

# Consultant gets feedback on new job-creation plan

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John Rhodes, left, one of two economic development consultants hired by the Cayuga Economic Development Agency, discusses issues Tuesday with local farmers including Rose Belforti, right, the owner of Finger Lakes Dexter Creamery in King Ferry. The meeting with the farmers at the Emerson Park conference room was one of a few meetings Rhodes had with a variety of local groups.

## ► Firm is working on economic blueprint for Cayuga County.

CHRISTOPHER CASKEY  
The Citizen

A consultant made another stop in Cayuga County on Tuesday in the midst of drafting what will become the community's road map for economic growth.

John Rhodes of the consulting firm Moran, Stahl and Boyer met business owners, local leaders and small farmers in the latest of a series of visits to the county.

Rhodes will eventually take the information gathered from the many workshops and forums conducted during his visits to draft a 10-year, strategic plan for economic development in the county.



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John Rhodes, left, an economic development consultant from Moran, Stahl and Boyer, meets with mostly Blueprint Group members at Auburn Public Theater Tuesday.

# Consultant meets with farmers, business owners, leaders

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The plan, which has been commissioned by the Cayuga Economic Development Agency, will be used as a type of blueprint for growing and keeping jobs by prioritizing the needs of local businesses and industries and identifying areas that have potential for growth.

Rhodes said he expects that plan to include four or five concrete actions the community will be able to take quickly as well as a more comprehensive approach to developing business.

"It's called triangulation. If you keep hitting the same thing, or if each group says the same thing, then you've got it," said Rhodes, who is work-

ing with Ellen Morosoff Pemrick on the plan. Both have extensive experience in economic development and have worked with businesses and communities across the country.

On Tuesday, he met with business leaders at Auburn Public Theater, where they discussed the potential tourism offers for the local economy. He later talked with a group of small farmers about ways to improve business among small agricultural enterprises and team up on marketing strategies.

Rhodes also met with public leaders, making a presentation to the Cayuga County Legislature on the plan process after discussing development potential with a group

of town supervisors from around the county.

He and Pemrick visited the area for a week at the beginning of March for the "fact finding" portion of the plan, gathering information about the region, the population and the economy. They returned later in the month.

Rhodes said the most recent visits have been more about testing ideas and solutions and discussing them with local stakeholders before formulating his draft of a strategic plan.

"You can't throw one of these final reports at somebody and have them go, 'OK, here I am, I get it all,'" he said. "Everything I come up with will have some root in

some discussion with somebody so there is some validity to it."

Rhodes said he is in the midst of writing a draft for the plan, which will be presented to the community in May or June.

Terry Masterson, executive director of CEDA, said he would like to see more public participation once the draft is complete. He expects to hold workshops and forums to gather feedback on Rhodes' conclusions and suggestions.

"It's still important to hear what's important to

everyone," Masterson said on Tuesday.

The strategic plan is one of the first major initiatives for CEDA since it began operations approximately a year ago.

The organization is meant to be a first-stop agency for anyone conducting business or looking to do so in Cayuga County.

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