

BY: Senator STEC

CONGRATULATING Jim McKenna, CEO of the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, upon the occasion of his retirement after more than 40 years of distinguished service at the helm of various local tourism councils and offices

WHEREAS, It is the sense of this Legislative Body to recognize and honor those distinguished citizens of this great Empire State who have devoted themselves to faithfully serving the best interests of their community and the needs of its residents; and

WHEREAS, Attendant to such concern and in full accord with its long-standing traditions, this Legislative Body is justly proud to congratulate Jim McKenna, CEO of the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism, upon the occasion of his retirement after more than 40 years of distinguished service at the helm of various local tourism councils and offices; and

WHEREAS, Born in New York City, Jim McKenna, 72, graduated from Mount Assumption High School in Plattsburgh in 1970 and, after college, moved to Lake Placid to operate Newman Opera House, a country, rock and blues club, with a college friend; they sold the club in 1979; and

WHEREAS, Jim McKenna first pitched the Lake Placid Convention Bureau to the North Elba Town Council in the fall of 1981, as a way to maintain the village's tourism momentum following the end of the 1980 Olympic Winter Games; the following year, the bureau was given \$35,000 by the town and he was hired as one of its two employees; and

WHEREAS, Approximately five years later, the convention bureau combined with the Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce to create the Lake Placid Visitors Bureau, which then turned into the Lake Placid-Essex County Visitors Bureau in 1990; and

WHEREAS, During this time, in addition to being in charge of the bureau, Jim McKenna served on many of the major boards in the area, giving him profound knowledge and a chance to network throughout the county; he subsequently became a big force not only in Lake Placid, North Elba, Essex County, and the State of New York, but also in the international sports community; and

WHEREAS, In 2010, the bureau renamed itself as the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST) to signal its commitment to tourism across the region, not just Lake Placid, as well as its new-found emphasis on sustainable tourism and its community-first approach; and

WHEREAS, Under the able leadership of Jim McKenna, ROOST focused on building up the region for its year-round occupants and avoiding overcrowding, while still making the economy and infrastructure conducive to tourism; and

WHEREAS, The most prominent component of Jim McKenna's community support in recent years has been his advocacy for Community Tourism Enhancement Funds; one of his major visionary accomplishments is the development of the occupancy tax as a dedicated revenue stream to fund these vital initiatives; and

WHEREAS, Furthermore, by transferring responsibility for these expenses from local taxpayers to visitors, Jim McKenna ensured a level of financial stability that was necessary for Essex County's success, and he paved the way for other important initiatives, including the CTEF which has supported community betterment projects necessary for tourism growth; and

WHEREAS, Jim McKenna was also instrumental in the creation of North Elba's Local Enhancement and Enhancement Fund grants, which help fund local organizations such as the Adirondack Film Society, John Brown Lives! and the Adirondack Sports Council, where he is the chairman of the board of directors; under Jim's direction, ROOST received a New York State Tourism Excellence Award for its work with CTEF in July of 2023; and

WHEREAS, For decades, Jim McKenna has been the face and voice for Adirondack tourism; he has been instrumental in supporting and preserving the region's winter sports legacy, and promoting the areas incredible year-round events and attractions that welcome visitors from around the world; he spearheaded the Adirondack Sports Council, which organized the 2023 FISU Winter World University Games; and

WHEREAS, Through his dedication and tireless efforts, Jim McKenna has helped make Lake Placid and its surrounding community a place where families want to live, tourists want to visit, and businesses want to locate; his unwavering commitment, as well as his willingness and ability to understand and respond to the concerns of its people, have made a substantial contribution to the betterment of this community; and

WHEREAS, For more than 40 years, Jim McKenna rendered faithful, conscientious and valuable service to his community, truly earning the admiration, esteem and affection of his colleagues; and

WHEREAS, Rare indeed is the occurrence of such a compassionate blending of strength, leadership, intellect, and commitment as that demonstrated by Jim McKenna over a lifetime of sacrifice and dedication to others; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That this Legislative Body pause in its deliberations to congratulate Jim McKenna upon the occasion of his retirement, and to wish him well in all his future endeavors; and be it further

RESOLVED, That a copy of this Resolution, suitably engrossed, be transmitted to Jim McKenna.