

**NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL**  
**CEDS Committee Meeting**  
**Mt. Eustis Commons and Zoom Option**  
**April 19, 2024**  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

Members Present (V = Virtual):

Ken St.Hilaire (V), Ericka Canales (V), Annette Cole (V), Jason Achmoody (V), Frank Grossman (V), Jade Hartsgrove (V), Tracey Hutchins, Anne Duncan Cooley, Steve Fortier, Chuck Henderson, Harrison Kanzler, Miguel Morales, Doug Arion, Katelyn Robinson, Benoit Lamontagne, Tim Josephson

Staff Present:

Glenn Coppelman, Cathlin Lord, Angela Cleveland, Taylor Roy

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Glenn Coppelman called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

February 16, 2024 Minutes: Motion to approve by Harrison Kanzler. Second by Steve Fortier.

Approved. Two abstentions by Katelyn and Anne.

**3. PRESENTATION: FIRST**

Presentation by Ken St. Hilaire and Frank Grossman. Glenn and Benoit introduced Ken and Frank's organization, FIRST NH, robotics programs for students in grades K-12. The North Country Project started in 2020, which is building a pipeline for students of starting interest in robotics at a young age. The project is located in Coos and northern Grafton Counties. Ken expressed that the main concern of the project is creating STEM equity within schools in the state, which is a long-term component to workforce development. It is also an opportunity to learn skills that would not be acquired in the classroom. The initial project will conclude in September of 2024 and they are working on a second phase, hoping to expand into additional rural areas in New Hampshire.

Glenn asked if there are any methods in place to follow kids in the programs to see what they do after high school. Ken says it is something they are doing and gave a few examples.

After school transportation was mentioned as a large barrier for the program. Many schools are trying to introduce the program throughout the school day with an additional club after school.

FIRST NH facilitates the program and provides training and WMSI is a partner to help schools as well.

45 Frank also introduced an additional program where White Mountain Regional gets  
46 the manufacturing experience of producing robots and distributing to schools.  
47 Saturday, May 18<sup>th</sup> at Littleton High School is their Robotics Celebration.  
48

#### 49 **4. BRAINSTORM: ROBOTICS RESOURCES FOR THE NORTH COUNTRY**

50 Taylor lead a brainstorm session on improving robotics in our areas and industries.  
51 Angie brought up the circular economy of robotics, discussion continued about  
52 reducing waste.

53 Harrison voiced the concern of robotics and AI replacing workforce, he asked if that  
54 is counterproductive to our goals with jobs and workforce. Conversation continued  
55 on how robotics in the North Country is meant to improve or complement  
56 manufacturing and how the main focus is education.

57 Participants were asked what the most impactful method would be for educating the  
58 public on robotics/ the importance of it. Many agreed that a video of how things  
59 work and a booth at a public event would be the most beneficial.

60 The opportunity of partnering with businesses was also brought up to see what the  
61 businesses need students to be learning to potentially be future employees.  
62

#### 63 **5. PEOPLE AND PLACES FOR GROWTH WEBINAR SERIES**

64 Taylor introduced the [webinar series](#) that NCC will be hosting.  
65

#### 66 **6. FUTURE TOPICS & SPEAKERS**

67 Angie gave a recap on the recent survey with the top results of people's interests-  
68 career and technical education in schools, tour of industrial/technology/ business  
69 incubator sites, workforce housing examples and ideas, forest economy  
70 opportunities and issues, and expansion of workforce training.

71 In relation to the forest economy opportunities and issues, Steve brought up the  
72 New Hampshire Forest Economy Alliance, which has experts to talk on the topic.  
73

#### 74 **7. PARTICIPANT SHARE OUT**

75  
76 **Benoit Lamontagne (NH BEA)** is still working closely with the Balsams and shared  
77 that there will soon be a press release on breaking ground for construction. Capone  
78 Iron Corporation from Berlin will also be expanding. They are working with two  
79 forestry companies to produce CLT products and three Canadian companies that  
80 involve robotics. The NH Canada Trade Council this year will be held at the Mount  
81 Washington Hotel.  
82

83 **Katelyn Robinson (NCIC)** shared that everyone is getting settled in and adjusting  
84 to the merge. Preservation and Reinvestment Initiative for Community  
85 Enhancement (PRICE) Program from HUD for resident owned communities. Their  
86 new office is in Thayer's Inn in Littleton.  
87

88 **Chuck Henderson (Senator Shaheen's office)** the office is focused on  
89 congressional spending, and they have received over 250 applications.  
90 Approximately 40 projects will receive funding.

91  
92 **Doug Arion (Mountains of Stars)** summarized his work prepping for the eclipse  
93 and the impacts of the event on the state's economy.  
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96 **Tim Josephson (UVLSRPC)** shared that in Sullivan County the bridge that crosses  
97 the Connecticut River from Charlestown to Springfield, Vermont is going to be  
98 worked on and closed for 38 weeks. There was not much notice and will not have a  
99 temporary bridge. Work is being done to delay the project and get a temporary  
100 bridge as it is part of a major trucking route.  
101

102 **Harrison Kanzler (AHEAD)** shared that they have their annual meeting at The  
103 Rocks on May 30<sup>th</sup>, which be a networking and celebratory event. The Pathways for  
104 Homeownership for first time home buyers, downpayment assistance program has  
105 been launched. This can also be used to help employers develop workforce  
106 housing. This is in partnership with Tillotson. In its pilot year, this is available in  
107 Coos County, Littleton, and Bethlehem.  
108

109 **Erica Canales (CEDC)** shared that June 13<sup>th</sup> is their annual meeting which is  
110 including the public for professional networking and BLOC Awards at the Mountain  
111 View Grand. The Workforce Housing Loan Fund closed on their first project in  
112 Colebrook on a mixed-use development including five residential and two  
113 commercial units. NBRC grant has started, and the first phase was a GAP Analysis  
114 on youth in the workforce. The analysis found that CTE two-year programs are  
115 losing people when they finish the program if they are not 18 years old. Creating a  
116 program to close the gap through laws and a third-year pilot program. Whitefield  
117 Economic Development Corporation is dissolving, and they are hoping to have one  
118 of their staff join the CEDC board. Pittsburg Aurora business and carbon credits  
119 forest plan was denied by the state, which was a win in Coos County because it  
120 could have been detrimental to jobs in the region. A study is in the works about the  
121 potential losses from scaling back Aurora's forestry operations.  
122

123 **Miguel Moralez (SBA)** is working on education programs within the Berlin prison  
124 for people looking to start a business, helping Hanover High School for their  
125 business class, and the last week of April is National Small Business Week, which  
126 will be celebrated on April 30<sup>th</sup> in Derry at Tupelo Hall.  
127

128 **Steve Fortier (NH BEA)** highlighted the new forest economy program called  
129 Timber for Transit. Additional programs for NBRC entities including Recreation  
130 Economy for Rural Communities, J1 Visa Program, and Workforce Opportunity for  
131 Rural Communities. On September 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> of 2024, Radically Rural is hosting  
132 an event in Keene. He adds that is likely that not all ARPA funding will be used, so  
133 those working on projects and looking for funding should reach out to get  
134 themselves on the list.  
135

136 **Anne Duncan Cooley (GRDC)** shared that GRDC is launching a CDFA family  
137 childcare grant, they are looking for people that need help or want to launch a  
138 business to solve the lack of childcare in the region. The grant runs until September  
139 of 2024.

140  
141 **Tracey Hutchins (Upper Valley Business Alliance)** MedTech collaborative is  
142 putting on their fourth conference on November 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> in Hanover.  
143 Expanding group in Burlington, Vermont and Portland, Maine, bringing together  
144 businesses and people together. They are also taking part in a Cooperative  
145 Extension study with Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Vermont, and New Hampshire  
146 on rural tourism to develop a marketing plan for Upper Valley. Lastly, they have  
147 been working with the arts organizations to develop a month-long program for  
148 equity in the arts for the Upper Valley region in both New Hampshire and Vermont.

149  
150 **Angie Cleveland (North Country Council)** announces that additional funding will  
151 be available around May to continue HOP grants.

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153 **8. FY25 MEETING DATES AND TIMES**

154 Check in to see if the second Friday of every other month is still working for the  
155 group. The group agrees that a Doodle Poll would be appropriate to gauge  
156 availability. Any determined changes will not occur until fiscal year 2025. The next  
157 meeting will be June 21<sup>st</sup> and will likely be held at White Mountains Community  
158 College.

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161 **9. ADJOURN**

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163 Glenn Coppelman declared the meeting adjourned at 12:07 PM.  
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