

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: FEBRUARY 28, 2007

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COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER  
BELDEN  
KENNY  
SHEEHAN  
MERLINO

OTHERS PRESENT:

KATE JOHNSON, TOURISM DIRECTOR  
LINDA WOHLERS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
REPRESENTING THE WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF  
CHAMBERS:

LUISA SHERMAN  
ELAINE CHIOVAROU-BROWN

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS GABRIELS  
STEC

JOAN PARSONS, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE  
AND FISCAL SERVICES

JOAN SADY, CLERK  
SUPERVISOR MASON

JOANN MCKINSTRY, CONFIDENTIAL SECRETARY TO THE  
COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE AND FISCAL  
SERVICES

FRANK O'KEEFE, COUNTY TREASURER

FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY

AMANDA ALLEN, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the November 28, 2006 meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Tourism Director, who distributed copies of her agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson apprised that her agenda included several resolution requests, the first of which was a request for a new contract with Offset House for the printing of the 2007 Rates & Dates and Events brochure. She noted that the contract would be for an amount not to exceed \$9,489 and would incorporate a term commencing on March 19, 2007 and terminating on April 30, 2007. Ms. Johnson advised that the quantity of brochures printed would be increased from 100,000 to 120,000 due to its popularity.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request for a new contract with Offset House for an amount not to exceed \$9,489 for the printing of 2007 Rates & Dates and Events brochure with the term of the contract commencing on March 19, 2007 and terminating on April 30, 2007. The necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting and a copy of the request is on file with the minutes.

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Ms. Johnson stated that her second request was for a transfer of funds in the amount of \$250 from Code A.6417 424, (Tourism Occupancy - postage), to Code A.6417 220, (Tourism Occupancy - equipment), for the purchase of a flat top scale. She explained that the Tourism Department had implemented new UPS software which allowed for the use of a flat scale and printing of UPS labels which would greatly aid her Department as currently all shipments had to be transported to the mail room for weighing.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.*

A request to amend Resolution Nos. 759 & 760 of 2006 was also included in the agenda, Ms. Johnson apprised. She stated that both resolutions should be amended to include Linda Wohlers, Creative Director, to the list of Tourism personnel authorized to attend 2007 Consumer Shows and Motorcoach Trade Shows/Sales Blitz/Marketplaces. Ms. Johnson noted that this request had been suggested by Mr. Caimano.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend Resolution Nos. 759 & 760 of 2006 to add Linda Wohlers to the list of Tourism personnel authorized to attend 2007 Consumer Shows and Motorcoach Trade Shows/Sales Blitz/Marketplaces and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson reminded the Committee that Warren County had received designation for the 2007 I Love NY Summer Festival and she advised that her agenda included a request for a resolution honoring the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French & Indian War. Ms. Johnson noted that Mr. Tessier, along with some re-enactment actors, would make a brief presentation at the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting during which a new poster would be unveiled celebrating the anniversary.

Motion was made by Mr. Sheehan, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request for a resolution honoring the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the French & Indian War and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.*

The final request listed, Ms. Johnson apprised, was a request to amend the 2007 County Budget in the amount of \$10,495 to reflect the acceptance of unanticipated revenues. She explained that the funds were the results of consumer show brochure distribution (\$4,465); student and youth travel co-op advertising revenue (\$350) and Better Homes & Gardens co-op advertising revenue (\$5,680).

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to amend the 2007 County Budget in the amount of \$10,495 to reflect the receipt of unanticipated revenues and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request is on file with the minutes.*

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Ms. Johnson apprised that 2007 would be a huge transition year for the Tourism Department, full of excitement and opportunity. She said that she was looking forward to working with all of the new facets of the Department and Ms. Johnson noted that she and Ms. Wohlers would be present at each Committee meeting, periodically interjecting various staff members, contract holders, vendors and such. She noted that the transformation from the Paul Kaza Associates contract to the new in-house momentum for advertisement and creativity had been seamless. Ms. Johnson stated that there were two outside contracts, the first with Sawchuk Brown Associates based in Albany, for the public relations component and she had already met with that group on two occasions. She said that press releases had been issued notifying the public of the contracts with Sawchuk Brown Associates and Susan Stratton & Partners, as well as a release on the hiring of the Ms. Wohlers as Creative Director. She said that her Department was very excited to work with Sawchuk Brown Associates and they had relayed several ideas for the advertisement of Warren County; however, she said, they were relying on the company to use their expertise to strategize and position Warren County high among the list of travel vacation destinations.

Mr. Kenny asked if the contract with Sawchuk Brown Associates specified the frequency of their meetings with the Tourism Department and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively. She explained that the contract included provisions for six meetings per year at the Municipal Center, which had already been scheduled for 2007, and monthly meetings at their headquarters in Albany. Ms. Johnson added that she and her staff had the ability to contact Sawchuk Brown Associates via telephone or email at any time, a provision they were using frequently already. Mr. Kenny noted that as a Committee member he would like to hear from these groups with whom contracts were held, to remain apprised of the efforts in place.

Mr. Tessier asked if there were specific contacts assigned by Sawchuk Brown Associates and Ms. Johnson replied that there were. She stated that two key contacts had been appointed to work with her Department and another alternate contact was also working on the account who was more familiar with Warren County itself.

Ms. Johnson apprised that Susan Stratton and Partners was the company holding the contract for the buying of all broadcast media such as television and radio advertising. She said that Ms. Stratton was dynamic to say the least and she noted that Susan Stratton & Partners had used the Winter television commercials created by Paula Kaza Associates, immediately forming an advertisement strategy running commercials from January 2<sup>nd</sup> through March 4<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Johnson stated that initially response to the advertisements had been slow; however, they had increased due to the inclusion of a contest for a getaway in the area which directed interested parties to the [www.visitlakegeorge.com](http://www.visitlakegeorge.com) website to enter.

The hosting of the [www.visitlakegeorge.com](http://www.visitlakegeorge.com) website had been overtaken by the Warren County IT (Information Technology) department on December 20<sup>th</sup>, Ms. Johnson stated. She said that the transition of the site from its hosting by Paul Kaza Associates had been absolutely perfect and the creative changes and email broadcasts to the 60,000 email addresses captured would begin in March,

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Ms. Johnson added. She noted that the email broadcast would reflect a very integrated and up to date look reflecting the current advertising campaign. Ms. Johnson advised that the IT Department was also aiding the Tourism Department by updating the way in which inquiries were logged; she noted that although the system was designed by the IT Department some years ago and worked well, it was in need of some updating. An outline was created within the Tourism Department detailing what was needed and the IT Department was ready to begin the upgrades. In addition, Ms. Johnson stated, the IT Department was in the process of combining the multitude of databases maintained by the Tourism Department into one large Excel database from which all of the information could be extracted. In addition to these technology upgrades, Ms. Johnson noted that they were currently working with both the IT and Tele-Communications Department to increase telephone capabilities to the Tourism Department and also to improve the way in which calls were routed throughout the office. She stated that some additional costs would be associated with the upgrades and proposals were currently being developed by the IT and Tele-Communications Departments for presentation at future Committee meetings. Ms. Johnson said that her Department was very excited to proceed with their office automation.

Mr. Merlino asked if he could be added to the email broadcast list and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively. She added that she would include all Supervisors with email addresses listed in the Warren County directory in the list of recipients for the email broadcast.

Ms. Johnson distributed a spreadsheet displaying the ads placed for the Spring/Summer 2007 campaign. She noted that although she had placed fewer advertisements than Paul Kaza Associates had during the prior season, she had saved \$27,000.

The most positive transition, Ms. Johnson stated, was the addition of Ms. Wohlers to the Tourism Department's staff. She said that Ms. Wohlers' creativity was phenomenal and the Department was very lucky to have her. Ms. Johnson introduced Ms. Wohlers to the Committee and noted that she would give a short presentation on the creative changes made so far.

Ms. Wohlers stated that thus far she had made changes where appropriate so as not to lose continuity with what had already been done. Although she acknowledged that a considerable amount of funding had been used to develop 'Find Your Smile' as the catch phrase for Lake George, Ms. Wohlers apprised that the phrase had altered slightly to 'Bet'cha We Can Make You Smile!'. She explained that the original phrase had sounded more like a directive than an invitation and the new phrase was much more fun and friendly. Ms. Wohlers stated that all promotional materials would be branded with the new phrase and it would be included in the upcoming broadcast advertisements.

Ms. Wohlers apprised that she had also reviewed the existing advertisement materials such as the placemats and the rates and dates brochures. She said that in both cases the materials could be made more interesting and fun without compromising the information enclosed. Ms. Wohlers stated that the placemats were distributed at many area locations and seemed more like a boring corporate agenda than advertisement for enjoyable events in the area. She pointed out the new version of the placemat, displayed on the Board Room wall, which incorporated bright colors and photographs

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while including all of the information listed on the more drab model. Ms. Wohlers said that the same type of effort was used with the Rates & Dates and Events brochure which had been very text heavy initially. She apprised that abbreviations had been used to decrease the amount of text and new color schemes and photographs had also been added to this publication, making it much more interesting.

Lake George itself had been used as the main focus of the new advertising efforts, Ms. Wohlers apprised. She stated that the area was comprised of three anchors which were the Lake itself, the Village of Lake George and the Great Escape and these attractions would be incorporated with other area events to draw visitors to the area. In keeping with this idea, Ms. Wohlers advised that a new mantra had been developed for the Tourism Department which was "Get 'em here, Get 'em out, Get 'em back". She said that this new marketing strategy would portray the accessibility of the area emphasizing only a three hour drive for downstate visitors. Ms. Wohlers noted that the downstate area had many transient residents that had no knowledge of the Lake George area, as well as those who had fond childhood memories of the area and those were the visitors targeted. Ms. Wohlers said that vacation homeowners would also be targeted to attract their friends and family as visitors. She apprised that the Tourism Department intended to develop a book which would feature road tours to various towns and portray what those towns had to offer in terms of dining, shopping and entertainment. Ms. Wohlers stated that it was her hope that these new materials would aid in bringing visitors to the area, drawing them out of their lodgings to partake in fun and interesting events in hopes that they would return in the future, possibly bringing friends and family with them.

Ms. Johnson and Ms. Wohlers expressed their appreciation to the Planning & Community Development Department who had printed the enlarged materials displayed for the Committee's perusal. Ms. Johnson noted that the Tourism Department envelope had also been altered to display a picture of the area, which she said would be changed according to the season.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Wohlers noted that Warren County Airport was the best County airport in the northeast and needed to be advertised more extensively. She stated that the Airport was a wonderful facility that could be flown into under just about every weather condition, was convenient to many areas and was surrounded by beautiful scenery. Ms. Wohlers advised that Ms. Johnson was currently researching the various publications available to advertise the Warren County Airport to pilots.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Johnson introduced Luisa Craige-Sherman of the WCCC (Warren County Council of Chambers) and noted that Ms. Craige-Sherman had asked to be added to the agenda to make a presentation to the Committee. Ms. Craige-Sherman apprised that the WCCC was not a new organization; however, there were a number of new faces and new energy to formalize the group. She noted that a brochure, including the groups mission statement and membership, had been developed to advertise the group and she distributed copies to the Committee members. Ms. Craige-Sherman apprised that the WCCC was a group of volunteers who represented a broad cross-section of the

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business community in Warren County; she added that the WCCC hoped to develop a more extensive relationship with the County through communication with the Committee and the Tourism Department. Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that she would be pleased to act as the liaison between the Committee and the WCCC, relaying information between the groups as necessary. She noted that the WCCC held a monthly dinner meeting, which Supervisors Belden and Merlino frequently attended, and she encouraged any other Supervisors interested to attend also.

Mr. Belden asked Ms. Craige-Sherman if she felt the Tourism Department was on the right track in advertising the area and Ms. Craige-Sherman replied that she felt they were. She added that she thought the use of the Lake as a main marketing tool was a wonderful idea and she noted that there were several areas wherein collaboration between the Committee and the WCCC could be very helpful.

Discussion ensued.

Concluding agenda review, Ms. Johnson apprised that there was one pending item for discussion which was a referral from the Parks, Recreation & Railroad Committee to increase the promotion of the Warren County fairgrounds. Mr. Tessier noted that one of the problems with the fairgrounds was the cost to use the facility. He reminded the Committee that in prior years a blue grass festival had been held at the fairgrounds but that event had ceased due to the costs incurred. Mr. Tessier stated that the \$1500 fee should be reviewed and possibly reduced in order to attract new events to the site.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Johnson stated that the area was best suited for outdoor events and the fairgrounds were easily accessible. She added that the facility was suggested quite often for events in the area and was listed as usable space in the Tourism Department manual which listed all of the County's facilities. Ms. Johnson said that listings for the site could be updated and more heavily promoted.

Mr. Tessier reiterated the need for the Board to consider lowering the fee for rental of the fairground site and Mr. Merlino suggested that a sliding scale be developed to determine the cost of use based on the event.

Discussion ensued.

As there was no further business to come before the Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Sheehan, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Amanda Allen, Legislative Office Specialist