



## NORTH CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA REGIONAL PLANNING and DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

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NCPRPDC Board Meeting  
Wednesday, October 23, 2019

### Board Members Present

Jim Thomas  
Lynn Crosby  
Dave Greene  
Mark McCracken  
John Sobel  
Jodi Brennan  
Bradley Lashinsky  
Matthew Quesenberry  
Daniel Freeburg  
Jodi Foster  
Tim Pearson  
Jeffrey Pisarcik  
Jack Matson  
Jill Martin-Rend  
Carol Duffy  
Tom Kreiner  
Jeremy Morey  
Sara Andrews  
Douglas Morley

Cameron County  
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Clearfield County  
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Jefferson County  
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McKean County  
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McKean County  
Potter County

### Staff

James Chorney  
Amy Kessler  
Cheryl DePanfilis  
Christine Perneski  
Julie Kasmierski  
Katie Geci  
Edward Matts  
Mary Lou Jessop

### Guests

Kim Thomas  
Tom Kronenwetter  
Mark Adams  
Fritz Lecker  
Caroline Newhouse  
Debra Thompson  
Jay Breneman  
Hoop Roche  
Susan Yurkeiwicz  
Thomas Beveridge  
Brian Stockman  
Brienne Fleming

Northwest Regional Office, DCED Erie  
DCED  
Senator Scarnati's Office  
Elk County Commissioner Candidate  
Bradford Area Alliance  
Strategy Solutions  
Strategy Solutions  
Strategy Solutions  
Strategy Solutions  
Coppolo & Coppolo  
Ridgway Record  
Courier Express

Chair Matt Quesenberry welcomed everyone to the meeting and called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM with the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

## **INTRODUCTIONS**

As there were guests present, Chair Quesenberry asked everyone to introduce themselves.

## **MINUTES**

With no corrections, additions or amendments to the July 24 Executive Committee Minutes and Full Board of Directors' Minutes, August 21 Executive Committee Minutes and September 25 Executive Committee Minutes, Doug Morley made the motion to accept the minutes as presented, seconded by Jeff Pisarcik. Motion unanimously passed.

Before getting into the Presentation by Strategy Solutions, Matt asked the legislative representatives attending if they had anything to say.

Mark Adams stated they are winding up the legislative cycle, only nine more days to go.

Kim Thomas, Northwest Regional Director for DECD, said she was happy to be back after being gone for four months and looks forward to working with us. If you have any concerns feel free to reach out to her.

Tom Kronenwetter said he was here to support whatever is going on at the meeting.

## **PRESENTATION**

Matt thanked everyone for attending the meeting today.

He then turned the meeting over to Strategy Solutions for their presentation. Debra Thompson gave a brief background on how this came to be. They made a presentation to the Executive Committee at their February 27, 2019, meeting and the Kick-Off meeting was held on July 24 to the Full Board of Directors. At that time there was talk about what is the vision for the future.

Strategy Solutions then spent the months of August through October 18 looking at the internal needs of North Central, talking to employees, looking at the external needs of North Central, talking to elected officials, municipalities, other stakeholders, board members, looking at some Best Practices in economic development and non-profit organizational structure. They are at this meeting to look and start to ask and answer questions "where are we now" and "where do we want to be as an organization." Today is a snap shot of where are we today, what do we want to see in the future and what are our priorities moving forward, and also to engage the Board and Staff in that process.

They have additional work to do to finish out their engagement to fully develop goals and objectives. This is the 'step in the middle' of the process where they engage the Board and Staff to look at where are we and where should we be going.

Matt Quesenberry gave the opening remarks.

“As we heard from Debra, that is sort of the present and what we hope will be the future.”

“What I’d like to do this morning is just rewind the clock a little bit and talk about how we got to where we are. And in order to do that, I hope to only take a few minutes, but in order to do that we have to wind the clock way back, all the way back, kind of World War II back. And what we remember after that was success. Right? Things worked out thankfully for us; and in the 1950s the country underwent a tremendous amount of prosperity. And we all remember what this was like from our history lessons.”

“But what happens in the 1960s is that folks began to take a look around the country and realized that there were going to be parts of our country that did not experience the same level of economic prosperity. So beginning under the Kennedy Administration and then the Johnson Administration, a good bit of reports, books, things that were written, caught the attention of the White House and of Congress. And so we began what would become known as the War on Poverty. It was an effort to try to get out to areas that were not able to keep up the way other parts of the country had done. So during this time, we had things like Medicaid, Medicare, Food Stamps, big programs, big social programs. And wrapped up in all that was what we would know today as the Appalachian Regional Commission, parts of 13 states that were particularly hard hit, that were not able to keep up and not able to share in the same economic prosperity as much of the rest of the country. So they lapped these 13 states together and becomes the ARC, the Appalachian Regional Commission, of which part of western Pennsylvania is a member, us.”

“So by 1965 we have the ARC. A couple years later they’ve realized, while in order for us to take those Federal dollars and funnel them down and try to do some good at the local level, we need a middle man. We need an organization capable of being a vehicle to receive those dollars and execute those programs.”

“So by 1968 we have the North Central Pennsylvania Regional Planning and Development Commission. Six counties become the LDD and that is the organization responsible and tasked for fulfilling that mission to try to make improvements, to try to reach out and do things to help these local areas that hadn’t yet been able to fulfill the promise that most of the rest of the country had following World War II.”

“However, even though we have an LDD and we are getting there, there has to be an oversight apparently. I’m not of the ‘70s vintage so I don’t quite remember back this far, a few of you might, trying not to look at you, Doug, but a few of you might. And the Oversight Committee, of course, is going to be all of us. Right, we need a Board.”

“But my experiences taught me that what happens is this is sort of an upside down approach, right? That often times these top down initiatives, although well intended, if we don’t have that local buy-in, we didn’t ask for this to happen. And at times when Harrisburg is telling us what we’re going to provide for you, and the Federal Government is telling us what we what we’re going to provide for you, what were Ronald Regan’s nine scariest words in the English language? **‘I’m from the government and I’m here to help.’**”

“So I don’t know what it might have been like in his early days. But I have a hunch there was probably some skepticism about what was this coming down on us. And we didn’t ask for it; and frankly we may not want it, but we got it. It’s here. And now it has become a part of who we are low these many years, and it’s worked to some degree. We’ve had successes, but what’s happened over the last 50 years is we’ve seen shifts. In the time I have been here for the last 25 years, the thinking about this kind of approach has changed. We are no longer a country that supports pursuing these big initiatives. So over

time there became some discussion about whether this is really what we want. Is this really good for us? Is this a good use of Federal dollars? Has this organization outlived its useful purpose?"

"So that takes us kind of into the '90s and 2000s and there is some whispering and we're not quite sure. All the while the staff here continues to do the good work that we know they are capable of doing. The Board dutiful shows up."

"But in 2017 something happens. We lose Workforce Development. It knocks a big underpinning out from underneath of this organization. And it really was quite a moment for us to sort of wake up and realize that this is a new reality. This is a real threat to the continuation of this organization."

"By 2018 we lose our Executive Director of 12 years. He is now gone and I think thankfully under Doug's leadership at that time, you kept the wheels from coming off the cart. But we really needed to look in the mirror. We needed to answer those skeptics and say "are we a relic of the '60s?" "Are we still going to serve a useful purpose to our constituents?"

"So by fall of last year, in this room, we invite every county commissioner from all six counties to come to one place, at one time, and have a very honest discussion. Seventeen of 18 show up. I don't know if that's unprecedented or not, but it was, for me, impressive to see. And we sat down and asked those questions. Let's not fool ourselves. If we no longer have any value, then we need to figure out how to unwind this organization, if that's possible. We really needed to take a hard look in the mirror. We came away from that meeting with two takeaways. One we have an impressive track record. For those people thankfully like professionally myself, I've had a chance to be on the front lines with Amy, with Bob, with folks that are here and have been here for years and years, Pat Brennen of the Loan Program and more recently Jenn Hibbard. And we have seen the good results. And so one of the takeaways was "yah, this is important to us. This adds value to the people we serve."

"The second takeaway was 'we want a future for this organization.' So we decided at that moment that we were going to double down, and we were going to do whatever it was that was necessary. As a group we agreed that we were going to move forward. We're going to reset this vision for North Central. And here is why I think it's really cool. Back in the '60s it came down full on top of us and we scrambled and we worked and we tried to make it fit. To me I see this as an opportunity for us to flip that on its head."

"Beginning in this year when we hired Strategy Solutions to take a look at the organization, we get to control our own destiny. Understandably there is going to be Federal manuals collecting dust somewhere that tell us what we have to sort of do. But this is almost like the time when you first realized you were an adult and you could have ice cream for dinner if you wanted, or something. It's like "Hey, we own this organization. This is for the people that we serve as elected officials, as appointed people."

"I don't want folks coming to these meetings just because they're filling a chair. We've played this 50-year old telephone game where because the guy before you had the chair, now you get the chair. And he says "I don't know what they do but show up four times a year and don't be late." I want people that have a passion like you would with any other organization you're a part of. You just don't inherit it. They just don't tell you "Hey, by the way, now you're a commissioner. You're in the Running Club. Congratulations."

“I want you to be able to have that fire that you realize the value and see the importance of attending here. And so we’ve got a chance now to resort of refit this thing, retrofit this thing and get it to a place where we feel we can take ownership and that we come to these meetings, they have value for us. And what we do unearth under the direction of the Board matters.”

“So with that we hired Strategy Solutions, they are here this morning, we hope to provide you what is the beginnings of our next 50 years. That’s it, that’s all I’ve got. Thank you.”

Jim Chorney then gave the “State of the Agency” of wher North Central is now. Jim thanked everyone for attending. He had a chance to call all the Board Members and talk to them one-on-one and get to know them and talk to them about what we were going to do at today’s meeting. What is important to Jim is your opinion. He doesn’t know how much was asked of you in the past; but moving forward, he wants to see people who want to be on the Board. People that are passionate about what North Central does; and are the people out there on the front lines that sell North Central and like what we do. People that can promote us and be our champions. That is what Jim is looking for. And that is what he hopes to get out of this whole process.

Jim thanked his staff for preparing this presentation. He highlighted a few things we have done but more importantly is giving Deb and her staff enough time to go through some of the results they have and talk about what we can do to try to fix some of the problems that we have. He said when he was talking to Jack (Matson), Jack said that “it’s not we’re righting the ship, it’s just directing it, fine tuning it.” And that is what we need and there are a lot of people in this room that can help us do that.

One thing that we, staff, recognized early on is that a lot of people in this room may not know exactly what North Central does. We are going to try to fix that. Some might know of some of the programs we offer such as our Loan Program with Jenn Hibbard, or our Economic Department. We want to be able to educate everyone.

Jim noted that the first statement of his power point, “North Central serves as a forum through which local business and communities work cooperatively to improve our Region” is probably the most important because that is why we are here to improve the Region. Hopefully as we move forward as a group, everyone keeps that in mind, that we are moving forward as a Region, not as individuals or groups, but as a Region.

North Central has four major departments: Community Development & Regional Planning/Transportation; Economic Development; Information Technology and Broadband (IT); and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

Things that are currently happening that the Board should know about. One of the problems that we had coming out of our former executive director leaving was the fact that we had vacant space which was going to cause us a problem with paying our bills. We were able to bring in, through the help of some partners, Keystone Rural Health Consortia. They have signed a 15-year lease, renewable every five years. They just recently approached Jim about taking on some additional space within the building.

We have a new sign out front that was in partnership with people not only within the organization here, but with 911 who is directly behind us and then the WRC Center which has two facilities further back.

Regarding the maintenance of the facilities, we have shared roads and are working with them to try to improve the roads.

We continue to try to engage people as far as some of the under-utilized space that we have. This is a big old building and we use it to the best of our abilities, but there are still things we can do to try to bring in new tenants. We have done it in the past and we continue to market the space.

Regarding Funding Sources, as far as Cash Flow for the organization, with Keystone Rural Health Consortia renting space, we are in a good position. Our traditional programs still remain in kind of flat funding. We haven't seen too many significant increases within that and the local matching dollars remain a challenge with those programs. We have seen some new funding opportunities, specifically within the Rural Broadband areas. We have some training areas that we have gotten access to additional funds. There is opportunity for us to work, kind of in the fringes, of the Opioid situation, teaming up with Workforce Solutions for North Central Pennsylvania.

We have talked about and we recognize that we don't get out and about as much as we should and we are trying to rectify that. We try to attend, at least once a quarter, the County Commissioner Meetings. We use all the social media platforms that we can use to try to get our message out. We do press releases, stories, pictures. We just had Anytime Lunch posted on our Facebook site as far as them being downtown Ridgway and the schedule they have. We are trying to let people know what we do as an organization and all we are involved with.

We are outreaching to other non-traditional partners, one of them being the School Districts. We will be doing a Vertical Asset Inventory and Broadband Study; and one of the things we plan on doing is going to the local schools and getting the students involved in actually doing the testing for us. Those are areas we haven't been involved with so we are reaching out and involving new partners. North Central is involved, as much as it can be, with the Penn State LaunchBox program.

The Strategic Plan is underway and we have talked about the engagement for the direction of this organization. Your involvement is really critical. You, the Board Members, help us steer the ship. We need your opinions, we want your opinions. We are hoping that everyone will continue to participate and give us your opinions and help us steer this organization. Jim not only wants the employees to be proud of this organization, he wants all the Board Members to be proud as well.

A Governance Committee has been formed where we have started looking at the structure of the Board, things that we can do to improve and streamline the processes we have.

One of the recent successes at North Central we have talked about is the \$300,000 Broadband Pilot project that we are doing in conjunction with the Northwest Commission. There are five projects slated to be done, depending on the availability of funds. Depending on the cost of the projects, we may be able to do some additional ones as well. The hope with that project is it is a pilot that we establish that we can do what we know we can do, which is provide Internet service to hard to reach places and that it will lead to additional funding in the future. Then we can have larger conversations with the Board as to where do we go next, what do we address.

That kind of ties into the Vertical Asset Inventory and Broadband Study. While we are doing and proving we can do the pilot project, we are also going to be doing speed testing in places to identify those spots

so there isn't a gap in service when hopefully we get the additional funding. We then can roll right into addressing additional spots. We will need everyone's help in doing that. We are going to reach out to more than just the school districts. We will be reaching out to all our Partners because the more information we have, the better we will be.

We continue to improve on our Regional Impact site. We just won a NADO Award for that. It is something that most Local Development Districts (LDDs), COGS, whatever you want to say have a problem and that is getting their message out. This is a great tool to be able to see that. It is on our website and is no longer password protected. Just go to North Central's website and click on Impact Tool and that will take you right to the site and you can actually start looking through it and viewing your particular county, a particular program, whatever information you want to see. If you have any problems or issues, please give us a call.

The Export Program served 80 companies during the last year.

Through the WIC Program we just launched eWIC which is basically a rechargeable credit card to be used instead of handing out physical checks. It is a little more discrete in regards to the end user as they don't have to pull out checks.

This is a very high level of what we do. We do have our Annual Report which contains more detailed information on our programs. Again if you have any questions or concerns, please reach out to Jim or any staff at North Central.

At today's meeting we are going to talk about the Mission Statement, the Vision, the Core Values and the Value Statement. We went through those at the July Full Board meeting and had limited comments on these items. Jim wants to challenge the Board Members to help us with this. We don't want to be seen as driving this process. We know what we do and we know what we do well, but we want to hear from you, what you think it is that we should be doing. As Matt pointed out it is a partnership, it is us working with you. What Jim would like to see from each Board Member is to provide us with either a statement or a few key words that you feel are important that we should have in these areas. We will take the first step at crafting it and putting it together and then bring it back to you to review. But it is something that we want you to have your input on. We will be sending out a reminder to everyone after today's meeting to please give us your input. We don't want to bog down today's meeting going through and trying to craft this because it could probably take the rest of the meeting. What we want to do is get your ideas, give you an idea of what we can put together and get your opinion on that.

Things we are going to discuss today is who are our customers, what are their needs, what do we need to do to address their needs. Those are things that are important to us so we can basically do what the expectation of the Board is, within the Mission of North Central.

At the July meeting they talked about the Mission Statement being a little wordy. Do we need a statement or just Core Values because we have a Core Value Statement and Core Values? Again please give Jim an idea of what you think we should be looking at.

Something we need to consider doing as an organization and we do it through our CEDS process, but it isn't for North Central, it is for the region is we need to do a SWOT Analysis. If you put your Strengths and Weaknesses and look at them internally; and Opportunities and Threats would be externally. If you

follow the line between Strengths and Opportunities, those are the areas you want to pursue. Threats and Weaknesses are where you are vulnerable and how do you address that. That is something we are going to have to get to eventually.

Those who have worked with North Central know what we do, but there are many out there that have no idea what North Central does and how it can help.

With that, Jim turned to meeting over to Deb Thompson.

Deb, with the help of Jay and Hoop, went through the findings of the interviews conducted with board members, county commissioners, partners, and employers. They also did surveys for the Board and Employees.

Deb stated that a Governance Committee has been established and has met once. The expectations of the Committee is to guide the Board restructuring process. This Committee decides if the Board should conduct a performance evaluation to get input from the entire board on performance and restructuring. The Committee also looks at possible restructuring options, decides on the structure that is needed, clarifies committee roles and looks at job descriptions for each committee. They will also recommend any structure changes they feel would be beneficial to the full board for approval/educate board on governance standards.

The Management Team worked on an Economic Development Analysis which had 10 headings and underneath each heading were comment boxes color coded to see how each function exists and working well; function exists and needs improvement and function does not exist but should. It was decided this is a very helpful tool but needs more background information and explanations.

Another area to be looked at is the Current Board Membership. This will be looked at to see if changes should be made.

The Bylaws are outdated and need to be looked at. Right now we are not following the Bylaws when it comes to vacancies on the Board. Copies have been sent to our solicitor for his review.

According to Best Practices the Board structure would have three standing committees: Executive, Finance and Governance and would be augmented by any other committees that North Central feels are vital to its strategic agenda of work.

The current Board structure was discussed. It was suggested to move the CEDS Committee under the Board. As well it was suggested to put the RPO Committee as a leg of the Executive Committee as all RPO documents must be approved by the Executive Committee.

During the last few minutes of the meeting discussion ensued regarding the current Mission, current Vision, current Value Statement and current Core Values.

Another suggestion was helping people help themselves, empowering people. Trusting North Central to do their jobs and giving them the tools. To which Deb said this would fit under the Vision Statement.



Tim Pearson stated the Mission Statement should be more concise. It shouldn't have things in there that are the assumed things such as, everyone wants to exceed expectations and everyone wants to have organizational excellence. The Mission should really be a statement of why you are there. What are those key things, whether it's education or whatever else, it should just simply say that.

The organizational structure is ideally tied to your Mission because your organizational structure is those things that you have, meet the things that you do. And you take out all the fluff. It should be this is why North Central is here to provide xyz.

Deb said or use action verbs that say we stimulate economic vitality.

Jim is going to send you a request for any other thoughts around this.

Based on all the things talked about today what is the Vision for North Central?

Tim said he believes the Vision should be the vision of where North Central sees this Region going, not the vision of what kind of organization North Central should be. The Vision of North Central should be North Central has a vision to put the Region here or whatever. Those are more inspirational and those would motivate people to get behind you. If your vision is to be a great organization and people love working here, that vision is more about North Central and you lose support of the people you are trying to get help from. The vision should be cool.

Deb feels both are important in this case. The Standards for Excellence would suggest that the Vision Statement describe the future state of the organization, not the Region. However, because North Central is a leading agency for economic development in the Region, she agrees that we need the Vision for the Region. She also thinks the Vision for the Agency should be articulated even if that is not what you're leading with in public.

Carolyn Newhouse said ultimately you are strengthening our community, increasing in our prosperity so maybe shortening it and focus on the outcome you want. She wrote down **"the go to leader in driving positive change in prosperity in the regional economic development and community development success."**

Deb said that is the Vision and Carolyn did a great job.

Deb was asked if the old Vision Statement was going to be scrubbed and start fresh with the status of the community now. What the Vision may have been 10 years ago has changed because of the change of economic development in the area, so we are going to be looking into the future with all kinds of different things.

Deb asked if there was a Vision for the Region in the CEDS document. If not, this is something that should be looked at. Jodi Foster said that if there is, it is probably as wordy as the one for North Central.

Then Deb asked if we need both the Value Statement and Core Values? At the July meeting this was discussed and perhaps we don't need both and that just having Core Values is fine. It was noted that both the Value Statement and Core Values Statement were almost identical and having the Core Values Statement would be fine.

Jim said he appreciates everyone's input today because our successes or failures as an organization are the Board's and he wanted everyone to recognize that and be part of that. Matt had touched on it earlier to be proud of being part of this organization. And that is what Jim wants to see. He hopes to get the continued participation from everyone, both on the Executive Committee and the Full Board and help direct our ship in the direction it should be going.

Jim will send out copies of the Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Value Statement and Core Values for input.

Matt concluded the meeting saying "this is an exciting opportunity and is thankful that everyone was willing to be here and be a part of this." His mindset was of not to just change the curtains but to tear the house down, but we may not have to do that. "But that is the way we have to think. It's here and a part of who we are going to be. You can rail against it and as he stated before that is the elephant in the room. It is Federal spending and some people in their ideology that is taboo. But just saying that you don't like that and therefore we don't like North Central because of that, is unfair. And we have to recognize and get past that mental hurdle that we are going to be here. The Federal Government is providing resources we otherwise would have not an availability to have. So we have to accept that, then we better be in a position where we can be prepared to make sure that fits the needs of our constituents and this is laying right in front of us."

Matt is looking forward to seeing where this goes. If we have to start over, we will do that. It's great to have the willingness of the people in this room to help us take charge of that.

In the packet handed out by Strategy Solutions at the start of the presentation contained an evaluation form for the retreat and Deb asked that this be filled out.

The next Full Board of Directors' meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 22, 2020, in the Teleconference Room at the North Central Office, 49 Ridgmont Drive, Ridgway, PA.

### **ADJOURN**

With no other business to be discussed Doug Morley moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Jeff Pisarcik. The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.

Respectively submitted,

Daniel Freeburg  
Secretary/Treasurer