

**Transcript of Economic Recovery Task Force Meeting via Zoom, January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

**Participants on Zoom Call:**

Jim Siplon  
John Wheatley  
Mark Behan  
Matt Simpson  
Kathy Muncil  
Chandler Atkins  
Andrea Hogan  
Joanne Conley  
Liza Oschendorf  
Amy Collins  
Laura Kohls  
Mike Wild  
Rachel Seeber  
Wayne LeMothe  
Don Lehman  
Linda Oldenburg  
Jacob Miller  
James Griffith  
Frank Dittrich

Kris Duffy ([00:00:00](#)):

... I got there like noon which is my new thing so that I can avoid the crowds. So really... I mean it was... I had a couple trails all to myself so it was nice time to go but I've heard they've been doing well considering, and that was even the gondola was down for some reason that afternoon and it still was not... it was very manageable so you feel pretty safe and normal skiing like it's... you can do something that's ... I don't go inside, I don't do anything... you just go. You just leave.

Chandler ([00:00:36](#)):

Well, good for you.

Kris D. ([00:00:44](#)):

So we're on two different seasons Chandler you're on the summer season and I'm in the winter season, my background.

Chandler ([00:00:50](#)):

I know, I should catch up.

Kris D. ([00:00:53](#)):

Yeah. No, it's okay to dream ahead too.

Chandler ([00:00:54](#)):

Oh, my gosh.

Chandler ([00:01:12](#)):

(silence)

**Welcome & Call To Order:**

Chandler ([00:01:12](#)):

Morning Mike.

Mike Wild ([00:01:13](#)):

Oh, good morning everyone.

John ([00:01:19](#)):

Hey Mike, how are you?

Mike W. ([00:01:19](#)):

I'm awake and kicking in and still have a list that's 20 miles long [crosstalk 00:01:32] Yeah, I'm still a little bit mourning but I'm looking forward to next year as well as a break to thinking about him for the next couple of months.

Jim Siplon ([00:01:46](#)):

I don't know how much longer we want to go, John do you think... I know some people from the county are going to be tied up in some of the other things that are happening with some emergency meetings there.

John Wheatley ([00:02:02](#)):

I think we got a lot of folks who said they were coming here now. Oh, boy it's not rolling.

John W. ([00:02:05](#)):

(silence)

**General ERTF Notes & Discussion:**

Jim S. ([00:03:05](#)):

I'll get started and if they jump in John we can get going and we can catch him up. Welcome everybody to the all that is new as old economic recovery group. Same time, same players, different person that hits the Zoom button I think. There's a couple things I wanted to cover though I think this kind of subtle change it gives us an opportunity to kind of remind ourselves of what we're doing here and how we can continue to adapt and evolve to have this both be effective and also worthy of everyone's commitment of time. But before we even do that I feel like... I'm not quite sure how to do it but I feel like we need to

take a second and recognize that we not only continue to lose people to this terrible disease, but yesterday we lost somebody who's serving us in helping people with that disease.

Jim S. (00:04:05):

It's not just people who hold titles in our community that are important. When a young nurse who works at the hospital tragically dies, I think we need to take a second to recognize just what's happening in our community. It's just a terrible thing to see yourself on the national news for a reason like that, and I certainly feel terrible for her and her family and all that knew her. But it's also a reminder of what kind of work is going on behind us in our community every day.

Jim S. (00:04:43):

People who are just our neighbors and our friends are literally heroes for us, and they deserve a group of leaders who are doing everything we can to put this place back together, so that's one of the things we need to do. In the last couple of weeks the county has made a lot of changes, and one of the things they asked was that we create a little bit of subtle change in terms of how this is organized. So we're now the meeting administrators if you will for the economic recovery task force, I think to [inaudible 00:05:31] largely be something you don't even notice if we hadn't even said it. But I do think... I need to remind you all that we are going to keep a short agenda and we're going to keep a short set of minutes, and we're going to make those available to the public. I'm still in the process of figuring out if additional information is available but just to protect that interest, we are recording this meeting in case it's determined that that is something that is appropriate.

Jim S. (00:06:02):

I think our goal though is to provide the public with clear, transparent view of what we're doing to work on their behalf as a public private partnership around the issues of economic recovery here in Warren County. And so the high level agenda I sent out to you will be posted, and a set of minutes that will be short and concise will also be posted after the meeting. If anybody has any concerns with any of this or feels like in some way this is going to constrict us, I'd like you to share that with me specifically and we'll try to problem solve around it together. But I don't believe this is going to be any obstacle to us accomplishing our goals.

Jim S. (00:06:45):

I think quite honestly the community would be better served the more they knew about what we were doing. This is something that matters to every single person that lives in this community, about what are the issues that we're facing together? What information are we working with? And what strategies are we developing? With that in mind it's important that we kind of rejoin all the players who are providing resources to the community. That was the original construct of this, was to gather the Chamber of Commerce and the EDC and the planning board... the Regional Planning Board and all of the players where resources were funneling into the community so that we could very quickly communicate with each other, and we could communicate with the community about what was available and how we could help. So we need... that pace of change has not stopped.

Jim S. (00:07:44):

In fact, every single week we see new programs, some of which are federal and some which are state. And our community still needs a little bit of help understanding who is administering what, how do they access it? How is it different? Who does it apply to? Who do they call? That stays the same and I think

I'm glad to see Jacob on here, I think we may look to expand this so I'm going to reach out to Mike and ask that somebody from his office find their way onto this call just because I think that they also are a really key player with the chamber.

Jim S. ([00:08:19](#)):

Gina has been a player all along and will continue to welcome her and her team. And we're also reaching out to other elected officials to allow them to participate as they see fit both state and federal. And so the goal is to make sure that all the best information is available to us all in the same way that I think particularly Jacob and his office have modeled for so long.

Jim S. ([00:08:50](#)):

So another thing I wanted to mention to you is that we're discovering a dramatic need for data. I don't know that it's necessarily new but like so many other aspects of the pandemic, it has exposed this and maybe accelerated it beyond what was there. But there's a lot of information some of which is accurate and some of which may be either dated or inaccurate, and we need to make sure we have the most current and the most accurate information for whatever problem solving and decisions that we are advocating for. And so I'm working with a group of people most of whom are already on this call but may include others that are not, to try to make sure that we produce some widely available data around some of the constructs we throw around. So for instance we talk a lot about what are the current employment figures because there's a lot of unemployment programs, and there's a lot of impact associated with those programs in our community. But we need to make sure that we're all a baseline on what is the current labor force, what percentage of that is actively seeking work but not able to find it? And what is the economic impact of that?

Jim S. ([00:10:08](#)):

The same is true in sectors that we're discussing like tourism, there's a lot of discussion about how much the tourism industry is generating in terms of revenue and in terms of taxes, and I think what we need to do is just bring the unequivocal baseline figures from the last several years and make them available to everyone so that we're operating off of the same set of data. And then from there some of the challenges that we're working on I think can be... we can kind of view this as a place for us to continue to dialogue what's possible, maybe to debate a little bit and certainly to collaborate and plan as to how would we go about attacking those as a community.

Jim S. ([00:10:53](#)):

So the only two things that I see changing here are who turns on the Zoom, and the fact that we will probably try to provide a scorecard with current data that we're constantly updating from the publicly available sources at the front end of the meeting, just so that we all have it. And we will continue to try to bring players who can add value in terms of the resources that they bring, or the expertise that they have to the group. Other than that I think this is going to work exactly as it has, and in fact that... maybe before we kind of go around the horn to see what people's updates are in their particular area. Maybe we take a pause just to make sure that anything that I've said if you have questions, or you want to talk more about that, that we do so now. Wow.

Kris D. ([00:11:55](#)):

Well, at the risk of being the one that also does Zoom calls where no one answers your question I would just say that, I think you laid out a great plan for us and we've done some good work to date, and I agree with the direction that you're proposing so thanks.

Jim S. (00:12:17):

Other thoughts?

Amy Collins (00:12:18):

Jim this is Amy. I just was wondering would you divide that data into sectors? Recreation sector, because I have struggled especially with trying to bring our rec areas up to speed, and now seeing new people I've constantly worked with our groups, our nonprofits as well to gather information about who's coming to use our facilities. Even like a five question survey online where they come to the trail head, and they see that they can scan it and then go right, and just learn about the venue. I didn't know if there were... I'd love to be part of... help you with that, as far as who's coming to visit, what they're doing when they're in our area? I didn't know if... simplicity I think is really important, especially for the city of Glens Falls but I just didn't know if you had some ideas of how to go about figuring that out.

Jim S. (00:13:30):

Well, thanks Amy and the work you guys have done in the city is really exciting, and I think we want to figure out how to quantify its impact. That's definitely something that we've got to develop that we don't have now. The first step I want to take is just to take the information that some of us are kind of wading through, but maybe not all of us seeing all the time, for instance [inaudible 00:13:51] employment data all the time. But I think we would benefit from at least a monthly review of where do we stand? And where are things going in terms of some of the key employment trends?

Jim S. (00:14:02):

I don't know that we need to cover every number every week, and I think you raised a good point Amy that there are specific areas that we've never really looked at from a data standpoint, like the use of our recreational facilities that we could develop a strategy for. But my initial goal would be to take some of the baseline data, employment data, revenue and sales tax and [inaudible 00:14:21] tax data, maybe some broad macro measures of the current state of our local economy that at least baseline us.

Jim S. (00:14:33):

Are things better the same or worse? How do we know? And how big of an upside or downside are we seeing? I think those things will help us be more targeted in the things that we take on. But we definitely want to come out of this stronger and one of the things Amy that you're highlighting is that there may be some information that we have the ability to gather that we should gather and that we will gather. Other thoughts before we move on to checking in with everybody? Just about process? Does it still make sense for us to meet weekly because I believe it does, but this is my world.

Jim S. (00:15:16):

If you see value in that, that would be something I would want to continue but if... I don't want anyone to feel like this is a slog for them, and really taxing them and maybe not particularly effective weekly. Okay.

Frank Dittrich ([00:15:31](#)):

Jim it's Frank, I think it's a good idea to continue to meet, maybe thinking about isolating and kind of an outline form, what are the initiatives that are underway and then run through those methodically week by week to... mostly to make sure we're pacing progress, right? So if you go to bi-weekly or monthly things slide until the day before and the whole month goes by and you did one thing. If we go weekly we'll pick things off quicker I think, but getting us all focused on what are the topics we're concentrating on now on a tactical view? What are the topics that we're concentrating on a midterm view? So midterm to me would be nine months out... six, nine months out something like that, and then longer term some more strategic stuff that we need to think about. And in my case in particular being more mindful that this group to me is... tourism is a piece of it but it's not the only piece.

Mark Behan ([00:16:34](#)):

Jim I would add that I think weekly is the right schedule from this perspective that, first of all there are developments that are happening so quickly that I think we need a weekly call to catch everybody up. Second, we need to create a predicate every week of information because we spend so much time on monthly calls, catching people up from 30 days of developments that we rarely get to strategy and new directions, because there's such a disparity of information. And we spend an awful lot of time knocking down false information so we can let actual facts grow up.

Jim S. ([00:17:07](#)):

Well, thank you to you both. I agree that weekly... I want weekly because it stays on our calendar and it becomes part of our operating rhythm, but I'm certainly can understand if that is a difficult thing for people to support. And so what I want everyone to know is that we welcome your participation at any level that you can participate. But I believe that we will see value from having a core here meet every week and we'll continue that. Well, maybe... then with that in mind maybe what we do is start to check in with people specifically... next week it is my intention to bring you some of this first set of data. John and I met with CEG who has access and does help us compile some of this core data. It starts with employment and labor force data, but we're also looking to expand that into migration data.

Jim S. ([00:18:00](#)):

Who's moving here? Who's moving out? At what level? And where are they going to? We're also looking for information potentially from cell phones or mobiles, as far as when people come here with numbers that are from outside the area how long are they staying in for? And where are they going? All these are new areas of data so they're not yet a baseline with CEG, and so we're trying to figure out how we can bring some of that to bear. And we're also meeting with the realtors in the next week to try to see whether we can bring some of that information to be as timely as possible about what's happening on the private property, both commercial and residential across our region.

Jim S. ([00:18:51](#)):

That's a lot of data, so we're not going to throw all that data up every single week, what we'll try to do is strike that in such a way that every month or six weeks you're getting a glimpse to key aspects of our economy and having it be relatively current. So with that in mind maybe we start at the county. I see Andrea here, I think Rachel's here, Wayne's here. Mike is here as always, the godfather of the group. Welcome all of you and one at a time I would love any input from you.

**Updates From ERTF Participants:**

Mike ([00:19:33](#)):

Jim it's Mike. I'm just going to continue to listen and enjoy what's happening here, so I'm just going to be brief, go team.

Jim S. ([00:19:41](#)):

Thanks, Mike.

Rachel Seeber ([00:19:43](#)):

Hey, Jim how are you?

Jim S. ([00:19:44](#)):

Good morning Rachel.

Rachel S. ([00:19:46](#)):

Good morning. I'm just jumping in between different meetings, I know Andrea is on here as you mentioned several other supervisors. So I'm just listening to the extent I can and then I'll get caught up afterwards. So thank you very much for hosting this for the agenda and for all your hard work to Jim, I appreciate it.

Jim S. ([00:20:03](#)):

Sure. Thank you, Rachel. Andrea, I saw you and then you seem to have disappeared from my screen. I think she knew she was getting called on. Maybe she'll dial back in. Wayne, are you still on?

Wayne LeMothe ([00:20:25](#)):

Yes, I am.

Jim S. ([00:20:28](#)):

Well, welcome.

Wayne L. ([00:20:30](#)):

How much to add to the... we are looking at some numbers you indicated about the realtors and people moving in and out. One of the things we collected that was interesting is this office issues all... well, not all but most of the 911 addresses for new parcels within the county. Last year it was about nine new 911 addresses a month, January was 18. So I think that kind of indicates a spike that there's new development going on, on the residential side predominantly. So I would not be surprised to see an influx like post 911. We're kind of anticipating that, we've seen that, people are relocating from downstate to here. So we're just going to keep watching that number and see where it goes.

Jim S. ([00:21:31](#)):

That's good information. Thank you Wayne, that reminds me of something that we learned yesterday from CEG. If you... they actually foil the Postal Service change of address records on our behalf, I really hadn't meant for them to be quite that aggressive. But in any case, it turns out that the Postal Service

only tracks zip code, the zip code changes if a double digit number of residents move from a particular zip code to another zip code which you would think would then mean that we would have no data whatsoever to report. And yet in the last year, there are two zip codes that delivered more than 10 people to single zip codes in Warren County, one of which is in New York City, and one of which is in the state of Washington.

Jim S. (00:22:17):

So we're trying to figure that out. It's a little curious. We expected one we didn't expect the other. But well... I think we're going to figure out how to put that together with the stuff that you have Wayne, and maybe some of the stuff that's lagging to see whether or not any of this can provide us with some more timeliness to what we're seeing.

Wayne L. (00:22:40):

Yes, the other thing I want to point out is that shortly we should be receiving their reapportionment numbers from the census. So that will also give us an indication of some of the population moves. However, the census was April 1, and I think a lot of this transition has happened post the census collection date. So we'll just have to see where the data takes us.

Jim S. (00:23:06):

That's an excellent point, thank you, Wayne. One other point I would like to make about all that is that we recently... the EDC partnered with roost in Lake Placid because they put out a survey that was specifically oriented at relocation and we recognize that that data would be valuable to us, even if all we did was get a glimpse into the data of people who saw the Adirondacks as one giant region. But they were able to modify the survey to include several specific questions about Warren County, one about Lake George and another about the gore area.

Jim S. (00:23:44):

Specifically, what's interesting about that survey it's they've already received thousands of responses which far exceeded what their expectation was going to be. And that survey is going to give us a glimpse to all the people who come here to recreate and whether or not they're actually considering relocating here, and what are the factors that would influence that decision? I think that's going to be really great information. We think we know what some of that is but I think we're going to have much better information to operate on soon.

Jim S. (00:24:22):

Andrea, did you dial in? I see a number.

Andrea Hogan (00:24:27):

That is me, can you hear me?

Jim S. (00:24:28):

We can.

Andrea H. (00:24:30):

I have wonky internet apparently today.

John W. (00:24:33):

Oh, oh.

Jim S. (00:24:34):

Oh, we need to work on that. John

Andrea H. (00:24:39):

I am so sorry I wasn't there when you called on me. Something you said really jumped out at me Jim, and it was come out of this stronger. I really just want to say I think this group continuing on a weekly basis is important to that goal of coming out of this stronger. You guys have really shown what you can do when you meet and you talk through these things and brainstorm them. And I'm just excited to continue that energy and I do think weekly is a good thing. I've been working on reaching out to everyone on the economic growth and development committee and talking about our goals. I have a meeting with Wayne this afternoon to also talk about that.

Andrea H. (00:25:29):

It's been really interesting though because I've spoken with people... supervisors and residents of eight towns now. And large and small, what I'm hearing is infrastructure and year round economic activity over every single one of them. So I thought that was pretty interesting but really that's all I've got for you guys today.

Jim S. (00:26:00):

That's insightful and thank you for that Andrea. Thank you for you're stepping into greater leadership role here. We're eager to work with you and all that you bring to the table as well. You mentioned infrastructure, I think it's important to know that we continue to team with Wayne and his group to figure out how do we help catalyze the things that are already on the capital plan for the county? What are the things that are going to move the needle for us or that we find to be most timely after going through what we've gone through for the past year, and they overlap with the year round... the need for year round economy to many parts of our county is an important part of that. So these two issues are related. A wastewater system and in your area will help us be able to support more year round visitors to that area which accomplishes both goals and so thank you for bringing that to our attention. Its something that we will have to continue to add.

Jim S. (00:27:02):

All right. Joanne, you had mentioned that you have some information to share. And maybe you want to talk for a moment before that but thank you for joining us.

Joanne Conley (00:27:13):

Thank you Jim, good morning. A little while back supervisor Wilde had asked if I would share the STR reports. So I do have December... through December 2020. So it would be all of that year 2020. I did share some of that at our committee meeting. I can do a quick scoop screen share and I tried to pull out just a couple of pertinent things because it can be a little bit overwhelming, but there are a few... when we're talking about baseline data, there are a few data points that I have that I think could be beneficial to you.

Joanne C. (00:27:47):

Aside from this STR, I'd mentioned that I have a contract with a new vendor for the short term rental information and I have mentioned before the cell phone data. So I don't know if you're getting cell phone data from CEG. I actually have a dashboard run through this morning. I haven't started to receive that yet But we're setting up the... we could choose different points of interest around the county So large attractions or business districts.

Joanne C. (00:28:16):

In addition to county wide, we could focus on seven or eight specific zones. So whether that's the same as or different from what you're getting, that would be good to factor in.

Jim S. (00:28:29):

Absolutely. That's exciting to know and I think you had mentioned that before Joanne. We're asking that she CEG for what I was [inaudible 00:28:37] going to be much bigger macro data, what is the migration into the 518? And then hopefully, with that we will get some straight into data, but your information is going to be far more precise than whatever we get from them.

Joanne C. (00:28:51):

So I have seven or eight points of interest and I think for this first year, that's the way it'll be set up. But moving forward we may be able to add additional downtown business districts if that's the direction we think we need to move in. But this year I think there'll be a little bit of a learning curve there. So I'm anxious to see the data and in addition to that, this is through my Adirondacks in New York State tourism group. So I think that will have Adirondack level data in addition to the other areas of New York state that are participating. They'll share some level of data with us so there'll be greater low levels of comparison.

Jim S. (00:29:32):

That's wonderful. Did you want to share anything Joanne on the screen?

Joanne C. (00:29:37):

There we go. Okay, so do you see my Smith trend table right now?

John W. (00:29:45):

No, I'm pretty sure you should be able to Joanne, I hope I did it right.

Joanne C. (00:29:54):

How about that.

Jim S. (00:29:54):

There we go it looks like it's about to happen.

Joanne (00:30:00):

All ready? Let's see. I tried to highlight because it's difficult to see all the lines in bold some of the numbers. So our comp set at this moment is Essex County Saratoga. Dauphin County is where Hershey

Park is in Pennsylvania, we have Warren County highlighted in yellow and Orange County, I added because Legoland will open this year.

Joanne C. ([00:30:26](#)):

So, that's the reason they're in I typically look at demand. And we talked about that demand number all year. So when it comes down to January to December, Essex County was down 29.4%, Saratoga 38%, Dauphin County 45%, Warren County 28.7. So I think we fared relatively well in that sense and the revenue numbers that go along with that. So let me scroll down to... I just happened to highlight average daily rate.

Joanne C. ([00:31:06](#)):

Our average daily rate was up a little bit 3.2%, I did notice that Essex County was up considerably, almost 10%, and I was able to look at the properties that subscribe. So the results from that we're looking at this midterm report is larger hotel properties that happened to subscribe to this trend reporting. So it's not every hotel and motel in the campground but it is, as Kathy will attest to, a very good indicator of what's going on.

Joanne C. ([00:31:37](#)):

So I took a quick look at which properties were subscribing in Essex County, they have fewer properties subscribing but maybe some of them had higher end and were able to ask a greater rate. Their ADR for 2020 was \$185 whereas in Warren County rate was 157. But that was still up 3% for Warren County over previous years. There's lots of other good information but I thought these two tables might be good to look at.

Joanne C. ([00:32:07](#)):

So if anyone has a question about in depth STR reports, it's many pages but I could share. Typically, I shared demand from month to month. I also have a day by day breakdown. So when we come to a large event in [inaudible 00:32:25] for example, we can specifically choose the dates from one year to the next and compare occupancy or demand for a specific event.

Frank D. ([00:32:38](#)):

Joanne it's Frank. Oh, I'm sorry did somebody want to go?

Jim S. ([00:32:42](#)):

No, go ahead Frank.

Frank D. ([00:32:42](#)):

So Joanne I'm surprised the Warren County occupancy percent... And so Kathy, you see this more often than I as well. The drop to... from 52%, 52.7 to 38.3 this year surprised me. I would not have thought it to be so dramatic from what we were hearing.

Joanne C. ([00:33:08](#)):

So that's occupancy and not demand.

Frank D. ([00:33:10](#)):

Right, right. So that's guests that actually checked... that's the hotel reporting back, this is how many rooms are rented.

Joanne C. (00:33:18):

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Frank D. (00:33:22):

All right. And then you see the revenue per available room number, that revenue par number is a reflection of the revenue in a business. So for Warren County this year, on average a property's taking in \$60 per room on the property. So we're ATR is how many... what they rented the room for. So it's kind of a blend of occupancy. I didn't think... I expected to see a number in the 40s. That's the only takeaway for me, an occupancy percent. And Joanne what was the number? Can you remind me the demand number? What did that swing by? So down 27-

Joanne C. (00:34:00):

Let me just scroll up. Demand we were at [inaudible 00:34:03] 28.7.

Frank D. (00:34:06):

Yeah, it's about the same. Yeah, percentage wise.

Joanne C. (00:34:08):

Right. And revenue is approximately the same.

Frank D. (00:34:11):

Yep.

Kathy Muncil (00:34:12):

[inaudible 00:34:12] In terms of looking at Essex County, it's an interesting study that all of us in the hotel industry have to consider every day when we're setting our rates. It's you'd say, "Wow, look, their ADR's up," but then look at their occupancy as well it is an extraordinarily fine balance between raising your rates and affecting your occupancy. And in their case, you have to look at it the fact that Frank is brought to our attention that our demand is down about what our revenue par makes sense, based on where we've been.

Jim S. (00:34:48):

So one other interesting point maybe to throw in the mix is I've been having a conversation with a number of finance people that I work with in my previous life adjust and these are people who are trying to determine how to trade based on the impacts of COVID and the responses of different markets to COVID. And one of the things that, that world looks at is literally concentric circles from major metro areas, particularly New York City. And they believe there's a linear relationship to the tourism effect. So in other words, the places that are in the first concentric circle from New York City, but that are viewed as a way out of the city and out of density like Long Island fared better than places that are two hours away, which fared better than places that are three hours away. And they're actually building algorithms to look at investment ratios based on that but they're also trying to figure out how sustainable that will be in a post-COVID world.

Jim S. (00:35:55):

So I only throw that out, because they were checking for information from me trying to figure out whether or not it followed that kind of logic. And it appears, if you look at that occupancy data, that it supports that that hypothesis.

Kathy M. (00:36:11):

Jim, one point is what you brought up and that is, there's a false sense of security in that New York kept everybody in New York. And when that goes away, there will be a very different picture.

Jim S. (00:36:24):

This is fantastic information Joanne and it's an example I think of what happens when we bring insightful information to people who all have something maybe to both learn from, but also something to add to. And to me it's one of the greatest accomplishments of this group, is how that information which has been available is now becoming much more of a tool for so many enjoying, you've been so fundamental in that and I'm so grateful not only from an EDC standpoint, but also just from a working group standpoint. And so we got to figure out, what's the right core piece of this to keep going so that we can all continue to learn but also continue to help, but this is fantastic.

John W. (00:37:09):

James, you have your hand up? James [inaudible 00:37:12].

James Griffith (00:37:12):

I do, thank you. Joanne, what's the metric for demand? How is that construed? What-

Joanne C. (00:37:21):

Demand is number of rooms sold, actual number of rooms.

James G. (00:37:25):

Oh, okay. Okay, thank you.

Joanne C. (00:37:28):

So hopefully next month I'll have the new report on short term rentals and I think that'll be another very... it'll be set up almost the same way, the same comparison of analytics so we can factor that into the mix.

Jim S. (00:37:44):

Well, that's wonderful. Thank you Joanne and [crosstalk 00:37:46] go ahead.

Mark B. (00:37:48):

[inaudible 00:37:48] jump in for a second, it's mark. I think this is very, very helpful Joanne, thank you. And it really, really underscores the need not only for data that's retrospective, but prospective. We need to understand now, how do we prepare ourselves for this coming summer, so that we capture more of the demand, we position the region to benefit to a greater degree. So this is really helpful, thank you.

Joanne C. (00:38:13):

Mm-hmm (affirmative). [inaudible 00:38:15]

Kathy M.(00:38:17):

Thank you, I promise to [last 00:38:19]. I think it's also important for everybody to consider how we are... how important tourism is relative to our county. When you look at Saratoga, our supply is 30% more, when you look at Essex County, it's more than double. So things that affect us have a bigger effect or a bigger audience of businesses and therefore the all the related amenities because we are a very large supply all the time.

Jim S. (00:38:51):

That's also an interesting point you make Kathy because if you look at the supply, it's relatively stable. But I mean if anything, it's moving down by 2%. Is that... Do we have any insight to that?

Kathy M. (00:39:07):

Joanne has the list, it'll tell you exactly who ends up being part of that number and this is not all the supply. Joanne, that is correct. This comes right off of the listing of who's in it, correct? And this is the people who report for the whole thing is this on 6000 to 9000 units.

Joanne C. (00:39:26):

This is the entire population.

Kathy M. (00:39:27):

Okay. [crosstalk 00:39:29] And the other thing is it does not at all include condos, or home rentals, or even Airbnb. This is strictly the definition of hotels, it's not campgrounds, it's not... so I'm mentioning all these other things that show you how big tourism is within Warren County and especially as it relates to other counties.

Jim S. (00:39:56):

That's probably the next wave of activity Joanne is for us to work with you as you're able because you got a lot of things competing for your time, but figuring out how can we help you collect either information or maybe supplement you to get at some of these other things that are maybe important to the community, but maybe not the highest priority for you and your office as you're trying to drive this specific demand?

Jim S.(00:40:20):

Just getting a sense of what that is so that the public can be educated, as Kathy is saying, this is the total amount of capacity that's in the marketplace. And therefore, the economic... the reason this is important is, the economic impact associated with that capacity has such a effect on every household and every citizen. We want to help figure out how to get that message out but to do it in a way that is hopefully not obtrusive, it's additive to what you're doing. That's the goal anyway.

Joanne C. (00:40:47):

We look forward to working with you on all of that, yeah. Additionally, I have a number, and it is looking back from DEC on number of campgrounds and sites sold over the previous years. So again, that's just one more little piece of the puzzle. It's not the private campgrounds but its considerable number of campers, and we know that that was... anything outdoors was through the roof this past year. So another piece of the puzzle.

Jim S. (00:41:17):

Well, its wonderful data and some good news and some things we can build on here.

Joanne C. (00:41:24):

Exactly.

Jim S. (00:41:27):

John maybe we go back to the picture of everybody.

Joanne C. (00:41:32):

Oh, sorry about that. I will stop sharing.

Mike W. (00:41:35):

This is Mike, I just have a question about the cell phone data. And I'm not really sure what that means for us but it's a lot of data. I think back about my private sector career, they were talking about big data, and how do you clean information out of all this data? Are there any other regions that are using the cell phone data that we can learn from per se and are there any best practices that we can capture?

Jim S. (00:42:06):

Well, I have a session with all the economic development directors in the capital region next week. And one of the topics is that exact conversation everyone is asking that same question, Mike. I think the analytics are available, both Google and phone base data, you can get some of it that's public. And then there are several proprietary databases that track it. But all of us are asking who's using it best so that we can target the data that we get to be most effective?

Jim S. (00:42:41):

And no one has a clear answer that I've been able to discern yet. This is fairly new, pioneering territory but one thing that's very important that we're asking that maybe is beyond... it's kind of in the space between tourism and traditional economic development, is if somebody comes and they have an out of 518 area code, and they stay for longer than two weeks, what is the economic multiplier there? It's beyond what you would see as a traditional tourist visit and it's not somebody who's moved here. It's a new third hybrid category where someone is leaving their life here, their kids are probably going to school, they're shopping at the grocery store. They're part of our community for some period of time.

Jim S. (00:43:31):

Now, for some communities like in Andrea's area she knows this well, there's plenty of people who have second homes and it's kind of indiscernible sometimes about whether or not they live in Westchester or they live in [inaudible 00:43:43]. They go back and forth. But for some of our areas this is unique. Glens

Falls has not traditionally seen that and yet, we are now starting to see it. What we need to do is to figure out, what would that lead us to do differently?

Jim S. ([00:43:59](#)):

Is there both revenue that if we're capturing that's good, or is there revenue we're leaving on the table there that we need to figure out how to better capture? Is there opportunities for us to see that in terms of some of the investments that we make? So for instance if they're coming primarily for recreation, that's clearly something that would prioritize those kind of public investments. But we need to know that before we make any decision, and that's why we're eager to try to get as much best practice as we can here.

Mike W. ([00:44:32](#)):

[inaudible 00:44:32] Looking forward to-

Jim S. ([00:44:33](#)):

Well, Joanne thank you that was wonderful. Beth, you're next on my screen, how are you?

Beth Gilles ([00:44:42](#)):

I'm good, thanks. I don't have too much new from last week. I do want to say the ROOST survey that you mentioned, I asked the Capitol district and the Hudson Valley Regional Planning boards to push that out as well.

Jim S. ([00:44:53](#)):

Thank you.

Beth G. ([00:44:54](#)):

So hopefully, they'll get that out and they'll get some good responses back. We've been spending a lot of time working on our business retention and expansion program with our consultants from [inaudible 00:45:03] just setting up the whole system and HubSpot, we spent some time kind of refining our vision for it, there's a lot of different ways you can go with these kind of programs.

Beth G. ([00:45:15](#)):

So for us we really want to be able to identify the needs of small businesses within our region and then see how we can address those needs. And so we are going to do some kind of survey but it's going to be a much more forward looking survey, not so much of what was the impact of COVID. But were this to happen again what are the things that you would need as a business to be able to weather it better. So they're... [inaudible 00:45:44] is in the middle of getting that together for us, and we're hoping to get that survey out sometime next month, that might end up being in March.

Beth G. ([00:45:51](#)):

We know everybody's been surveyed to death. So we just want it to be really meaningful and easy and available for people. So that's pretty much all I have.

Jim S. ([00:46:03](#)):

Well, thank you Beth. We'll certainly do everything we can to help you in the effort of getting that out to our constituencies and not only letting people know how important it is, but maybe if there's help in terms of contacting people to make sure that we execute on it, we'd be glad to help you there. Thank you for all your help on the [inaudible 00:46:20] survey as well. Okay, Chandler and Kelly, we talked earlier this week, maybe you want to share some of what you guys are working on?

Chandler ([00:46:31](#)):

Sure, Jim. First of all, I'm still working on the... with Kelly on the conversions of lodging into private properties and trying to determine the economic impact of that, looking at multipliers as well. I've reached out to Anne Marie at the college, I'm going to have a meeting with her later today to talk about what numbers might be effective for us to think about in doing some of that analysis.

Chandler ([00:47:00](#)):

And also looking at the... with you looking at the occupancy flows, how we grow them, how we don't grow them, how we grow sales tax, how we don't grow sales tax, and then how maybe do we reinvest that to continue to grow our occupancy tax revenues in the future? So those are a couple of areas that I'm working on, I'd like to really get... maybe I need to have a meeting with Joanne or something to... or through you Jim to try to get a better grip on what our actual numbers are now.

Chandler ([00:47:33](#)):

For example, what our sales tax revenue of \$54 million, is that made up just of hotels or is it made up of autos and retail and everything? And then how do we really come up with that number of 3000 plus dollars that every homeowner taxpayer is getting a benefit from by the fact that we've got tourism and economic strength in our area? So those are a couple things I'd like to talk to maybe Joanne, later on off this meeting.

Jim S. ([00:48:06](#)):

Yeah. So we'll continue to talk and we'll capture all those things, share them with her and then figure out the easiest way for us to try to get at some of that.

Chandler ([00:48:15](#)):

Yeah.

Jim S. ([00:48:16](#)):

Kelly, what can you share?

Kelly Hatin ([00:48:18](#)):

So in addition to what Chandler just mentioned, this week I've been working with Winterfest for the welcome bags. So, that's been kind of my focus. We're going to try to get the 500 welcome bags all stuffed and ready to go for tomorrow.

Jim S. ([00:48:33](#)):

Well, that's wonderful. I appreciate you guys help both of you in terms of trying to figure out on the quantitative side, how we organize ourselves for maximum benefit. So you guys have been wonderful

participants and we're looking forward to talking some more. John, I wonder if it might be helpful to share with everyone the status of the current broadband survey and what's going to come next.

John W. ([00:48:59](#)):

Sure. Now, we're pleased we, as you know, we kicked off this broadband assessment survey last week. We've been working closely with the consultants and also the county, Sarah and [Don 00:49:13] Lehman have been just completely tremendous and the supervisors. The supervisors are really helped to get the word out. But we are pleased to report that we are at a record pace so far, in this time in a survey. Our consultants have worked with probably five or six counties before us, and we'll be continuing after us. But there are said there it is really kind of blown away by the level of interest this early in the process and that doesn't mean we're going to stop at all, we're actually going to accelerate reaching out to folks making sure that we get responses particularly in the outer areas where this is a critical problem.

John W. ([00:49:54](#)):

But right now we're on a good pace and we thank you all for, for spreading the word to about this Warren County broadband.org O-R-G. It's a really important project for us so thank you and we'll keep you posted. Pretty soon in about a week or two from now we'll be able to start seeing the mapping of via GIS of where the responses are coming from, and kind of where the holes are. So we can get out there and actually try and address some of the areas where we really want to see more more response, but that's kind of the update for us right now.

Jim S. ([00:50:29](#)):

Yeah, and just to give you guys a perspective. In the first few days we saw somewhere between three and five percent of the households in the county have already responded. And that's a fantastic outcome which I think demonstrates that not only the pent-up demand there is to contribute to this, but also the collaboration that's occurred around the communication of it. Our next wave of activity is to make sure that we're collaborating with every single school district and supervisor. John's been really aggressive about connecting with all of them so that we get the word out to every single student particularly in the outer reaches of the county, and that will be our focus area for the next week. And then this morning we started to engage with the healthcare community, particularly those that are involved in administering remote health services, to try to not only help them see why this data would be useful to them, but also to see if we could rope them into some of the communication process of making sure that, that voice is properly represented. And the Adirondack Health Institute was ridiculously helpful, I think they've already gathered some data.

Jim S. ([00:51:38](#)):

They shared with me today that there's been tens of thousands, and they had the exact number but I just don't remember it, of telehealth sessions since COVID began. And of those depending on the criteria used, one out of four to one out of six, they were either able... they were not able to hold the session or the session failed because of issues of connection. But that... in all those cases that is not only an economic impact, that is a true health effect. That meant that somebody had to go into a clinical setting in order for their needs to be met at a time when we don't want that, and they don't want that.

Jim S. ([00:52:22](#)):

So what we're trying to do is put a better economic kind of number around that, what does that actually represent in terms of cost? Good people can disagree about just how dramatic that is, but I think we can

all recognize that that's not a situation we want. And what was really... I think perhaps most enlightening to me was that they're not just focused on how do we get a broadband connection to everyone. I think everyone recognizes that at some point, we cannot run fiber up every dirt road throughout the region. But they were also very aggressive about figuring out how do we change the way that this is done, so that it could potentially be done across a cell connection.

Jim S. (00:53:09):

And then looking for partners around grants where we could test ways that this service is being delivered that still meets our patient protection criteria, but could be done in a lower bandwidth way. I think this is an area of great interest because that would have application obviously to schools and to businesses as well, if we could figure out how to thin out clients like Zoom or some of the other applications that are being used in such a way that they're still usable in some way with a much smaller connection, then we're coming at the problem in a new different way.

Jim S. (00:53:51):

So we have some people in our community and they're really thinking about this very creatively and we're excited to work with them. Okay, I'm trying to see who we haven't talked to, James what would you like to share?

James G. (00:54:06):

So I appreciate the opportunity to give you as much feedback as I can in regards to... We've been using Placer AI for about six months now. So we have some pretty in depth unique traffic from cellphone uses on all of our properties. So to give you from a large commercial retail perspective, 80% has been what we've been seeing year over a year right now in traffic generation. Largely it's due to the big boxes so that's a benefit and unfortunately we're still... without the entertainment, the movie theater and other things that's really lagging the traffic.

James G. (00:54:47):

So that's the one [barometer 00:54:52] that I can give you in regards to cell phone usage. In regards to the sales and revenues of the property the... again the big box have been doing very, very well. And the local [inaudible 00:55:07] what we're finding is that more of the... we're not getting as much of the outside travelers, we're getting more the local travelers over and over on repetitive.

James G. (00:55:15):

So most of our stays are averaging between five to seven stays a year coming back to on average per unique user. So there's some good data there and I could share some more offline with you, more specific.

Jim S. (00:55:30):

Thank you James.

James G. (00:55:30):

Thanks.

Jim S. (00:55:32):

Liza

Liza O. (00:55:32):

Good morning everyone. Thanks Jim. We saw our December unemployment rate numbers come out in the last week and Warren county is at 6% so that went up about 6%, that went up about a point. That's usual typical in the winter but we're still a point above Saratoga and Washington counties for our area. And again about 2000 fewer workers in Warren County and really for our region our tri county workforce region, about 10,000 fewer workers in the workforce right now. So that's a challenge, those folks are not looking for work. We continue to want to align what the business needs are with what our training and hiring needs are. So working with [inaudible 00:56:17] and then hearing from you guys about what the business needs are and in the most in demand industries of hospitality, manufacturing and healthcare that's really helpful.

Liza O. (00:56:28):

There continue to be a bunch of healthcare jobs that are very low paying, and people are not interested in those positions. And so we hope... we haven't heard back yet about the rural health care workforce grant we applied for, but we hope to hear back about that so we can get more people into health care training programs to meet that need and for them to see yeah you might start out at an entry level position, but look at all these other positions that could lead to. And then our push hospitality training program will be... I'm working on the marketing materials for that, so we'll be getting that going by the end of February which is wonderful, and it's been great to work with Kelly and Frank and a lot of great folks on that and Roger at Lake George Chamber. I attended the Adirondack cycling advocates meeting last night, Joanne was there as well. We need their data, their biking data for this proposal that we're giving to the municipalities about why bike share is important for here.

Liza O. (00:57:28):

So any other data anybody has around biking please send that my way, because we want to put that in the proposal that CDTA is working on right now. And then finally hiring events, there was a virtual hiring event in Schenectady yesterday from Capitol region, and I had some employees attend it and see what it was like so that we can try to do some virtual hiring events as well. And also we want to do some on site hiring events at businesses since we're not able to do in person job fairs right now.

Liza O. (00:57:57):

So those are the main things, I'm working on the child care survey. We're meeting tomorrow to review those results. We had 163 families participate in that survey and 63 businesses, so we will see what we learn from that. Any questions.

Jim S. (00:58:13):

Yesterday I saw Rebecca Wood in The Great Escape. Was that at some kind of hiring event in the building here, because it seemed like there was a fair amount of traffic?

Liza O. (00:58:25):

I'm not sure. I did come by the office yesterday but I didn't see them.

Jim S. (00:58:29):

Okay, well-

John ([00:58:29](#)):

There was a blood drive too I think yesterday.

Liza O. ([00:58:32](#)):

Yeah-

Jim S. ([00:58:33](#)):

Maybe that's what they were associated with but it was interesting when I did talk to her in the hallway, she believes they're not going to be able to get significant relief on the Jones this year and they're mitigating around that. It was interesting to talk to her about kind of almost resigned, but not in a deflated sort of way. It was much more about how do we strategize, she was very aware of your efforts to try to adopt not only [inaudible 00:58:59] tourism, but to elevate this as a career path and I found that to be fascinating because I sometimes wonder whether or not people who aren't on this group are aware of the work that's going on here, and it was clear she knew all about it and felt like it was an important strategic initiative that we're supporting her and her organization.

Liza O. ([00:59:19](#)):

Great. Yeah, I think Andrew has spoken with her because I have not spoken with her, but I look forward to speaking with her. I think it's critical that we get high school students working for a number of reasons, some of them have been in abusive households and they need to have other role models, they need to get some job readiness skills. We need to get them rooted in our community that and how much it'll help the hospitality industry. We really have to invest in our youth and I'll be getting in front of high schools with Roger in the next month or two.

Jim S. ([00:59:47](#)):

But what's interesting she shared with me that it's not linear to replace a Jones with a local worker, that right now it generally takes between two and two and a half a local workers to displace one, and it's not just hour for hour it's because of the conflicts scheduling wise, when somebody is ready to work full time versus when you're trying to juggle somebody whose schedule is constantly changing, gave me some insight to how difficult this is for so many.

Liza O. ([01:00:16](#)):

And I think the work ethic and training matters too, right? So we have some international workers who work their butts off, and then we've got some high school kids who have no work ethic. So I think that's why this training program is critical as well.

Jim S. ([01:00:31](#)):

Well, I know it's time to go but Jacob I wanted to make sure that we first thank you for hanging in there not only this week but every week. But what can you share with us about... maybe that we don't know about what's happening down in Washington?

Jacob Miller ([01:00:44](#)):

Yeah, I feel like there's a lot going on but not a ton legislatively currently, obviously there's word on the street that there's another relief package moving down the line, but obviously that's still pretty fresh so I don't know many, many details about that, but some more clarity should be coming soon as we get closer.

Jacob M. ([01:01:04](#)):

I've heard that March is the target date for getting that passed, which obviously is [inaudible 01:01:09] away so I will keep you guys updated if that information comes in. I learned a lot today though guys and I really appreciate all the information, the data that was presented. Laizer when it comes to the workers and work visas we'd be happy to help any businesses in the area who applied for H-2Bs that might need some assistance or just some clarity with Department of Labor. So if you want to let me know about any businesses [inaudible 01:01:36] reach out to our office, I'd be happy to speak with them.

Liza O. ([01:01:38](#)):

Great. Thank you.

Jacob M. ([01:01:40](#)):

Yep, absolutely. And just moving forward not a ton of good information for you guys right now coming from the federal side, but I will obviously let you guys all know if something does come up. But I just want to thank you guys all for the information today, this was really helpful and I'm looking forward moving forward with our new organization that we've kind of planned out here and trying to make sure that we get the best results for this part of Warren County, so thank you guys.

Mike W. ([01:02:08](#)):

Jim it's Mike, id like to interrupt and ask Jake a question. Jake we've talked on this group and I'm sure you've heard it about the stimulus and the extended unemployment benefits. Is there any talk about taking that \$300 additional that everyone's getting, and giving them a portion of that if they go back to work? To kind of incent people.

Jacob M. ([01:02:33](#)):

I have not heard anything about that but I can definitely pass that along to the congresswoman and our chief of staff and just give them the information that [inaudible 01:02:41]

Mike W. ([01:02:43](#)):

Any help we can get I think would be good for us for sure.

Jacob M. ([01:02:47](#)):

Yeah, I heard that was proposed last year during... last summer during the [inaudible 01:02:52] stimulus but it didn't seem to go anywhere, but I will pass that on to the Congresswoman.

Jim S. ([01:02:59](#)):

Well, thank you Jacob. One last thing I want to mention to everybody before we go, there was an announcement in the paper yesterday that the city hired their own economic development advisor, and by the way I want to make sure if we're going to welcome him, Jeff Flagg as soon as he's able to step into the role to this group and to this community. I want to make sure everybody knows that we need

every resource we can possibly get, and to go focus as we've been talking about on being better going forward. The mayor and the city collaborated with the EDC on that hire, and we supported it 100% because one of the things that was confused before was whether or not the EDC was working on behalf of the city or the county, and I don't want there to ever be confusion about that. The city has some very specific needs that they need to support every day, we are responsible for the strategic overall environment to make this a business-friendly community.

Jim S. ([01:03:53](#)):

Those two are complementary and Jeff Flagg if you haven't met him is a wonderful resource. He's very smart, he's very focused on sustainability which is a piece that will help us develop not only in the city but in the entire region. His expertise is going to be a welcome addition to this group. So next week you'll see him and hopefully if he's able to join us and I think there will be more by the way before we're done, people who are committing themselves to this work.

Jim S. ([01:04:22](#)):

And as they come in they're going to be welcomed with open arms because we need everybody pulling for us to be the great that we're going to be, so more to come on that.

Amy C. ([01:04:35](#)):

Yeah, thanks Jim. Dr. Flagg is a wonderful addition and we love those PhDs, we got a few on this call too.

**Adjournment:**

Mark B. ([01:04:44](#)):

Thank you everyone for another productive week.

Amy C. ([01:04:48](#)):

Take care, stay safe.

Mike ([01:04:51](#)):

Thanks Jim.