

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: BUDGET - TOURISM

DATE: AUGUST 26, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY
BELDEN
CHAMPAGNE
KENNY
SHEEHAN
MERLINO
TAYLOR

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS O'CONNOR
STEC

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOANN MCKINSTRY, DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS PITKIN
STRAINER
TESSIER
THOMAS
VANNESS
CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Budget Committee to order at 1:00 p.m.

Copies of the Tourism Department 2010 Budget Request were distributed to the Committee members; a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Kate Johnson, Tourism Director, stated that Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk for the Tourism Department, would present the 2010 Budget request. Ms. Grant presented the 2010 Budget request which reflected a 2010 total appropriation of \$3,329,212 as compared to the 2009 appropriation of \$3,385,696, a decrease of \$56,484; and a 2010 total revenue of \$3,537,214 as compared to the 2009 revenue of \$3,383,637, an increase of \$153,577.

Ms. Grant said that 2009 had been a challenging year. She advised that they had begun 2009 with a budget of \$3,400,000 and it had been necessary to reduce the matching funds by 19% due to a decrease in the amount of funds received from New York State (NYS). She added that they had reduced their receivables from NYS by \$22,132 and had reduced Occupancy Tax Revenues by the same amount. She advised that they had also funded the Special Event Coordinator position at a prorated cost of \$29,839, effective May 27, 2009. She added that the salary for the Special Event Coordinator in the 2010 Budget was \$50,000. She said that the Tourism Department had expended \$9,700 for the County's portion of an engineering study on the Gaslight Village Property. She advised that a further reduction in NYS matching funds was expected for 2010 at an estimated 15%.

Ms. Grant apprised that the Tourism Department would include an additional salary in the 2010 Budget, as they would absorb the salary of the part-time Keyboard Specialist who worked at the Information Desk. She added that the Keyboard Specialist accomplished a lot of work for the Tourism Department while she manned the Information Desk. Mr. Kenny asked if the Keyboard Specialist would work solely for the Tourism Department and Ms. Johnson replied

that she would stay at the Information Desk but would continue to complete tasks for the Tourism Department. Mr. Kenny asked if she would accomplish other work as well and Mr. Champagne replied that she would answer phones and direct visitors. Mr. Kenny stated that the position could not be funded using Occupancy Tax funds unless it was solely for the Tourism Department. He added that if a percentage of her duties were not Tourism related, the County would need to fund the same percentage of her salary. In answer to the question of how many hours per week the Keyboard Specialist worked, Hal Payne, Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, replied 18 hours per week. Mr. Geraghty interjected that the work completed by the Keyboard Specialist was for the Tourism Department.

Following a brief discussion, it was the consensus of the Committee that the salary of the Keyboard Specialist would be funded in-part from the Tourism Department Budget and the Administrative & Fiscal Services Budget, based on the percentage of work completed, to be determined, as approved by the County Attorney.

Ms. Grant advised that NYS Legislation allowed the County to utilize 65% of the Occupancy Tax collections. She added that 10% went towards special event funding and 25% was dispersed to the individual Towns. She said that 65% of the collections for 2008 totaled \$2,146,439 and they wanted to utilize \$1,955,405 for the 2010 Budget. She added that the expenses for 2010 had been reduced by 1.2%. She apprised that additional revenues were anticipated for 2010 and would be placed in the Occupancy Tax Reserve Account. She added that the Reserve balance was currently \$222,772.45 and they were anticipating the addition of approximately \$90,000 from the additional revenues.

Mr. Belden stated that the Creative Director's salary was currently higher than the Tourism Director's salary. He added that Ms. Johnson had been with Warren County for a longer period of time and he felt she should have a higher salary.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to increase the base salary of the Tourism Director from \$63,750 in 2009 to \$67,695 in the 2010 Budget, an increase of \$3,945.

Referring to the request to reclassify a Tourism Specialist position to a Senior Tourism Specialist position, Ms. Grant apprised that the previous Senior Tourism Specialist had passed away unexpectedly last year. She added that they had hired a replacement and since she had not been trained she was hired as a Tourism Specialist. She advised that the Tourism Specialist was now fully trained and was performing the responsibilities of a Senior Tourism Specialist.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to reclassify a Tourism Specialist position, base salary of \$25,788, to a Senior Tourism Specialist position, base salary of \$27,023, Employee No. 11529, effective January 1, 2010, thereby amending the Department's Table of Organization.

Mr. Geraghty asked where the anticipated additional revenue of \$90,000 would be generated. Ms. Johnson noted that at the last Committee meeting they had discussed the possibility of selling the email addresses in the database to local businesses; however, she continued, they had proposed an alternative solution. She explained that when the Department sent out their monthly email blasts, they would include a featured sponsor at the bottom of the blast. She

said they would charge a fee of \$2,000 per sponsor and would include up to three sponsors per monthly email blast. She advised that the County Attorney was researching the legality of the proposal.

Brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Geraghty stated that some of the special events that were held in Warren County required the services of other County Departments besides the Tourism Department. He asked if there was any way to factor this into occupancy tax distributions in the future. He gave the example of additional Sheriff's Patrols required for certain events. Mr. Kenny said that the County Attorney had been consulted on the issue as it pertained to the Adirondack Balloon Festival and he had advised against it. He continued that the County Attorney had advised that the coordinators of the Adirondack Balloon Festival could apply for the funding; however, he added, occupancy tax funding could not be used to supplement the budget of the Department of Public Works (DPW) or Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Geraghty apprised that the Sheriff's Office supplied a large number of patrolmen for events such as Americade and it was a significant strain on the budget. He added that patrols during special events were more Tourism related than Public Safety related. Mr. Kenny stated that during the first discussions concerning occupancy tax, it had been suggested that a portion should be allotted to the DPW and the Sheriff's Office for the extra work they did during special events; however, he added, at the time the Board was opposed to that. Mr. Geraghty suggested that the issue should be revisited as staffing was increased to cover the special events.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. VanNess noted that there was a \$600,000 increase in the 2010 Sheriff's Office Budget, the majority of which was due to salary increases. He said that he would receive a copy of the schedule the next day, that included the requests from the Towns and the Village for additional patrols during special events. Mr. Belden said that the Towns and the Village paid County taxes and should be entitled to the additional patrols. Mr. VanNess countered that the Towns and the Villages received routine patrols that were paid for using tax dollars. He advised that if the Sheriff's Office Budget was decreased they would need to decrease services.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the Tourism Department 2010 Budget request and to forward same to the Budget Officer.

There being no further business to come before the Budget Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Merlino, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist