

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: TOURISM**

**DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2008**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS TESSIER  
BELDEN  
KENNY  
SHEEHAN  
MERLINO  
SIMMES  
STRAINER

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:  
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR  
LINDA WOHLERS, CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
REPRESENTING SAWCHUK BROWN ASSOCIATES:  
KATE OSTERHOUT, ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE  
SUSAN STRATTON, STRATTON PARTNERS ADVERTISING  
AMY BARTLETT, FIRST ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN  
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE &  
FISCAL SERVICES  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
SUPERVISORS GIRARD  
STEC  
THOMAS  
FRANCIS X. O'KEEFE, COUNTY TREASURER  
ROB HOSFORD, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY  
IDA WILLIAMS, FORT WILLIAM HENRY  
MICHAEL SPILMAN, HOLIDAY INN TURF  
CHARLENE DiRESTA, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:18 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Francis X. O'Keefe, County Treasurer, noted that Mr. Kenny had requested that he attend the Tourism Committee meeting, in order to give an update on the County occupancy tax revenues. He stated that the 2007 occupancy tax revenues that had been collected as of February 25, 2008 totaled \$3,331,664.20. He added that this represented an 18% increase when compared to the 2006 total occupancy tax revenues, which were \$2,821,891, for an overall increase of \$509,773.20. He apprised that the County Treasurer's Office would continue collecting 2007 occupancy tax revenues through March 20, 2008 and would close the books and have the final figures on March 31, 2008. Mr. Belden asked how much more was expected in 2007 occupancy tax revenues and Mr. O'Keefe

replied that they had estimated an additional \$12,000.

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

Ms. Johnson apprised that she was requesting a new contract with Production Equipment, Inc. for videography services, commencing March 31, 2008 and terminating December 31, 2008, for a total amount not to exceed \$15,000. She added that a Request for Proposal (RFP) had been sent to five companies, three of which had responded. She noted that the videographer would be Taylor Morrison and that the Tourism Department had previously used his services. She stated that it had been suggested by the Purchasing Agent that the Tourism Department enter into contracts this year for photography, videography and production services.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to authorize a new contract with Production Equipment, Inc., as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 21, 2008 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson stated that she was requesting a new contract with Offset House for printing of the 2008 Rates & Dates and Events Brochure, commencing March 24, 2008 and terminating April 30, 2008, for a lump sum amount of \$10,094, to be paid upon completion of the project. She said the RFP had been sent to six companies, of which five had responded. She noted that the brochure would be redesigned for 2008 and 120,000 copies would be printed.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to authorize a new contract with Offset House, as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the March 21, 2008 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson expounded that three RFP's for the Tourism Department had been delayed and she was requesting authorization to enter into contracts with the lowest bidder for data/text entry for print publications, video editing and sound editing. She noted that the bid opening would be February 28, 2008; however, she added, she was requesting authorization to accept the lowest bidders so the contracts could be approved at the March 21, 2008 Board meeting. Mr. Tessier questioned if Ms. Johnson was sure that she wanted to accept the lowest bidder and Ms. Johnson replied as long as they met the specifications for the project. Mr.

Belden asked if he could receive a copy of the Tabulation Sheets and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to authorize contracts with the lowest bidders for data/text entry for print publications, video editing and sound editing, and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the March 21, 2008 Board meeting.

*Subsequent to the meeting the following contracts were awarded pertaining to the three RFP's:*

- ▶ *For data/text entry for print publications: Since there was only one response to the RFP, which was not within the budgeted amount for the project, the bid was rejected;*
- ▶ *For video editing: The contract will be with Working Pictures, Inc. for post-production and on-line editing services, commencing March 31, 2008 and terminating December 31, 2008, for a total amount not to exceed \$7,500; and*
- ▶ *For sound editing: The contract will be with Cotton Hill Studios, Inc. for sound/audio production services, commencing March 31, 2008 and terminating December 31, 2008, for a total amount not to exceed \$5,000.*

*Copies of the resolution request forms are on file with the minutes and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the March 21, 2008 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson apprised that at this time of year the Tourism Department started running the first print ads of the year. She added that the first ads this year were the travel brochure ads, which included a reader response card. She stated that ads had been placed in *USA Weekend*, *The Hartford Current*, *The New York Daily News*, *The Boston Globe*, *The New York Times* and a newspaper group called *Great Vacation Getaways*, which included newspapers in Greater New York City, Philadelphia, Southern Connecticut and additional Northeast and Mid Atlantic markets. She said that the ads, translated into French, had been placed in two Canadian newspapers, *Le Soleil* and *La Presse*. She apprised that travel service ads were popular in magazines as well and had been placed in *Readers' Digest*, *Red Book* and *People Magazine*. She added that travel service ads were a good source for travel planning and early decision making. She said that the first ads would run in March and April and would offer reader service with the publishers sending leads to the Tourism Department in Excel format. She stated that seasonal display ads, which also provided reader service, had been placed in the May issues of *Better Homes and Gardens*, *Ladies' Home Journal* and *Family Circle*. She noted that additional display ads had been placed in lifestyle publications with a proven success history, such as *Camping Life* and *Cooking Light Magazine*.

She apprised that the message in all of the ads placed this year was creating memories, spending time and reconnecting with the ones you love.

Ms. Johnson expounded that the Tourism Department employees had been attending the consumer shows. She added that they had already attended sports and outdoor shows in Edison, New Jersey; Springfield, Massachusetts; and Suffern, New York. She said they had attended two camping shows in Suffern, New York and Hartford, Connecticut. She noted that she was going to Manhattan, New York this weekend to attend the New York Times Travel Show and added that there would be 500 exhibitors and 30,000 consumers.

Ms. Johnson reported that as part of the winter promotion, an email blast had gone out on December 31, 2007 to 1,000 people who had requested snowmobile information. She noted that the Tourism Department had approximately 90,000 subscribers and were capable of segmenting by industry based on the interests listed by each subscriber. She stated that the online 'Magical Winter Getaway' giveaway had been successful with 2,589 entries. She noted that four winners had been chosen and added that a list of the winners and the prizes was included in the Agenda packet. *Copies of the snowmobile email blast, the Magical Winter Getaway email blast and the list of the winners and prizes are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson apprised that Warren County Tourism had purchased a 3-page fold-out ad on the inside front cover of the *New York State 2007-08 Winter Travel & Ski Guide*, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She noted that the upcoming online promotion would include camping and RV (recreational vehicle) packages and would run in March and April. She expounded that the majority of the area hotels were nearly empty in the middle of the week. She added that the Tourism Department would run a free promotion entitled "Mid-Week Fill 'er Up" which would include mid-week discounts for the area hotels. She noted that the flyer had been sent out to the area hotels with a deadline to respond by March 6, 2008. She added that they would do an email blast to all 90,000 subscribers. *A copy of the Mid-Week Fill 'er Up flyer is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson apprised that there was a new whitewater rafting brochure, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She added that an in-house press release pertaining to the brochure had gone out recently to local, extended local and select northeast publications.

Ms. Johnson expounded that the Governor's Annual Tourism Conference would be held at The Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing, New York on March 14-16, 2008. She added that she had been asked to be part of the advisory board. She was requesting permission to stay overnight at The Sagamore during the

Conference for one or possibly two nights.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to authorize Ms. Johnson to attend and stay overnight at The Sagamore Resort in Bolton Landing, New York for one or two nights during the Governor's Annual Tourism Conference on March 14-16, 2008. *A copy of the Authorization to Attend Meeting or Conference is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson stated that the Tourism Department had developed a binder to be distributed to 350 operators of the American Bus Association. She noted that the binder contained a profile sheet for Warren County Tourism, as well as information sheets from local participants such as The Hampton Inn, The Fort William Henry and the City of Glens Falls.

Ms. Johnson introduced Kate Osterhout, Senior Account Executive with Sawchuk Brown Associates, who gave a Power Point presentation, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Ms. Osterhout said that since her last presentation in November 2008, Sawchuk Brown Associates had done a lot of planning for 2008, as well as sent out many press releases and pitches. She explained the differences of the two as follows:

- ▶ A press release was a document that was sent out to publications containing quotes and all the information that a writer would need to write a story; and
- ▶ A pitch was a document that was more specific to the publication it was sent to and was used to spark the interest of the reporter.

Ms. Osterhout stated that the most current press releases pertained to the Warren County Travel Guide and the 'Greatness Starts Here' quiz. Linda Wohlers, Creative Director of Tourism, distributed copies of the 'Greatness Starts Here' quiz to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. She stated that the Lake George area had an amazing history, which was the basis for the quiz. Ms. Johnson apprised that the original idea had been for *Homeschooler's Guide* magazine; however, she added, they had expanded the idea to include all target markets via the website. Ms. Wohlers apprised that anyone who took the quiz on the website would be entered to win 'The Great Curious Adventure'. She added that participants would have two chances to answer each question correctly. She noted that there was a website link for each question that would take participants to a website that would contain the correct answer. She added that upon completion of the quiz the participants were automatically entered for the adventure vacation giveaway. She apprised that the vacation package had not been completed yet; however, she added, they were hoping the package would include a stay at the Fort William Henry Resort. She said that the vacation package would include a day at the lake which would be set up by the Lake

George Association, as well as a trip to Natural Stone Bridge and Caves. Mrs. Simmes asked if the quiz had been sent to Warren County schools and Ms. Wohlers responded that it would be sent to the schools with the press release.

Ms. Osterhout noted that an educational field trips pitch had been sent out to freelance travel writers, local media and drive market publications (those publications whose market was within driving distance). She added that the pitch had also included an offer to set up a FAM tour. She said that they had received a significant amount of interest from this pitch, with at least ten writers responding. She noted that in the future when Sawchuk Brown Associates sent out pitches, they would include an offer to set up a FAM tour.

Ms. Osterhout stated that Sawchuk Brown Associates had been working hard on ProfNet queries. She explained that ProfNet queries were email requests from writers for information that would enable them to write a particular story. She said that they reviewed the emails that were received to see if any of the requests were appropriate for Warren County. She added that they then wrote a pitch and sent it to the Tourism Department for any correction prior to sending it to the writer. She noted that it did not take a lot of time to write these pitches. She said that Sawchuk Brown Associates was developing a database for the pitches that were used, so that they could be used again with slight changes based on the needs of the writer. She stated that a list of the ProfNet queries that they had responded to was included in the Power Point presentation.

Ms. Osterhout apprised that Sawchuk Brown Associates had also been working on FAM visits. She added that John Fox-Clinch, of the *Western Daily Press* in England, had visited in the Fall of 2007 and Christine Harvey, of *New Living Magazine*, had visited January 18-20, 2008. She noted that there was a list of the pending FAM visits included in the Power Point presentation, as well.

Ms. Osterhout stated that Sawchuk Brown Associates had developed a public relations plan for 2008 that had the following objectives:

- ▶ To increase positive media coverage over last year;
- ▶ To encourage travel writers to visit the area for FAM tours and increase visits to [www.VisitLakeGeorge.com](http://www.VisitLakeGeorge.com); and
- ▶ To broaden Warren County Tourism's reach through expanded national coverage.

Ms. Osterhout said that there was a tentative press release schedule included in the Power Point presentation. She noted that this year they were pitching press releases several months prior to the events. She said that they were currently pitching spring getaways and whitewater rafting and added that in April they would pitch Americade which would be held in June. She stated that in June they

would begin to pitch fall getaways. She said this press release schedule was tentative and added if there were any ideas or suggestions from the Committee, her contact information had been included in the material.

Ms. Johnson introduced Susan Stratton, of Stratton Partners Advertising, and noted that Ms. Stratton was the broadcast media buyer for Warren County Tourism, which included television and radio. Ms. Stratton showed the winter television commercial to the Committee and noted that it had run on Time Warner Cable, CableVision and Albany Time Warner from December 1, 2007 through January 31, 2008. She added that the commercial had been broadcast locally on News 9, TBS, TLC, the Discovery Channel, HDTV and the Food Network. She further added that it had been broadcast downstate on News Channel 1, News Channel 12, TBS, TLC, the Discovery Channel, HDTV and the Food Network.

Ms. Stratton stated that they had used a new technology offered by the cable company which allowed digital cable viewers who were watching the commercial to press 'A' to receive information or to press 'B' to view a video and receive information. She added that viewers who pressed either 'A' or 'B' had their names and addresses sent directly to the Warren County Tourism Department so that information could be mailed to them. She noted that this technology was called RFI (Request for Information). She added that the commercial had been broadcast to both digital and non-digital viewers. She apprised that they had reached over one million digital households plus an additional one to two million non-digital households in the Metro New York area. She added that CableVision had broadcast the commercial to an additional four million households.

Ms. Stratton apprised that they had received 13,477 RFI's from the Metro New York and Hudson Valley area and an additional 460 RFI's from the Albany area. She added that they were only allowed to use the names and addresses obtained from the RFI's for one mailing. She noted that she had an inquiry with Time Warner Cable pending to see if it would be allowable to use the names more than one time. Ms. Johnson said that if the viewers visited the website as a result of the commercial and entered their information they became part of the database permanently. Ms. Stratton noted that Time Warner Cable limited the amount of clients who could use the RFI services with only three clients per quarter.

Ms. Stratton expounded that Time Warner Cable offered another service called VOD (Video on Demand). She said that Local Channel 1282 was Journey TV which allowed customers to view videos on demand that pertained to travel. She added that viewers who went to Journey TV could click on New York and scroll down to Winter Lake George to view a 90-second informational video. She noted that the website was advertised on the video, as well as the winter getaway contest. She noted that the VOD did not record names and addresses like the RFI;

however, she added, it gave viewers a chance to see what was available in the Lake George area. She apprised that there had been almost 10,000 VOD hits in the Metro New York area for the months of December and January with another 500 hits in Albany, New York for the same time period. She noted that CableVision which serviced the Long Island, New York area reached approximately 2.5 million households from which approximately 3,000 VOD hits had been received.

Ms. Wohlers stated that the Tourism Department was preparing the website for the summer season. She added that there was more emphasis on internet marketing and Warren County Tourism had to be more competitive with internet promotions. She said that more landing pages were being added to the website to make it easier to navigate. She noted that the camping landing page had been broken down into private campsites, Lake George Island campsites, State campgrounds, primitive camping and RV campgrounds. She added that the landing page would contain links to the fishing and boating landing pages. She noted that the fishing landing page included links for guides which would assist in referring business to local fishing guides. She stated that the landing page included information on Lake George fishing, including licenses, fishing seasons, regulations, events and packages and she added, they were encouraging guides to team up with hotels to offer fishing packages. Ms. Wohlers apprised that they were encouraging people to send in fishing photos to be posted on the website. Ms. Johnson said that they had also asked fishing guides to send in photos and three had already sent images of their customers.

Ms. Wohlers apprised that serious emphasis had been put on the boating landing page. She added that the page would include links to restaurants and motels that had dock access or were within walking distance from a dock. She said the page would also contain links to rules and regulations for boating. She added that they were also encouraging people to send in boating pictures to be posted on the website.

Messrs. Thomas, Girard and Stec entered the meeting at 11:10 a.m.

Ms. Wohlers stated that the email blast for whitewater rafting had gone out this week. Ms. Johnson said that 86,181 people had received the email blast and added that it had gone out on Monday, February 25, 2008 and to date, 575 people had entered the contest. Ms. Wohlers apprised that they were attempting to increase the whitewater rafting business of all of the local outfitters. She said that the contest was to win a whitewater rafting weekend that included a trip to the Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course in Bolton Landing, New York. Ms. Johnson said that there was a link to the Whitewater Derby site and added that the Whitewater Rafting Brochure was able to be downloaded.

Ms. Wohlers apprised that the 2008 Rates & Dates and Events Brochure would be a 4" by 5" booklet, as opposed to a larger fold-out. She added that the booklet listed all of the events and attractions that would be held in the Lake George area in 2008. Ms. Johnson stated that they were still editing the placemat and it was not yet ready to go to the printer. In answer to a question as to how many placemats would be printed, Ms. Johnson replied approximately 350,000. Ms. Wohlers said that the placemat had a new look. She added that they had tried to get away from the typical rustic look and make it more light and bright this year.

Ms. Wohlers apprised that the website would also include a link to a separate website for all the other area lakes. She added that Lake George was kept separate because it was such a large lake with many businesses, restaurants and hotels.

Mr. Merlino said that he felt the Tourism Department was comprised of a great team and that they were doing a great job.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Charlene DiResta, Legislative Office Specialist