

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION joint with TOURISM**

DATE: NOVEMBER 17, 2006

**Committee Members Present:**

**Occupancy Tax:**

Supervisors: Caimano  
Tessier  
Gabriels  
Kenny  
Merlino  
Wm. Thomas  
Haskell

**Others Present:**

Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator  
Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative &  
Fiscal Services  
Joan Sady, Clerk  
Paul Dusek, County Attorney  
Supervisor Mason  
Supervisor Geraghty  
Supervisor VanNess  
Supervisor Champagne  
Fred Austin, Fort William Henry  
See Sign-in Sheet for additional guests  
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office  
Specialist

**Tourism Comm. Members Present:**

Supervisors Tessier  
Belden  
Gabriels  
Kenny  
Sheehan  
Stec  
Merlino

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Mr. Caimano, as Chairman of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

Mr. Caimano explained the purpose of the joint committee meeting was to discuss the status of the Fire Chiefs' (New York State Association of Fire Chiefs') contract, and the status of the interviews for a Creative Director in the Tourism Department.

Privilege of the floor was extended to County Attorney, Paul Dusek, who reported that he felt the negotiations were ready to be finalized with the Fire Chiefs' regarding the Occupancy Tax Funding contract for the 2007 Convention. He said he needed the Committee members approval of the final points of the contract, as summarized below:

- ✓ the contract would be a regular, Occupancy Tax Funding contract in the amount of \$150,000;
- ✓ up to 75% (of the \$150,000) would be disbursed in advance of the 2007 Convention, to assist with preparations for the event;
- ✓ the Fire Chiefs' have agreed to repay the County (for funds disbursed prior to the event) on or before June 17, 2007, if the 2007 Convention is cancelled for any reason outside the control of the sponsor (i.e. "act of God," expropriation or confiscation of facilities, or compliance with order of any governmental authority, etc.)
- ✓ the Warren County logo will appear in any 2007 Convention advertisements the

- Fire Chiefs' place in various Chiefs' magazines; on the Fire Chiefs' website; and in the 2007 Convention program;
- ✓ the Fire Chiefs' will furnish the County with zip code information on all pre-registered attendees, and possibly for walk-in attendees (if collected); and
- ✓ the County has no obligation to provide additional security or transportation (as provided for the 2006 Convention).

Mr. Wm. Thomas and Mrs. Parsons entered the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Mr. Dusek further noted the Fire Chiefs' president, Tom LaBelle, had requested that the Executive Host Committee continue to hold regular meetings to coordinate the planning for the 2007 event.

Mr. F. Thomas and Mrs. Sady entered the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

Responding to Mr. Caimano's questions, Mr. Dusek explained that a resolution to authorize the funding contract with the Fire Chiefs' had been passed at an earlier Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meeting (see Resolution No. 559 of 2006). Therefore, he said no further action needed to be taken, at this time.

Next, Mr. Caimano reminded the Committee members that one of the new staff positions (created through the Budget process) was a Creative Director in the Tourism Department. He also noted the Tourism Department had submitted three separate RFP's (requests for proposal) related to: website design, electronic broadcasting and PR (public relations).

Mr. Caimano reported that Messrs. Gabriels, Kenny, Tessier and himself had interviewed the candidates for the Creative Director and determined the best candidate for the position was Linda Wohlers. He noted that Ms. Wohlers possessed such a host of skills and expertise, the interview group had felt the scope of services addressed in the three RFPs needed to be reduced considerably.

As for the RFP on website design services, Mr. Caimano apprized that he met with Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator; Rob Metthe, Director of the Information Technology (IT) Department; Paul Kaza, of Kaza Associates; and Linda Wohlers, Creative Director Candidate. Consequently, he explained, it had been determined that Ms. Wohlers and the IT staff had the expertise needed to handle the website design services, for a savings of \$30,000 to \$40,000 to the County.

Mr. Caimano further noted the successful bidder for the electronic broadcasting RFP had agreed to perform the services for a 5% commission of the \$1 million spent on electronic broadcasting fees. Therefore, he stated, the County would save an additional \$100,000 in contract fees.

Mr. Mason left the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Consequently, Mr. Caimano explained, the interview group's proposal was to hire Linda Wohlers as Creative Director and change Ms. Johnson's position from Tourism Coordinator to that of Tourism Director. In addition, he pointed out, the County would ultimately save approximately \$275,000 via services performed in-house.

Mr. Kenny commented that he felt Ms. Wohlers was very talented and he felt her work with the New York State Tourism Department and the Empire State Development Corporation would benefit Warren County. He further expressed his confidence that the combination of her creative talents and the IT staff's website capabilities would produce good results for the County, at a considerable savings to the taxpayers.

Mrs. Parsons and Mr. W. Thomas left the meeting at 9:38 a.m.

Mr. Gabriels concurred, as he expressed his support of the group's recommendations. He acknowledged that through the interview process, his initial concerns had been eliminated, once the capabilities of both the PR firm and Ms. Wohlers became apparent to the interview group.

Mr. Tessier said he fully supported the recommendations, and added that he was glad to see the County "finally get around to doing this."

Mr. Kenny said it was his understanding the RFP for PR services would need to be re-issued. Mr. Caimano agreed and he explained the scope of the PR services would be narrowed, considerably, which would result in a lower contract price, as well.

Mr. Caimano asked if the Committee members (of the two Committees convened) accepted the recommendations as presented.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Gabriels, and carried unanimously to hire Linda Wohlers as Creative Director of the Tourism Department, at an annual salary of \$63,000; to change the position of Tourism Coordinator to Director of Tourism, at an annual salary of \$63,500. The Committees further authorized the requests be forwarded to the Personnel Committee. (No resolution request forms were submitted.) [*Subsequent to the meeting it was determined the 2007 Salary Budget would be amended, via Resolution No. 743 of 2006.*]

There being no further business to come before the joint meeting, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Tessier, Mr. Caimano adjourned the joint meeting at 9:44 a.m.

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