta, of Coldwell Banker Bartolotta Realty, will act as president for the next month until elections are held.

She previously served as vice president of the board. Bob Sherwood, of Kinderhook Bank, was named acting as treasurer through the month. The current board has 15 members, with the resignation of Crawford.

“I hope to facilitate better oversight reporting to the Board of Supervisors and Economic Development Committee while I am here,” Tucker said. “I will be proposing an organizational structure for CEDC with the help of my staff.”

Crawford said the management committee has been meeting every Monday to work on a plan for reorganizing. Board member Mike Benson strongly advised the corporation develop a strategic plan going forward.

Fellow board member Colin Stair said the corporation needs to begin an open dialogue with the Board of Supervisors to see if it wants the organization to stay in business.

County Economic Development Committee Chairman John Reilly, R-Gallatin, assured the board he has not heard a majority of the supervisors express their desire to not continue to support the corporation.

Tucker is a member of the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Councils. In the race for the state’s \$750 million grant funding through the consolidated funding application process and the \$1.5 billion Upstate Revitalization Initiative, Tucker will act as an advocate the county’s chances at getting funding.

Board of Supervisors Chairman Patrick Grattan, R-Kinderhook, is also a member of the council. Reilly is a member of the Upstate Revitalization Advisory Council, a subcommittee of the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Councils.

Reilly was present at the meeting and discussed the need for the county to potentially contribute \$50,000 to the economic development council to help the county’s chances with getting funding.

While no decision was made, Tucker said he will be discussing the idea for a financial contribution with board members at a later date. The corporation is submitting one consolidated funding application to the Capital Region Regional Economic Development Councils.

Administrative Supervisor Lisa Drahushuk said the corporation is asking for \$878,800 to begin developing the goat milk and meat industry in the county. The application is for Hudson Valley Creamery to further develop the right genetics for goat breeding.

“The council is looking to raise \$2.6 million and has about half a million raised so far,” Tucker said. “I understand the value of what Columbia County has to offer the region.”

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