



# Choose Columbia

Columbia Economic Development Corporation

**MINUTES**  
**COLUMBIA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION**  
**Tuesday, December 12, 2017**  
**Columbia-Greene Community College**  
**4400 Route 23**  
**Hudson, NY 12534**

A regularly scheduled meeting of the Columbia Economic Development Corporation (CEDC) Board of Directors was held at Columbia Greene Community College 4400 Route 23, Hudson, NY 12534 on December 12, 2017. The meeting was called to order at 8:35 a.m. by Tony Jones, Chair.

Attendee Name	Title	Status	Arrived
Ruth Adams	Board Member	Present	
Russell Bartolotta	Board Member	Excused	
Rick Bianchi	Treasurer	Excused	
Jim Calvin	Board Member	Excused	
Jim Champion	Board Member – Ex Officio	Present	
David Fingar	Vice-Chairman	Excused	
Tish Finnegan	Board Member	Excused	
Triona Fritsch	Board Member	Present	
Tony Jones	Chairman	Present	
James Lapenn	Board Member	Present	
John Lee	Board Member	Present	
Jim Mackerer	Board Member – Ex Officio	Excused	
Ed Nabozny	Board Member – Ex Officio	Excused	
Michael Polemis	Board Member	Present	
Robert Sherwood	Board Member	Excused	
Gary Spielmann	Board Member	Present	
Colin Stair	Board Member	Excused	
Sarah Sterling	Secretary	Present	
Maria Suttmeier	Board Member	Present	
Andy Howard	CEDC Attorney	Excused	
F. Michael Tucker	President/CEO	Present	
Brandon Dory	Project Manager	Present	
Lisa Drahushuk	Administrative Supervisor	Present	
Martha Lane	Business Development Specialist	Present	
Erin McNary	Bookkeeper	Present	
Ed Stiffler	Economic Developer	Present	
Carol Wilber	Marketing Director	Present	

Mr. Jones asked Mr. Tucker to give a brief overview of the CEDC projects to date, in order to reserve time to hold an open discussion by the Board Members.

Mr. Tucker reviewed the projects including hotel and agricultural projects.

**Open Discussion:**

Mr. Jones asked the Board members to discuss what they felt deserved more attention by CEDC. He expressed the importance of schools, noting school quality was the most frequent topic of the year. Mr. Lee agreed with Mr. Jones about school quality. He also expressed the need for education of the local Planning and Zoning boards, which is currently limited. Mr. Jones felt there was also a need for locations in the county set aside for businesses. Mr. Tucker suggested hiring an engineering firm to map the county with the current zoning and permitting and including best practices. He noted the current inventory could be tied to the map.

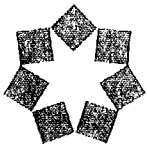
Mr. Speilmann noted the library system provided many residents the opportunity to access the internet due to the limited connectivity in the county. He encouraged CEDC to continue to advocate for expanded broadband access in the county. Mr. Jones and Mr. Tucker stated the providers are currently working on the infrastructure, noting they anticipated meetings to begin again after the beginning of the year. Ms. Adams shared her experience at Art Omi. She explained that a potential rental client tested the connectivity and found it was insufficient for their needs. The client chose not to utilize the space.

Mr. Lapenn asked Dr. Suttmeier what she felt could be done to help schools. Dr. Suttmeier stated many people were interesting in assisting. She noted the different schools have different needs due to their students. She stated a meeting of all county school districts had been scheduled to discuss needs, differences, and listen to needs of businesses. She was hopeful the meeting would result in an action plan.

Mr. Polemis suggested CEDC work with not-for-profits to provide grant money for those offering jobs to high schoolers. He noted it provided an opportunity for students to gain work experience. He also informed the Board that the Columbia Land Conservancy had found that the student they had employed had a high rate of entering as job in the same industry. He suggested CEDC partner with the National Young Farmer Coalition to market CEDC's loan funds, targeting start-up farmers. Mr. Polemis also asked the board to review the interest rates currently charged on loans, suggesting the interest rates could be dropped to under market rates.

Mr. Lapenn suggested the Workforce and Education Committee review Mr. Polemis suggestion, noting it looked manageable and reasonable for CEDC. Ms. Adams recommended involved leadership ensuring the work assigned was safe and meaningful. Ms. Adams suggested a coordinator for the program. Mr. Lee stressed the need for the community to hear about the program and the success.

Dr. Suttmeier reviewed Hudson City School District's YES Program for the Board. She noted the program began with building a resume and practice interviews. She stated the student selected areas of interest. The process then led to a curriculum, a mentor, a connection with a business and timesheets. The program held the student responsible and required the coordinator and mentors who checked on a regular basis with the student. Ms. Adams noted transportation would need to be considered in most school districts.



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Mr. Jones addressed the issue of communicating success. He noted the effectiveness of word of mouth generated by the Creative Economy event. He suggested CEDC hold 2 events in the upcoming year leveraging the success of the Creative Economy event.

The challenges of an aging county population was discussed. Ms. Adams noted retirees were the next the focus of obtaining a workforce for some businesses. Ms. Fritsch noted many of the newer residents were seeking volunteer positions, noting they may fit the mentoring needs of area students.

The Board discussed the difficulties of attracting former county residents back to Columbia County. Mr. Tucker suggested sponsorship of 5 year class reunions, and social media promotion.

*Having no other business to discuss and no further public comments, a motion to adjourn was made by Ms. Fritsch seconded by Mr. Spielmann. Carried. The meeting was adjourned at 9:56 a.m.*

*Respectfully submitted by Lisa Draushuk*