

**Minutes of Meeting
North Shore Council of Governments
Thursday, August 16, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
West Monroe Town Hall
46 County Route 11
West Monroe, New York**

Attending:

Central Square: Randy House, Mudd Murphy, Tom Rinefierd

Cleveland: Laureen Tackman, Christine Schreiber

Constantia: Ron Chapman, Richard (Rip) Colesante, Tom Moran, Dan Poné

West Monroe: Dale Maher, Michael Hickey, Mike Walker

NorCOG staff: Paul M. Baxter, Heidi Tompkins

Tug Hill Commission: Katie Malinowski, Matt Johnson, Matthew Smith

MRB Group: Tracy Verrier (via Zoom)

Operation Oswego County: Austin Wheelock

Oswego County Office of Strategic Initiatives: Dave Turner

Other attendance:

Nic Capozza

Meeting called to order and attendees were introduced.

Presentation and Q&A with Dave Turner, Director of Office of Strategic Initiatives, and Austin Wheelock, County of Oswego Industrial Development Agency

Austin began with observations about Micron impacts on Central New York. An Oswego County Micron Strategy Steering Committee was launched in early 2023, with 25 members. Dave Turner touched on county (possibly county-wide) infrastructure efforts, and spoke about a possible public infrastructure authority. The county has retained an engineering firm to prepare an analysis, including an inventory of who owns what.

Austin noted that future growth can only occur as fast as available workforce.

Dale asked whether it would be possible to get information on comparable development elsewhere, to gain from their experience.

Nic recalled GE expansion in Syracuse in the 1950s, and Micron is estimated to be twice that.

Dave observed that the GE growth occurred around the plant; the Micron development and related growth is expected to be more regional. People these days drive further to get to work, especially with higher incomes.

In terms of preparation, Austin noted that there is more to do than we have money or time for.

Mudd said that we depend on state corridors, and the state has been unresponsive. Roads need redesign, and when roads need work, it isn't getting done.

Austin said there is a traffic study underway looking at a lot of roads and their needs. Major work is taking place on I-81 (downtown Syracuse), with a decade or longer timeline. Micron is north of that, and can avoid those Syracuse complications. Investors aren't going to wait to deal with Syracuse detours.

There are workforce development opportunities with SUNY Oswego, Cayuga Community College, and CiTi BOCES.

Existing employers will feel increased labor competition from Micron and spinoff businesses. General discussion followed on state obstacles to small business growth. Austin recognizes these and advocates at the state level. We do what we can do.

Dave Turner has been out listening for communities to identify problems and obstacles, to be aware of them. Austin said the way to run bottlenecks up the chain is via Empire State Development.

There's a lot of federal money out there at this point, via the Senate and the House. Dave noted the federal government has made chips a security issue, and they're under a lot of pressure to perform.

Matt asked about the timetable on county comprehensive plan updates; Dave answered that county planning has been trying to get two new employees on staff for planning and economic development.

Tom Moran asked about county use of the old railroad bed for a possible sewer line to Fulton. Dave said that is only a concept at this point, but it's been fairly well received. It's both faster and less expensive to develop a trunk line, and Fulton needs \$40 million to upgrade their plant in a ten year project. Phoenix also needs more capacity; they're at capacity now. Money is the big obstacle. They needed \$7 million pre-COVID; it's up to \$10 million now. Nic asked about who was the engineering firm for the wastewater study; Dave said it was C&S.

Mike Walker observed that the government wants everything green – where is the green energy coming to power the Micron development? He further noted that the estimated cost of bringing sewers to West Monroe have gone from \$12 million to \$25 million, which is unaffordable.

Austin agreed, saying that the same is true for other Oswego County towns.

Rip said we can't afford a lot of what is needed for development, and questioned whether that will stall the progress of development. Austin replied it could, or it could stall spinoff projects.

Dale asked whether communities nearby were in better shape; Austin noted Hastings' water and sewer development, and Dave identified Minetto's wastewater treatment plant capacity at 50%.

Austin said all wastewater treatment plants have their issues; perhaps best addressed by an independent infrastructure authority.

Dave identified one thing in our favor: our proximity to Micron, combined with an emphasis on water quality. We have the ability to say what will happen "if you don't do this;" the ability to identify negative water quality impacts.

Rip questioned whether DEC really even supports this project. Austin answered that DEC prefers fewer wastewater treatment plants than many many more failing or inadequate septic systems.

Mike Walker noted that everything in West Monroe was within a 500' "check zone." Dave Turner spoke of a recent Supreme Court ruling regarding wetlands. He added that lower quality wetlands near wastewater treatment plants may have value as wastewater filters.

Nic likes the concept of an authority as an efficient model.

Dave Turner encouraged identification of problems in common and bringing them to DEC, Nic noted that things are much more complicated in a regulatory sense now, and that Micron does have an ear in Albany with the Governor's office.

Austin identified a need for conversation with communities to identify problems and opportunities.

Randy said that it would be possible to push West Monroe sewage to Central Square across I-81 if permitted to do so. The village plant is at 50% capacity and development is limited to the north. Austin thought this might be more doable if such a project took place on a smaller scale, in phases – first, NYS Route 49 to County Route 37.

Paul noted the Micron plant's 950 megawatt need is comparable to the total combined output of Nine Mile One and Nine Mile Two.

Mike Walker asked what will our tax bill be in five years; Austin predicted that it is going to be up.

Dale is concerned about competition for available labor; Dave Turner expects that will be more true of specific skill sets.

The county has a new mobility manager, to identify transportation problems, and how needs can be solved in a public way.

Ron Chapman suggested another meeting of this type in the fall, or within the next six months.

Dale asked about the Global precedent; Austin identified the first phase got started, and the next phase may be getting underway. It's a much smaller project, but could be used as an example of impact on a community.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted



Paul M. Baxter
Municipal Management Consultant
North Shore Council of Governments