Town of Fort Covington

Three Year Action Plan

For Use of Casino Compact Funds

January 26, 2012

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Introduction

The Town of Fort Covington has prepared a Three Year Action Plan for use of Casino Compact funds to advance community economic development goals. This Action Plan prioritizes opportunities identified in the 2010 *Fort Covington and Bombay 2010 Economic Development, Zoning and Planning Document* and other previous community planning efforts and includes both immediate actions to be funded using existing revenues and recommended next steps for future Casino Compact funds.

Prior to development of the Three Year Action Plan, the Town reviewed the guidance regarding use and requirements of Casino Compact funding provided by Empire State Development and the guidance provided to the Town of Bombay by the New York State Comptroller Division of Local Government Accountability. In compliance with the directives of the State Comptroller's **"Long Term Planning for Casino Compact Revenues,"** the Town of Fort Covington has developed a multi-year financial and capital plan projecting, to the extent possible in the current climate of uncertainty, Casino Compact revenues and the operating and capital needs for which they will be used.

Casino Compact Funds

The Town of Fort Covington's fiscal situation has been significantly affected in recent years by the Casino Compact between the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe and the State of New York. Under the Casino Compact, the State receives a share of slot machine revenues earned at the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and shares these revenues with Franklin County, which in turn shares Casino Compact revenues with the Town of Fort Covington.

To date, the Town of Fort Covington has received approximately $1.1 million in Casino Compact revenues as detailed below.

Fiscal Year	Impact Fund Payment
2007	$182,820
2008	$287,500
2009	$631,254 (Includes previous years adjustment)

The Town of Fort Covington used initial years of Casino Compact revenues to address immediate community development infrastructure needs, including sidewalk construction, water and sewer system upgrades, and recreational facility upgrades.

The Town also used initial funding to begin a planning process, in conjunction with the Town of Bombay, to develop the **Fort Covington and Bombay Economic Development, Zoning and Planning Document** in 2010.

As per Office of the New York State Comptroller Division of Local Government Accountability requirements, the Town of Fort Covington Board is responsible for developing a comprehensive, multi-year financial and capital plan to project Casino Compact revenues and how they will be expended.

Fiscal and Capital Analysis

TOWN EXPENDITURES AND PROJECTED CASINO COMPACT NEEDS

An analysis of the Town of Fort Covington's General, Highway and Water and Sewer district budgets indicates a relatively stable level of expenditures, with only modest increases in recent years as necessitated by increases in the cost of providing services.

Discretionary appropriations are expected to remain at near current levels over the course of the Action Plan. Debt service levels are low and stable, and salary increases will likely be limited.

Due to conservative expenditures and sound fiscal management, the Town of Fort Covington was able to meet the 2% tax cap for Fiscal Year 2012. While the conservative fiscal approach of the Town of Fort Covington Board is expected to continue, cost increases, such as pension fund and health insurance premium increases, along with state aid reductions due to the state's fiscal situation, are beyond the control of the Town.

Since predictable tax rates are essential to creating a good climate for business development and expansion, the Town Board will, over the three years of this Action Plan, as needed and as authorized by the language of New York State Finance Law, Chapter 56, Article VI Section 99-h, transfer unexpended Casino Compact funds to the general fund to keep tax rates stable and create the predictable property tax climate required for business development and expansion.

CAPITAL INFRASTRUCTURE ANALYSIS

The *Fort Covington and Bombay Economic Development, Planning and Zoning Document* included an analysis of the Town's infrastructure in 2010, summarized below:

Highways:
The Town of Fort Covington maintains a number of local roadways, which serve as secondary roads to the State and County highways that are the main travel routes in the Town. It is not expected that any capital expenditures will be required from the Casino Compact funds to maintain or improve the Town's

roadways in the next three years. It is anticipated that normal Highway Fund expenditures will be sufficient to fund operational and maintenance needs.

Municipal Water and Sewer Service:
The Town of Fort Covington operates municipal water and sewer districts in the hamlet of Fort Covington. The water system infrastructure includes two wells, an elevated storage tank, and distribution lines. Existing water system infrastructure is in good condition; however, since the Town has minimal additional system capacity, the Town is pursuing grant funding to drill another well. It is not expected that any Casino Compact funds will be required to maintain or improve water system infrastructure in the next three years.

The Town's sewer infrastructure is in sound working condition and therefore it is not anticipated that the system will require any capital investment over the next three years.

In summary, a financial and capital analysis of the Town's General, Highway and Special District infrastructure and funds has revealed no anticipated needs for allocation of Casino Compact funds over the next three years. As explained previously however, Casino Compact funds may be used as required to stabilize the general fund to create the predictable property tax climate required for business development and expansion.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT FUND

Since community infrastructure needs were addressed with initial year Casino Compact funds, the Town of Fort Covington, at the advice of Empire State Development, chose to accumulate remaining Casino Compact funds in an economic development fund, pending completion of this Action Plan. At the completion of this planning process, the Town has approximately $450,000 remaining in this fund.

The Town will expend this balance over the course of 2012 on Action Plan items as detailed in the Action Plan implementation matrix that follows.

PROJECTED FUTURE IMPACT FUNDS

The Town of Fort Covington has contacted Empire State Development for assistance in complying with New York State Comptroller Division of Local Government Accountability guidelines for development of a multi-year capital plan for use of Casino Compact revenues.

The Town has not received a Casino Compact Fund payment since August 2011. Due to a dispute between the Tribe and the State of New York, the Tribe is no longer issuing Compact Fund payments. According to the Tribe, funds are being placed in an Escrow account, pending resolution of this dispute.

Based upon the formula agreed upon by New York State and the Tribe, the Office of the State Comptroller estimated the Town's share of 2010 Casino Compact revenues at $555,000. Using this amount as a basis, assuming constant slot machine revenues and adjusting for the increase in percentage of slot machine revenues shared by the Tribe in Years Five through Seven of the Compact, it is estimated that, should the Tribe once again issue payments according to the current agreement with New York State, the Town would receive the following amounts during the duration of this Action Plan.

Fiscal Year	Projected Future Payments
2010	$555,000
2011	$678,333
2012	$678,333

Therefore, while the Action Plan contains recommendations for Year 2 and Year 3 Actions, implementation of these Actions and resulting expenditures will be contingent upon Town receipt of future Casino Compact revenues.

Development of the Action Plan

As described above, the Town conducted an extensive planning process in 2010 that identified numerous community goals and priorities. The Town hired Melissa McManus LLC, a community development consultant, in September 2011 to assist in prioritizing goals and actions from the 2010 Plan and to develop a Three Year Action Plan for implementation of key economic development priorities. Melissa McManus, in partnership with River Street Planning & Development and Elan Planning and Design, met with Town officials, reviewed previous planning studies and grant applications, and developed a matrix of recommended implementation steps to achieve the community's identified goals.

Following review of the consultant team's recommendations by the Town Board, a public meeting was held in November 2011 to present the Action Plan to the public. Public outreach prior to the meeting included distribution of a flyer and press release announcing the workshop and calls to residents and business owners. At the meeting, the consultant team reviewed the plan with the public, answered questions and recorded suggestions. The Action Plan was then revised to incorporate Town Board and resident feedback.

Action Plan

The following Action Plan focuses on priorities for the next three years – 2012, 2013 and 2014. The Action Plan focuses on the downtown hamlet area but also investigates possibilities for economic development throughout the Town, such as agribusiness, housing needs, renewable energy production and broadband expansion.

The hamlet of Fort Covington or "downtown" is the center of Town activity. The Town Hall, churches and other community services, businesses, residences and the Town Park are all compatibly located in downtown. However, like much of rural upstate New York, the centralization of shopping in urban centers and the loss of farms and forestry have hurt local economies and driven out young families. Today, acant or underutilized structures, lots and storefronts detract from downtown Fort Covington's appearance and vitality. Nonetheless, Fort Covington has several opportunities for improving downtown including downtown's close proximity to the Akwesasne Mohawk Casino and a Canadian border crossing, the healthy volume of traffic that passes through downtown each day, the number of architecturally interesting buildings still remaining in downtown, the Town's acquisition of some key properties, and the aesthetic beauty and tourism opportunities associated with the Salmon River.

Several of the priority actions in this Plan are intended to improve the appearance of downtown through streetscape improvements and gateway elements that will establish a sense of place for residents and visitors and create an attractive location for new business development.

Another component of this Plan is to answer questions for the Town regarding the prospects for its future economic vitality and its ability to provide quality of life amenities, goods and services for local residents, places to work and quality housing choices for all stages of life. In terms of economic development some of the questions to answer include whether or not there is a market for new businesses in Fort Covington – and if so, what kinds of businesses. If not, what would have to change to establish a market for businesses desired by the community? How should the Town address the vacant and underutilized properties in downtown? Is there assistance that could be provided to existing businesses that would improve the prospects of successfully maintaining a business in Fort Covington? What about agribusiness and renewable energy production?

Finally, Downtown Fort Covington and the Town as whole have a wonderful asset in the Salmon River and Little Salmon River. These rivers provide natural beauty and recreational opportunities for residents and for attracting recreational tourists. Presently the Salmon River is not well connected to Downtown, which could be improved through pedestrian connections and wayfinding signage. With the removal of the dam on the Salmon River, conditions for paddling, tubing, fishing and other recreational activities on the River have recently improved. Capitalizing on this opportunity through the development of a boat launch and park on one of the town-owned waterfront properties is an essential first step. Other related recreational amenities may include future trails and Recreation Vehicle facilities.

ACTION PLAN GOALS

Through goals and projects identified in the *Fort Covington and Bombay Economic Development, Planning and Zoning Document*, and discussions with the Town Board and residents at the Community workshop for this Action Plan, the following goals have been established:

Goal 1: Improve the appearance of the community center (the hamlet of Fort Covington) through streetscape and building improvements.

Goal 2: Improve public access to the Salmon River and connect the river to Water and Mill Streets.

Goal 3: Develop a marketing and promotion campaign for the Town.

Goal 4: Develop organizational structures for economic development programs.

Goal 5: Develop specific economic development programs and services to assist existing businesses and attract new ones.

Goal 6: Improve telecommunications infrastructure Town-wide.

Goal 7: Improve housing affordability, quality and choice.

Goal 8: Support school youth programs to increase quality of life amenities for young families.

These goals represent the framework under which a set of priority actions were identified to be accomplished or commenced in the next three years using the Town's Casino Compact funds.

ACTION PLAN MATRIX

The following Action Plan Matrix includes the goal statements outlined above and priority actions to be accomplished in the next three years under each goal statement. The purpose of the Matrix is to provide the Town of Fort Covington with a list of actions and a strategy for accomplishing these actions including a targeted timeframe for a project's commencement, the steps necessary for implementation, costs associated with the project and potential partners in funding. With regard to potential partners in funding, while it is anticipated that Casino Compact funds will be used for these projects, other sources of funding have been identified to supplement the Casino Compact funding, should additional funding be needed.

Key to Matrix Funding Partner Abbreviations:

NYS DHCR – New York State Department of Housing and Community Renewal

NYS DOS LWRP EPF – New York State Department of State, Local Waterfront Revitalization Program as funded by the Environmental Protection Fund.

NYS OCR – New York State Office of Community Renewal

NYS OPRHP – New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

CDBG Small Cities – Community Development Block Grant Small Cities Program administered by NYS OCR

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX				
Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
Goal 1: Improve the appearance of the community center through streetscape and building improvements.				
1.1 Install ornamental streetlighting and enhance downtown gateways on Chateaugay Street. Plant street trees as needed.	Year 1	• Define downtown district boundaries and gateways. • Identify features, such as plantings, to be included with gateway signage. • Select ornamental streetlighting and tree plantings. • Survey and determine locations for installation. • Secure DOT approval. • Install ornamental street lighting and gateway features.	Fee: $60,000 Estimated Construction Cost: Approximately $4,000 per streetlight and $10,000 per gateway.	
1.2 Conduct downtown property inventory to assist in building rehabilitation or façade improvement and identifying redevelopment strategies for specific sites.	Year 1	• Inventory all existing properties with Chateaugay, Water and Mill Streets downtown area for existing usage and exterior condition. (Add interior assessment if available.) • Identify sites for exterior assessment. • Develop a written report including a map of recommend actions or improvements for each site (as needed). • Identify preliminary ideas for future use/development	$12,000, based upon assessment of 10 identified buildings. Interior costs TBD based upon whether an interior assessment by an architect will be conducted on any properties	

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
1.3	Develop Enhancement Plan for Water Street and Mill Street including streetscape and façade and building renovations.	Year 1	• Develop a concept plan for streetscape and façade improvements that may include ornamental street lights, street trees, seasonal banners, street furniture, and sidewalk improvements where necessary. • Develop prioritized list of improvements and estimated costs, including tasks that can be accomplished by volunteers.	Fee: $22,000	
1.4	Install streetscape improvements on Water Street.	Year 2	• Survey Water Street. • Develop design and construction documents for streetscape improvements that may include ornamental street lights, street trees, seasonal banners, street furniture, and sidewalk improvements where necessary. • Install improvements.	Fee: $50,000 (~~without major sidewalk improvements~~) Construction Cost: TBD (To be determined)	NYS DHCR New York Main Street Program, NYS DOS EPF

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
1.5	Develop a commercial building improvement program to spur business investment and create a cohesive appearance.	Year 2	• Delineate a façade improvement district to concentrate impact of improvements. • Identify program parameters including type of financial assistance (grant v. loan, amount of awards), expectations from property owners (share of project investment, design requirements). • Provide the services of a professional planner, architect or program coordinator to encourage overall design consistency with the downtown's existing architectural character. • Establish an escrow account. • Conduct outreach and secure participants in the program.	$8,000 – 12,000 for program development and administration and the RFP, bid and contracting of an architect if desired; plus approximately $500 per property for administration and 10-25% of project cost to architect. Total amount of grant awards and size TBD based on findings of building inventory and site assessment (Action 1.2)	NYS DHCR New York Main Street Program, CDBG Small Cities
Goal 2 Improve public access to the Salmon River and connect the river to Water and Mill Streets.					
2.1	Prepare a comprehensive Salmon Riverfront Enhancement and Access Plan	Year 1	• Inventory town-owned riverfront properties. • Analyze properties for opportunities and constraints for riverfront park and trail development.	$18,000	

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
2.2	Develop a concept plan for and construct a Riverfront Park	Year 1	• Prepare a concept plan for the selected site, including a specific amenities, access, and linkages to Water and Mill Streets. • Survey the site and develop construction documents. • Obtain necessary permits. • Issue requests for bids and construct the Park.	Estimated Fee: $40,000 (without building structure; actual fee will be determined when site is selected and concept developed) Construction Cost: TBD	NYS DOS LWRP EPF, OPRHP EPF
2.3	Seek grant funding from NYS DOS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program for future downtown and waterfront revitalization projects.	Year 2	• Identify downtown and waterfront revitalization projects for which to seek funding • Apply to Department of State Local Waterfront Program for funding.	$4,000	NYS DOS LWRP EPF

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
Goal 3: Develop a marketing and promotion campaign for the Town.					
3.1	Develop a town web site to improve communication with the community and potential visitors and businesses	Year 1	• Hire a web developer to develop and host a Town website. • Develop a calendar of community events.	$5,000 to $10,000 for a relatively simple site with the goal of Town staff being able to update content plus annual fees.	
3.2	Consider development of a community marketing strategy.	Year 3	• Pending results of feasibility study for economic development (see Action 5.1), consider a general marketing plan identifying community resources for promotion and media products targeted to appropriate audiences.	Up to $10,000 depending on level of media product development	Franklin County Tourism, NYS I Love NY Tourism Office
Goal 4: Develop organizational structures for economic development programs.					
4.1	Create a revitalization committee of business owners, residents, board members	Year 1	• Town Board appoints members or asks for volunteers. • Provide staff support from the community/economic Development Consultant described below. • Oversee the implementation of this Three Year Action Plan.	$7,500/year (recommended budget amount)	

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
4.2	Contract with a community/economic development professional to provide capacity to advance the Three Year Action Plan.	Year 1	• Contract with a community and economic development professional. • Develop work plan and monitor progress on implementation projects.	$15,000/year (recommended budget amount)	
4.3	Form a local development corporation (LDC) to assist the Town in redeveloping publicly owned properties.	Year 1	• Draft bylaws for LDC. • Appoint members to the Board of Directors. • Train members.	$2,500 (recommended budget amount for attorney fees)	
Goal 5: Develop specific economic development programs and services to assist existing businesses and attract new ones.					
5.1	Prepare a market feasibility study for general industry sectors and identified desired sectors.	Year 1	• Hire a planning and economic development consultant. • Conduct a market analysis for general industry sectors looking at both the regional and local economy. • Conduct industry specific analysis on certain sectors identified with potential through the general market analysis and community desires such as agribusiness, green energy, RV parks, grocery stores and food coops.	$15,000-20,000	

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
5.2	Develop site specific building improvement and redevelopment plans.	Year 2	• Hire a planning and economic development consultant to oversee the project. • Consult with an engineer/architect to evaluate building and site conditions and identify alternatives for building improvements. • Identify potential end uses for each site based on market and property characteristics. • Develop pro-formas for sites identified for redevelopment.	Up to $3,500 per site depending on needed consultations	NYS OCR CDBG Small Cities Community Planning Grant, NYS DOS LWRP and Quality Communities Program
5.3	Consider developing a business assistance program to assist business expansions or start-ups.	Year 2	• Conduct interviews with local business owners and regional chambers of commerce to identify needs for business expansion. • Develop a customized business assistance program to assist existing or start-up businesses including the type of assistance (financing, grants etc.) • Select an entity to administer the program, perhaps through regional development corporation such as AEDC. • Market the program to identify interested businesses.	Estimated $7,000-$10,000 for program development, administration and reporting for a 2-year period; application underwriting/analysis: up to $1,500 for each business application to ensure that the business is viable and use of funds meets the Town's criteria.	Adirondack Economic Development Corporation, Franklin Co., NYS OCR CDBG Small Cities Microenter-prise and Economic Development Programs

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
5.4	Consider developing a business incubator.	Year 3	• Consider development of a business incubator in a building owned by the Town. • Consider offering fitted out space at discounted price or for free during a start-up period.	TBD	
Goal 6: Improve telecommunications infrastructure Town-wide.					
6.1	Develop a strategy to expand the availability of high speed internet service throughout the town.	Years 1-2	• Hire consultant to research options for improving internet access. • Research options and costs for expanding high speed internet service. • Develop implementation strategy.	$5,000 for review of current status and development of initial recommendations from experts; remaining expenditures TBD.	
Goal 7: Improve housing affordability, quality and choice.					
7.1	Conduct a housing market study	Year 1	• Hire a firm to conduct a housing market analysis that examines housing needs for elderly households, subsidized and market-rate housing, rental housing, and special needs housing, including assisted living. • As part of the market study contact housing organizations, private housing developers and real estate developers regarding housing need and local and regional market issues.	$5,000	

Town of Fort Covington THREE YEAR ACTION PLAN MATRIX					
	Action	Time Frame	Implementation Steps	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Partners
7.2	Develop and implement a housing improvement plan	Years 2-3	• Based on the housing market study recommendations, develop and adopt a housing improvement strategy. Components of the strategy might address: o Housing rehabilitation o First-time homebuyer assistance o Senior housing o Attracting new residents such as homeland security workers o New housing locations. • Pursue development of this housing type by contacting appropriate stakeholders such as housing organizations, private housing developers and real estate developers.	Unknown until housing needs are identified	NYS Home & Housing Trust Fund Program, NYS OCR CDBG Small Cities, NYSDOS Quality Communities Program
Goal 8: Support school youth programs to increase quality of life amenities for young families.					
8.1	Work with neighboring towns to develop a summer camp program for local youth to keep them engaged and stimulated over the summer months.	Year 1	• Partner with the Salmon River School district and the neighboring towns of Bombay and Westville to develop a summer camp program. • Identify a program director. • Seek volunteers, college students and older high school students to work at the summer camp. • Market the summer camp program through the Salmon River School District.	$10,000 (Fort Covington's contribution)	Salmon River School District, Towns of Bombay and Westville , Franklin County Civic Development Corporation

Appendices

- 2 legal documents from Audit and Control
- Bombay audit
- Meeting summaries – 9/1 and 12/27
  - Presentation notes
  - Attendees
- Elan graphic