I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Lattimer called the meeting to order at 10:55 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 3, 2021, AND MARCH 22, 2021, MEETINGS MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MR. VAN CAESEELE. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

III. PRESENTATION

A. Feasibility Study – National Heritage Area Designation for Finger Lakes Region – Mr. Sousa stated the National Park Service is conducting a feasibility study on the Finger Lakes Region. This feasibility study includes public comment as well as an evaluation of public support for the National Heritage Area Designation. He introduced Chuck Lawson from the National Park Service.

Mr. Lawson stated he works for the National Park Service in Denver, Colorado. We are conducting a feasibility study in consideration of a National Heritage Area Designation (NHA) for the Finger Lakes region. There are 55 NHA designations in 34 states across the United States. These NHA’s were created through federal law and are designated by Congress. These NHA’s tell the nationally important stories that celebrate our heritage. National Heritage Areas are not national park units; we partner with the NHA’s and we direct federal dollars to the NHA entity. We assume no ownership of the land inside the NHA area or any land use controls. Legislation identifies a local coordinating entity and the federal appropriation is passed to them through the National Park Service. The NHA’s are authorized to receive up to $1 million annually, but typically the appropriation ranges from $150,000 to $750,000. All money has to be matched by other partnerships through the coordinating entity.

Mr. Lawson explained National Heritage Areas are involved in conservation, historic preservation, recreation, education, community development and economic development. The feasibility study is a report that documents the process undertaken by the National Park Service, and the residents of the region, to determine if there is a unique national
importance. There are ten specific criteria to determine if the story is being told and if that story can be experienced by the public. Additionally, we look for public support and look at whether there is an organization that can manage the area if it is designated. We are now looking at the Finger Lakes because in 2019 the Dingell Act directed the Secretary of the Interior to conduct a feasibility study of the Finger Lakes to determine if it was eligible for the National Heritage Area designation. The findings of this study will be delivered to the Secretary of the Interior who will then prepare a recommendation for Congress. The feasibility study was started in late 2019. During the spring of 2020 we conducted fourteen focus group calls and developed a historical context document. The public comment period ends June 1, 2021. Then the draft study will be submitted to the Secretary of the Interior.

Ms. Kimble stated she is asking for the County to consider putting forth a resolution supporting the 14-county Finger Lakes area for National Heritage Area designation. The Finger Lakes Region is the only vacation region designated by law in 1967. It is important for us to have the ability to apply for State funds. To make this Federal designation, we need letters of support and need you to engage with the public comment period that will end June 1st. Hopefully the County will pass a resolution supporting this designation. She stated she is also asking the County to support the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as being the lead entity. If we are designated as a National Heritage Area, we would start with the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance as the lead entity and then we would form a 501-c-3 organization that would run the NHA. Ms. Kimble stated she will send out documents that include the list of activities you can do to support this activity. We are looking to you to help us support this. Thank you for passing the resolution several years ago for the NHA as that did help us have the ability to go back and work to get the funding secured for the NHA. The resolution that we are asking for now will support the 14-county area as an NHA and having the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance act as lead agency.

Mr. Van Etten asked what kind of controls will be in place if the region is designated as an NHA? As a reference, when places get added to the National Historic Registry they have tight controls with regard to property, etc. If we become part of the National Heritage Area will there be any controls on land, buildings etc.? Mr. Lawson replied no, not that are directly associated with the designation of an NHA. There are no land controls, however, active NHA entities move local ordinances and support things like that. Streetscape improvements are something that NHA’s may support, but there is nothing from the Federal government that requires anything like that.

Ms. Lattimer stated you are asking the Legislature to consider doing individual support letters. Are you linking this NHA information to our County website so that the public can vote and comment? Mr. Wheeler stated we certainly can. Ms. Lattimer commented there are advantages to accessing grants as well as economic development opportunities that could be advantageous. Having more restrictions is not something we would favor, and thank you for answering that question.

IV. OUTSIDE AGENCIES
A. Steuben County Conference & Visitors’ Bureau
   1. Activity Update – Mr. Costello stated he would like to share with the committee a project that he has been working on since the end of last year, which is a new widget on our website. The widget is Explore Steuben and is a trip planning resource and mobile app. With this widget, we can get all of the business listings up front and center and travelers are able to create their itinerary. We have been working on this project with the Planning Department who has been assisting us with the GIS mapping. We have also integrated this widget on our Craft Your Adventure Trail website and we were able to save money by purchasing a better product and we have seen substantial downloads.

Mr. Costello stated we also have been working on a project to better track our data to understand the tourism marketplace and the effects of COVID and how we are coming out of the pandemic. We have a contract with Zartico which is a company that pools all of that data and aggregates it into a dashboard. We also have, in conjunction with that, UberMedia that tracks all of the cell phone data. This shows the ebb and flow of visits. He stated his intention is to create a quarterly report using this data. We also have a contract with KeyData which is a property management tool that looks at short-term rentals in the County. This uses scrape data from Airbnb and Vrbo and some of that data is redundant as there are some properties that are listed on both. With this we are able to track performance measures and these are based on bookings. This information will also be included on the Zartico dashboard.
Ms. Lattimer stated I like the idea of that app; that will really help travelers, correct? Mr. Costello replied yes. We are working with the four chambers of commerce to get them to work with their businesses to push the app as well as for the chambers of commerce to put it on their websites. Ms. Lattimer commented there is a vast amount of data now as compared to ten years ago. What does that prompt you to do for future decisions? Mr. Costello replied it is helping us to fine tune the places we are putting our advertising, the bulk of which is digital. With digital advertising you can change on the fly. When we start seeing people coming into the market, we can put more money into those markets as they open up.

Mrs. Lando stated Mr. Costello and his staff have done a great job during the pandemic to get ready for when people want to travel. She stated that she would also like to thank Mr. Costello for presenting at the Inter-County meeting last month. He and his team have been going above and beyond and are doing a great job. Mr. Costello stated we have a new graphic designer who has done a great job with our e-newsletter which is another tool we are using a lot more than we had in the past.

Ms. Lattimer stated going back to the National Heritage Area designation, does the committee want to pass a resolution supporting the designation and support having the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance act as lead agency?

**MOTION:** SUPPORTING THE DESIGNATION OF THE FINGER LAKES AS A NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA AND SUPPORTING THE FINGER LAKES TOURISM ALLIANCE ACTING AS LEAD AGENCY MADE BY MRS. FERRATELLA. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0. Resolution Required.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

A. Office Space Project – Mr. Van Etten asked if Mr. Wheeler could provide a status update on where we are with the office space project? Mr. Wheeler replied everything appears to be on schedule; we are actually ahead of schedule and well within budget. We have used the project contingency for small change orders. Everything is looking good. One issue we are running into is the timing of the furniture delivery. Any non-removable furniture is the responsibility of OCA (Office of Court Administration), and anything attached to the ground is the County’s responsibility. There have been change orders and everyone continues to do a great job.

Ms. Lattimer asked what is the percent of completion? Mr. Brewer replied we are just a touch over half completed. We still have the Courthouse and the Surrogates Building to do. Mr. Wheeler stated we may be a little north of that. Everything in the County Office Building is going very well. The work on the Balcom House is also going well. The Courthouse, holding cells, security area and the Surrogates Building are not insignificant portions of the project. We are ahead of schedule and within budget.

Mr. Malter stated I would like to see the status of the renovation and do a tour. Mr. Nichols asked if they could tour the building after the Legislative meeting. Mr. Brewer replied yes.

B. Goals – Mrs. Lando asked do we have a status on the goals as it relates to Vrbo? Mr. Wheeler replied I have emailed the Vrbo Government Affairs office and have not yet heard back. I will keep you posted.

C. Serv-U Credit Union – Mr. Van Etten stated I heard that their new building is moving along well. I just want to make sure we are ready when they vacate their current location and we are able to take title and get in and get our work done. Mr. Brewer replied that is coming along well. We are looking at the beginning of the fourth quarter to start moving in with occupation by the end of the year. We have six to seven months and I am in regular contact with them.

D. Corning Courthouse – Mr. Van Etten asked once we vacate the courthouse on First Street, have we reached out yet or met with development agencies? Mr. Wheeler replied we had conversations with Three Rivers and Corning Enterprises about possible interest. We will have to work with Ms. Prossick on the exact process we have to go through. Just prior to COVID we had toured the courthouse with Corning Enterprises and Three Rivers, along with economic development agencies. At that time there was interest. We are more confident in getting something meaningful out of that.
Mrs. Lando asked what about the land? Would the City be willing to sell the land if we sell the building? Mr. Wheeler replied we have talked with the City and they seem open to that.

E.  **REDEC** – Mrs. Lando asked for an update on the REDEC program. How many businesses have taken advantage of it? Mr. Brewer replied activity has picked up with the change in the guidelines as well as companies heading into spring and summer. He stated 2020 was not good for many of our businesses, but he is confident as 60 percent of funds have been loaned out. There is still a substantial portion to give out. We currently have 8 – 10 that are in application status. We are hoping to have more funds out by July.

**MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MR. HANNA. SECONDED BY MR. VAN CAESEELE. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.**

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR**

Wednesday, May 5, 2021
9:30 a.m.

Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature’s Office
NO LATER THAN NOON
Wednesday, April 28, 2021