

EMPIRE STATE POVERTY REDUCTION INITIATIVE  
STEERING COMMITTEE MEETING  
April 12, 2017  
City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Council Chamber  
245 Washington Street  
Watertown, NY 13601

**MINUTES**

Attending: Sharon Addison; Roger Ambrose; Joe Butler; Dawn Cole; Melinda Gault; Bob Gorman; Patti LaBarr; Carole McCoy; Barb Peck (attended for Karen Richmond); Jim Schell(attended for Teresa Gaffney) Peter Schmitt; Jeff Smith; Kate Wehrle (attended for Assemblywoman Addie Jenne)

Guest: Diane Leonard, DH Leonard Consulting & Grant Writing Services, LLC;  
Liz Morrissey, Office of NYS Office Temporary & Disability Assistance

Staff assistance: Tobi Darrah, United Way

Approval of Minutes

Peter Schmitt, ESPRI Project Director, opened the meeting at 4:02 p.m.

A motion was made by Carol McCoy to accept the minutes of the February 8, 2017 Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative Steering Committee (ESPRI) meeting and seconded by Melinda Gault. The motion carried.

Liz Morrissey Introduction

Mr. Schmitt welcomed and introduced Liz Morrissey. Ms. Morrissey is with the Office of New York State Office Temporary & Disability Assistance and helps assist with ESPRI.

Mr. Schmitt shared that the Jefferson Leadership Institute Class of 2017 is holding a race, “Race Against Poverty”, that will be held on May 6, 2017. All proceeds will benefit “Getting Ahead in a Just-Getting-By World”, an anti-poverty initiative being led by CAPC, The Watertown Urban Mission, and The Volunteer Transportation Center. Mr. Schmitt distributed the registration form and asked everyone to please share with their staff and friends.

### Engagement Review – Barrier Confirmation

Mr. Schmitt thanked Dawn Cole and Melinda Gault for their commitment, hard work, and long hours that have been spent organizing and working with the work groups for all the meetings. Ms. Cole shared her perception of the engagement sessions. There has been a total of ten meetings at seven locations with 100 participants ranging from 3 to 23 at each meeting. She shared there are some barriers and interconnections within the four work groups, Workforce Development; Education; Transportation; and Housing, that are intertwined. Ms. Cole shared that there are also some common themes within the four work groups which are confusion due to lack of knowledge of what all agencies offer; that people in poverty feel a stigma when applying for social services; transportation issues and that while trying to move out of poverty there is a benefit cliff of moving one step forward and then two steps backward. Overall she felt they were great discussions and good stories. People also shared some painful issues and shared that living in poverty can be very difficult. Ms. Cole shared how important it was that all engagement meetings ended with a positive note.

### Work Group Review – Initiatives Under Review

Mr. Schmitt reviewed the handout that described the initiatives under review for each work group and the programs presented for consideration.

### Survey Review

Ms. Cole reviewed the Watertown ESPRI Community Needs Survey and shared that the survey was developed as a one size fits all and asked the committee if any questions. Ms. Cole recommends that this survey be available and distributed at Community Action Planning Council, Watertown Urban Mission, Children's Home, Salvation Army, United Way's partner agencies and the United Way ESPRI website. The Steering Committee gave the approval to go ahead with the survey.

### Timelines

Mr. Schmitt reviewed the timelines. There was a lot of discussion regarding the RFP's and the date to be developed for distribution by May 29. Mr. Schmitt shared that he will write the RFP for the four initiatives and that we need to determine the target audience. He suggested that maybe the committee can consider where we can combine initiatives to have a more meaningful project with an end date. Also keep in mind that we need to be able to sustain the projects. The Steering Committee decided to change the date for RFP's to be developed for distribution from May 29 to the end of July. Mr. Schmitt will make that date change and will email the updated timelines.

## Unresolved Issues

Mr. Schmitt shared that part of the ESPRI mandate is to have social programs outside ESPRI. Mr. Gorman then shared that he and Patti LaBarr, Superintendent Watertown City School District, have a meeting set up to talk with Don Mesibov from Potsdam about how the program, “Teaching Teachers how to Teach Children in Poverty”, can be brought to Watertown City School District.

Mr. Gorman discussed that he will add \$20,000 to the ESPRI budget for the Bridges Out of Poverty program that will come out of the ESPRI administration costs. Ms. Cole shared that the cost for the Getting Ahead Program is \$10,000 - \$12,000 and the program runs for sixteen weeks with a total of around 14 participants.

## Next Meeting

The next Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative Steering Committee meeting will be held Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 4:00 p.m., City Hall, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Council Chamber .

The meeting was adjourned at 5:17 p.m.