

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: GASLIGHT VILLAGE Ad Hoc

DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MONROE
MERLINO
THOMAS
KENNY
BELDEN

JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
DANIEL STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
KAREN PUTNEY, ADMINISTRATOR OF FIRE PREVENTION & BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT
JOHN PAGANO, FIRE SAFETY INSPECTOR
ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
DAVID HARRINGTON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
TOM LARSON, VICE PRESIDENT & GENERAL MANAGER OF THE BIG APPLE CIRCUS
MARTHA LORD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE BIG APPLE CIRCUS
JIM McENANEY, REGIONAL OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR, REGION 5, NYS DEC
GARY WEST, OPERATIONS SUPERVISOR, WARRENSBURG, NYS DEC
KEVIN ROSA, PRESIDENT, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
MICHAEL CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB
WILLIAM LAMY, PROJECT MANAGER, WESTBROOK CONSERVATION INITIATIVE, CLARK PATTERSON LEE
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Monroe called the meeting of the Gaslight Village Ad Hoc Committee to order at 9:06 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Thomas and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting; subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Monroe stated the reason for today's meeting was to discuss the possibility of an agreement with the Big Apple Circus for use of the Festival Space on the former Gaslight Village property and he requested a round of introductions from those present. He said Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George had initiated the discussion and he requested Mayor Blais introduce the proposal to the Committee members.

Mayor Blais remarked he had sent an email seven months prior to various circuses informing of the Festival Space and Lake George as a possible venue. He said he had received two responses, one of which was the Big Apple Circus indicating their interest in Lake George as a possible venue. He advised he had given a tour of the Festival Space on December 12, 2011 to Tom Larson, Vice President & General Manager of the Big Apple Circus and Martha Lord, Executive Director of the Big Apple Circus. He commented the Circus was interested in Lake George as a possible venue for the last two weeks of July 2012. He announced the Festival Space was determined to be a suitable location for the Circus' Big Top Tent. He apprised the Circus would be featured on the December 15, 2011 airing of the *How They Do It* television show on the *Discovery Channel* and he added there would be a 15-minute segment of the show, detailing how the set up of the Big Top Tent was completed. He reported the area being considered for use by the Big Apple Circus was the gravel

parking area of the former Gaslight Village property. He said he had contacted Lisa Nagle, of Elan Planning, Design & Landscape Architecture, PLLC, and had been informed that no construction was anticipated on the area in question prior to the end of July 2012. He apprised the Lake George Recreation Center Parking Lot would be utilized for the parking of the semi-trailer trucks owned by the Big Apple Circus. He stated the Circus wanted to have the trailers in which the performers lived, referred to as The Village, in a nearby location. Mayor Blais indicated that William Dow, owner of the Lake George Steamboat Company, had offered use of the Lake George Steamboat Company Parking Lot, which was adjacent to the location where the Big Top Tent would be located. He noted it had been determined that it would be possible to supply the Circus with potable water and adequately dispose of sewage.

Mr. Kenny entered the meeting at 9:11 a.m.

Mayor Blais advised that following construction of the Festival Space, it would be one to two years before the Big Top Tent could be erected on the property. Therefore, he continued, the representatives from the Big Apple Circus, had also toured Battlefield Park as a possible future location for 2013. He requested Mr. Larson and Ms. Lord provide the Committee members with detailed information about the Big Apple Circus.

Copies of a packet pertaining to the Big Apple Circus were distributed to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Lord stated the Big Apple Circus was founded in 1977 and was currently in its' 34th year of performances. She said they were a world class one-ring circus operated as a not-for-profit organization. The addition of Lake George as a venue, she continued, would mean the Circus would have seven venues booked in 2012. She explained that each year the Big Apple Circus developed a unique show by recruiting international performers and acts. She advised the Circus' mission was to promote classical circuses and perform their community outreach programs. She reported the Circus' demographics were mostly adults ages 35 to 44 with children ages 3 to 15 but in general the audiences were multi-generational. She noted over 50% of the attendance each year was repeat customers. She said one of the Circus' goals was to support and work with the communities at each venue. She stated the Circus' demographics included higher income families with higher than average educational backgrounds and an interest in performing arts.

Ms. Lord pointed out the 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 Attendance Charts that were included in the handout packet. She stated that Lincoln Center in New York City was their main venue, where the Big Top Tent was located in a park next to the Metropolitan Opera. Other than Lincoln Center in New York City and Boston, Massachusetts, she continued, average attendance was 20,000 to 40,000 people per venue. Ms. Lord apprised the Big Apple Circus enjoyed working with communities that sponsored the arts and family entertainment. She said they worked with sponsors and/or presenting organizations as partners and added their sponsor for the Lake George venue would be the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce. She noted hospitality opportunities for the Big Apple Circus included the opportunity to sell private performances and an outreach program entitled, Circus for All, which allowed corporations or individuals to purchase tickets for families and children who would not otherwise be able to attend. In New York City, she continued, the Big Apple Circus had a community outreach program entitled, Circus of the Senses, which was designed to meet the needs of vision and hearing impaired children. Another community outreach program, she added, was entitled, Clown Care, which involved "Clown Doctors" visiting children at pediatric hospitals on the east coast. She noted the "Clown Doctors" performed over 250 "Clown Rounds" per year.

Mr. Larson stated they had toured the Festival Space and determined it would be a suitable location for the Big Apple Circus. He advised they had many semi-trailer trucks and set up of the Big Top Tent was essentially a construction project and conversely, take down of the Tent was essentially a deconstruction project. He said it was their intention to always leave the locations as they were when they arrived. He apprised the crushed gravel parking area was suitable for their needs but the concern would be if the site became saturated due to rainfall. Mr. Larson commented the site was a little tight for the Big Top Tent on the eastern end which might cause a problem with fire lanes. He added there was a possibility of other emergency vehicle access points, such as the Lake George Steamboat Company Parking Lot. He mentioned the possibility of relocating the Big Top Tent slightly to the west where the site was wider. Mr. Larson stated his only other concern with the site was a water line which he requested be completely marked to avoid damage from vehicles. He commented a benefit of the site was that it was visible from the highway which he said was one of the most effective ways to advertise.

Ms. Lord pointed out the Big Top Tent had 1,600 seats, none of which were more than 50 feet from the Ring. She anticipated the Big Apple Circus would perform a daytime and evening show each performance day. Mr. Belden asked the number of shows anticipated and Ms. Lord replied two shows a day, five or six days a week, for a two week period. Mayor Blais pointed out the opportunity for businesses to partner with the Circus for packages, such as the Lake George Steamboat Company and area hotels. He noted if the Circus had a successful first year, there was an opportunity for a long-term contract. He reiterated that the Festival Space would not be ready for the Big Apple Circus in 2013 and he had discussed the possibility of a permit for Battlefield Park with the NYS DEC (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation). He pointed out that they had discussed a rental fee of approximately \$8,000 for the first year for use of the Festival Space.

Michael Consuelo, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB (Convention & Visitors Bureau), said this was an opportunity to bring a world renowned circus to Warren County. He pointed out the need to begin marketing the event immediately and commented the Big Apple Circus could be included in the Motorcoach itineraries produced by Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter.

Mr. Belden asked the cost of a ticket for the Circus and Ms. Lord responded the ticket prices ranged from \$15 to \$50 depending on the location of the seat and the day of the performance. She said there were Ring side seats and mezzanine seats and she reiterated no seat was further than 50 feet from the Ring. Mr. Larson noted the front row seats were immediately outside of the Performance Ring. Mayor Blais opined this was not the average circus performance, as the Big Apple Circus presented a more theatrical performance. He advised he had spoken with the NYS DOH (New York State Department of Health) regarding inspection of the Concessions and the Village of Lake George would issue a special event permit. He stated he and Mr. Consuelo would attend the Big Apple Circus Board Meeting and a decision would need to be reached by January 15, 2012 in order to allow time to promote the event.

Brief discussion ensued.

Karen Putney, Administrator of Fire Prevention & Building Code Enforcement, asked if there would be vendor tents set up and Ms. Lord replied in the negative and said the Circus did not have separate vendors but they did have a Concessions Tent attached to the Big Top Tent. Mr. Larson pointed out there were a couple of small tents, such as those used to house animals. He added a small fabric structure was sometimes set up in front of the Big Top Tent for the ticket takers to stand within. He noted the possibility of small frame tents, for such activities as souvenir sales or a hot dog stand. Mrs. Putney asked if the Circus had an engineer who worked with them on the site plan

and Mr. Larson replied affirmatively. Mr. Larson noted the Circus had a detailed site plan, all necessary documents for each structure and all the required fireproof certificates. Mrs. Putney stated New York State Fire & Building Code required a permit to be issued by her Office. She mentioned the possible need to apply for a State variance if the necessary fire access was not available. She recommended submitting an application as soon as possible, if it was needed. Mr. Larson reiterated that relocating the Big Top Tent slightly to the west would alleviate all access issues and negate the need for a State variance.

Chairman Stec exited the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

Mr. Monroe informed of the West Brook Road Parking Proposal which would convert the westbound lane of West Brook Road into a Municipal Parking Lot. Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW), apprised any structures currently on the site would be taken down prior to July. He added if necessary, they could remove a section of fence in order to create a temporary access point from West Brook Road or the Municipal Parking Lot. He mentioned the gravel parking area had been intended to be temporary and if necessary the DPW crews (County and/or Village) could make minor modifications to the site. Mr. Larson asked if the fence on the northern boarder of the Lake George Steamboat Company Parking Lot was owned by Mr. Dow and Mayor Blais replied affirmatively and added he had spoken with Mr. Dow who indicated he would allow the section of fence to be opened for pedestrian traffic. Mayor Blais commented that Mr. Dow had also indicated a lane would be kept open through the Lake George Steamboat Parking Lot to allow emergency vehicle access. Mr. Monroe pointed out this was also a provision in the Land Swap which was currently being negotiated.

Mr. Monroe inquired as to the feasibility of allowing the Big Apple Circus to utilize Battlefield Park in 2013. Gary West, Operations Supervisor, Warrensburg, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC), suggested the Circus submit a TRP (Temporary Revocable Permit) as a first step. He said he would check with the Albany NYS DEC Office to ensure their approval, as well.

Mr. Tennyson inquired about security measures taken by the Circus in reference to access control and off time security and control of the site. Mr. Larson responded the site was essentially fenced and if necessary the gates could be closed at night. He said the Circus often rented fencing to enclose the site but he did not feel it would be necessary at this location. He added that in some instances the Circus hired security companies to patrol the grounds but because the Circus personnel lived on-site, this was not always necessary. He commented the Circus could keep an employee on-site through the night for security purposes, if needed. Mr. Larson said he was unsure of the security concerns locally but he was sure the Circus could address them. Mr. Tennyson responded his main concern would be unauthorized access to the site. Mr. Larson stated the Circus kept decorative fencing on-hand which was adequate to deter unauthorized entry. A brief discussion ensued.

Mayor Blais advised he was seeking conceptual approval from the County in order to proceed. He noted if it was agreeable, the sponsoring organization would be the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB; however, he pointed out, rental fees for use of the site would be allocated to the County and the Village of Lake George, as the property owners. Mayor Blais indicated a possible application for Occupancy Tax Special Event Funding in order to properly publicize the event. He added the Town and Village of Lake George would also contribute occupancy tax funds. He noted the Fort William Henry Resort and Off Track Betting had offered the use of their parking lots for additional parking of Circus vehicles.

Mr. Monroe informed the County was in the final design phase of the Festival Space and grant funding had been received for the installation of a turf stabilizing system involving plastic grid pavers to be placed underneath the grass. He asked if the Circus had any experience with a turf stabilizing system and Mr. Larson replied in the negative and added the system should be sufficient to support the weight of the Circus vehicles but he had some concerns regarding the stakes used to support the tents. Mr. Monroe pointed out the plans to construct a restroom facility on the Festival Space using grant funding and asked if the facility would render the location unsuitable for the Circus in 2014 and beyond. Mr. Larson responded he had viewed the site plan for the construction and the oval area of the Festival Space would be suitable for the Big Top Tent, essential support vehicles and the animal department; however, he added, The Village would need to be located elsewhere. He noted there would be a concern with truck access caused by the location of the restroom facility.

Discussion ensued.

Kevin Rosa, President of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Director of Sales & Marketing for The Sagamore Resort, commented that from a hospitality standpoint the period of time following the Fourth of July until the beginning of August represented a decrease in business. He added the addition of the Big Apple Circus for a two week period during that down time would be a great opportunity for businesses in the community. He noted The Sagamore Resort, and other area hotels, could package Circus Tickets with room stays. Mr. Larson apprised the Big Apple Circus could not select a new venue without the assistance and support of the communities and he noted collaborative marketing efforts with area businesses was essential. He added the Circus took pride in serving the communities where they performed.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the conceptual agreement with the Big Apple Circus for use of the Festival Space of the former Gaslight Village property during the last two weeks of July 2012. *The necessary resolution was authorized for the December 16, 2011 Board meeting.*

As there was no further business to come before the Gaslight Village Ad Hoc Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Thomas, Mr. Monroe adjourned the meeting at 9:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Senior Legislative Office Specialist