

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: MAY 27, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
TESSIER
MERLINO
CHAMPAGNE
SIMMES
GOODSPEED

OTHERS PRESENT:

FRANCIS O' KEEFE, COUNTY TREASURER
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER, TOURISM
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK, TOURISM
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR BENTLEY

SUPERVISORS BELDEN
PITKIN
SOKOL
STRAINER
TAYLOR
WAYNE LAMOTHE, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF PLANNING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE LAKE GEORGE
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST
PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEET FOR ALL OTHERS PRESENT

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:02 a.m.

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

Privilege of the floor was extended to Francis O' Keefe, County Treasurer, who reported that the 2009 occupancy tax collections through May 22, 2009 were \$306,101.41. He added that 2008 collections for the same time period had been \$357,151.57, which was a decrease of \$51,050.16 or approximately 15%.

Mr. Kenny said that the next item on the agenda was for Wayne LaMothe, Assistant Director of the Planning & Community Development Department, to discuss a new approach to the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor (FWHC) Event Coordinator position. Mr. LaMothe stated that he had met with representatives from the Department of State (DOS) and a Request for Proposal (RFP) had been released for technical assistance services. He advised that the grant funding that would be used for the position was from the DOS under the Local Waterfront Revitalization Program (LWRP); and therefore, he added, the DOS had the final say on any contracts. He said that they had received three proposals in response to the RFP and the DOS had issues with all three. He advised that the DOS had recommended that the County hire a part-time employee using the grant funding to offset the expense of the salary. He added that if they followed this

suggestion there would be no need to use occupancy tax funds.

Mr. LaMothe explained that the Town of Lake Luzerne had entered into an agreement with an individual who provided event planning services for the Town. He said that if they followed the suggestion of the DOS, they could underwrite the salary of the individual based on a 50/50 match. He apprised the Committee that they would prefer taking this course of action, as it would allow those Towns within the FWHC that had events to promote to hire individuals, as needed. Mr. Kenny clarified that grant funding would be used for the individual Towns to contract with event planners and the costs would be shared by the Town and the grant funding on a 50/50 basis. Mr. Merlino stated that the Town of Lake Luzerne had contracted with an individual at a fixed rate in order to promote tourism in the Town of Lake Luzerne.

Mr. Kenny asked Mr. LaMothe if he would send a letter to the Towns along the FWHC informing them of the opportunity and Mr. LaMothe replied affirmatively and said that he would use the Town of Lake Luzerne's efforts as a model. Mr. LaMothe added that he should be ready to send letters out to the Towns along the FWHC within two weeks. Mr. Champagne inquired as to the amount of grant funding and Mr. LaMothe responded that they had up to \$20,000 in grant funding and as long as there were funds remaining, they could reimburse the Towns up to 50%. Mr. LaMothe thanked the Committee for the funding which had been awarded for this purpose and added that since the funds would not be utilized they could be returned.

Mr. Kenny stated that the next item on the agenda was an update from Luisa Craige-Sherman, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce, on their search for a Sales/Special Event/Convention Coordinator. Ms. Sherman noted that they had shortened the name of the title to Sales Coordinator. She reported that they had been advertising for the position for the last several weeks and had received a terrific response. She added that they had narrowed down the candidates and were in the process of completing the second interviews and they hoped to make an announcement in the next few weeks. She advised that the Chamber had reallocated their seasonal staffing hours and had hired a part-time office assistant to assist with the workload. Ms. Sherman said that the contract would include that the Sales Coordinator would attend the County Tourism and Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meetings to provide monthly updates. She advised that if the Towns along the FWHC were to contract with event planners as described, she suggested that they should all meet once per quarter to communicate their efforts.

Mr. Goodspeed entered the meeting at 10:15 a.m.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter for the Tourism Department, distributed a handout on print advertising placement for 2009; a copy of same is on file with the minutes. She reviewed the list of magazines in which print advertisements had been placed and noted that she was trying to be selective as to which magazines were chosen. She advised that of the \$25,000 in the budget for print advertising there was \$3,859 remaining. Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, stated that the advertisements had noted the incentive that the County offered via occupancy tax funding for new events that came to the area.

Mr. Kenny advised that the Occupancy Tax Law in Warren County allowed for 10% of the revenue collected from occupancy tax to be used for special event funding. He added that the County was always trying to attract new events and had a maximum award of \$50,000 per event, which was awarded based on a point system for meeting the criteria. He said that in December the funding was awarded for the upcoming year.

Mr. Kenny stated that there was \$13,900 remaining in the Occupancy Tax Special Event Fund and added that they had five applications for funding to review. He advised that the North Warren Chamber of Commerce was requesting \$5,000 to assist in printing the Upper Hudson River Community Waterfront Map. He said that the Board of Supervisors had received a presentation at the last Board meeting and the Supervisors had referred the request to the Occupancy Tax Committee.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Tessier and carried unanimously to award \$5,000 in Occupancy Tax Special Event Funding to the North Warren Chamber of Commerce to assist in printing the Upper Hudson River Community Waterfront Map. *The necessary resolution was authorized for the June 19, 2009 Board meeting.*

Mr. Kenny said that the next application was from the Research Foundation of SUNY (State University of New York) on behalf of SUNY Plattsburgh requesting \$4,000 for the First Annual Learning to Lead Conference. He said that the Conference would be held in the Town of Lake George on September 18-19, 2009 and they expected to attract 75 to 100 attendees. He added that the event had already received funding in the amount of \$2,000 from both the Town and the Village of Lake George. Ms. Johnson asked if the attendees would stay overnight and Mr. Kenny replied affirmatively and added that it was a two day event.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to decline the application for funding from the Research Foundation of SUNY, as outlined above.

Mr. Kenny advised that the next application was from Cornell University Cooperative Extension requesting \$2,000 for the Warren County Youth Fair. He noted that they had previously been awarded \$1,000 and were requesting additional funding. He stated that the Warren County Youth Fair was a one day event that projected 1,000 attendees. Mr. Tessier stated that the County's policy for one day events was to let the individual towns fund them. Mr. Kenny said that the County was not excluded from funding one day events and in the past they had awarded \$1,000 a year to the Warren County Youth Fair.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried by majority vote to decline the application for funding from Cornell University Cooperative Extension, as outlined above, with Mrs. Simmes abstaining.

Mr. Kenny said that the next application was from the Lake George Blues Blast, who had originally been awarded \$2,000 and then had been awarded an additional \$2,000. He added that they had lost sponsors and were seeking any additional funding from the County. Ms. Johnson asked if the Village and the Town of Lake George had contributed funding and Mr.

Tessier responded affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to decline the application for funding from the Lake George Blues Blast, as outlined above.

Mr. Kenny stated that the last application was from the Lake George Arts Project for the Lake George Jazz Weekend which had previously been awarded \$4,000 and was requesting any additional funding.

Motion was made by Mr. Champagne, seconded by Mrs. Simmes and carried unanimously to decline the application for funding from the Lake George Arts Project.

Mr. Kenny noted that the Occupancy Tax Special Event Fund had \$8,900 remaining for funding any additional events.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Champagne and seconded by Mr. Tessier, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 10:29 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist