

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION**

DATE: MARCH 27, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Caimano
Tessier
Gabriels
Kenny
Merlino
Wm. Thomas
Haskell

Others Present:

Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative &
Fiscal Services
Joan Sady, Clerk
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator
Vonda Beattie, Sr. Account Clerk, Tourism Dept.
Supervisor Barody
Francis O'Keefe, County Treasurer
Fred Austin, Fort William Henry
David King, Lake George RV Park
Jessica Flint, Queensbury High School
Stephany Brand, Queensbury High School
Christine Margiotta, *The Post-Star*
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office
Specialist

Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Gabriels, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Ms. Beattie distributed an Agenda packet to each of the Committee members and a copy is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Caimano began with Agenda Item 1a) Scoring System for review of the Occupancy Tax Funding Applications. He directed attention to Draft 3 of the proposed Scoring System, which was included in the Agenda packets. He explained that he had previously reviewed the Draft.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Kenny who began a thorough review of the point system with the Bed Nights breakdown. He suggested that some of the categories could be combined as follows: 1-2,999 for 3 points; and 5 -14,999 for 20 points.

Mr. Kenny pointed out his intention when he designed the point system was to award more points to the larger event since the event would replenish the Occupancy Tax funds. Therefore, he said he placed heavy emphasis on Bed Nights, Economic Impact and the Time of Year.

Mr. Wm. Thomas entered the meeting at 2:34 p.m.

Mr. Caimano suggested the Length of Event points sequence could be listed in reverse order to mirror the other categories.

As for the Month of Event, Mr. Caimano said he felt the winter events needed more encouragement. He suggested the winter months could receive 10 points.

Turning to the section marked Funding is to Encourage New Events, Mr. Kenny noted his intention was to follow the old economic development theory behind the retention of business.

Mr. Wm. Thomas queried if the Point System was to be viewed as a hard and fast rule. Mr. Caimano said he felt the Point System was more of a starting point in developing a policy. He acknowledged the Policy could then be amended as time moved on.

Mr. Gabriels reported the Town of Bolton Bed Tax Committee had reviewed the point system and provided him with their comments. He explained one concern had been whether or not there was an evaluation method available to help the County understand how the Occupancy Tax Funding of a particular event came back to the County.

Mr. Kenny acknowledged that the impact of event funding was very difficult to measure. However, he said he felt a \$300,000 event in the Village of Lake George during the middle of August would be difficult to measure. Yet, he said, if the same event were held in Stony Creek in the middle of August, the impact would be very visible.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Haskell to adopt the Occupancy Tax Scoring System to be used to evaluate funding applications.

Mr. Gabriels stated that he felt the scoring system was too rigid at this point. He said he felt the Committee should take more time to review the system since the next round of applications would not be reviewed until late 2006. In addition, he noted the System made no reference to the type of event, such as cultural, educational, etc. He urged the Committee to view the points system as a guideline, and not something to be rigidly adhered to, since he valued independent judgement of each application.

Mr. Stec entered the meeting at 2:40 p.m.

Following a brief discussion, Messrs. Kenny and Haskell amended their motion to adopt the Occupancy Tax Scoring System Guidelines to be used as a tool to assist in the evaluation of funding applications.

Mr. Caimano called the question and the motion was carried unanimously, as presented, to authorize a resolution be prepared for the April 13th Board meeting. A copy of the Scoring System Guidelines (as amended) is on file with the minutes.

In response to Mr. Dusek's questions, Mr. Kenny acknowledged the "pot of money" may have to be allocated in proportionate amounts if the applications exceed the total amount available.

Mr. Caimano returned to Agenda review at Item 1b) 2005 Occupancy Tax Revenue 's final totals. Mr. O'Keefe, County Treasurer, explained that not all of the hotels had remitted the Occupancy Tax collections through December 31, 2005. To date, he explained his Office had taken in \$2,784,973, as compared to the 2004 total of \$2,597,871. Thus far, he noted the collection had increased by \$187,102 over last year. He said there were approximately 30 accounts yet outstanding, although he would produce a report as of March 31st regardless of what was unpaid.

Mrs. Parsons pointed out the Committee will need a resolution to specify the final distribution to each of the municipalities.

Mr. Dusek reminded the Committee of the contract with the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs, and the portion which dealt with the sponsorships and how the revenue would be shared. He apprized that an agreement had been reached and the contract would be finalized shortly. He noted the total sponsorship revenue (minus the cost of promotional tickets, ad space, and 7% commission) shall be divided: 40% to Warren County and 60% shared by the 4 June events. If the Occupancy Tax Committee was in agreement, he said he would proceed with finalizing the contract with the Fire Chiefs.

Motion was made by Mr. Gabriels, seconded by Mr. Haskell and carried unanimously to authorize Mr. Dusek to move forward with the contract with NYS Association of Fire Chiefs.

Turning to Agenda Item 2) Occupancy Tax Funding Request, Mr. Caimano directed attention to the Swim Lake George application included with the Agenda packet. Mr. Caimano explained the application was for a 2007 event.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee to table the application review until late 2006, when all of the 2007 applications would be reviewed.

Mr. Caimano returned to Agenda review at Item 3, Notification to Funding Applicants. Mr. Kenny suggested a template, form letter could be developed for quick distribution of the Committee's decisions.

Mr. Caimano directed Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board of Supervisors, to draft two different letters: one of congratulations and one of regrets, to be brought to the Committee at the next meeting.

As for Agenda Item 4, Smith Travel Research Reports, Mr. Caimano invited Fred

Austin, of the Fort William Henry to comment. Mr. Austin cautioned the Committee members to be mindful of the variables (such as weather) that were not part of the statistics.

Turning to Agenda Item 5, Occupancy Tax Expense information, Mr. Caimano directed attention to the report on Paul Kaza Expenses 2006 included with the Agenda packet.

In response to questions from Mr. Kenny, Mr. Caimano confirmed that he personally calls Mr. Kaza for clarification on the Out of Pocket expenses.

As one final item of business, Mr. Caimano announced the Executive Host Committee would be looking for Supervisors to volunteer a few hours during the upcoming Fire Chiefs' Convention. He explained the volunteers would be divided into different categories: show and exhibitor operations, social accommodations, local information, etc.

Mr. Caimano urged the Supervisors to consider the volunteer time as a physical demonstration of support for the Convention.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, upon motion by Mr. Tessier and seconded by Mr. Haskell, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist