

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: SEPTEMBER 28, 2012

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS KENNY
MERLINO
BENTLEY
CONOVER
DICKINSON
FRASIER
WESTCOTT

OTHERS PRESENT:

MICHAEL SWAN, TREASURER
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK, TOURISM
JOANN MCKINSTRY, ASSISTANT TO THE ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS MASON
TAYLOR
THOMAS
DAVID KENNY, LAKE GEORGE BUSINESS OWNER
MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:45 a.m.

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

Mr. Kenny extended privilege of the floor to David Kenny, local businessman and owner of the Adirondack Outlet Mall located in the Million Dollar Half Mile shopping outlet center. Mr. D. Kenny proposed that a Warren County Tourism information site be established in the shopping center. He noted that space had been made available for this opportunity and he felt a Tourism Office with a kiosk would present an opportunity to reach a broader population and maximize marketing efforts for the region, especially as a year-round destination. He further stated that he had met with Mr. Merlino, Mr. Kenny and Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, to discuss the establishment of a satellite office which could serve as a temporary or permanent home for the information center. The available space, he said, included a 50 to 60 foot wall space where each municipality could be represented for a fee to be determined by the County, such as \$100. He said the initiative, which would require a staff person, could commence on a one year trial basis and he asserted the region was not adequately marketed as a year-round tourism destination and he felt there was potential for expansion. Additionally, he said, the region must be promoted to capital regional markets and he said although an office in the Municipal Center was an option, he felt a booth in the high traffic Outlet Mall would be notably advantageous.

Mr. Kenny thanked Mr. D. Kenny for addressing the Committee and he noted the matter would be discussed further at the next meeting of the Tourism Committee.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kevin Geraghty, Budget Officer, who asked the Committee to consider the use of Occupancy Tax funds to pay Sheriff overtime expenses for special events. He said Americade and the Centurion Cycling event were the only two special events that reimbursed the Sheriff's Office for patrol overtime costs. Americade, he said, paid \$4,000 (of the total cost of \$40,000) and the Centurion Cycling event paid the full amount incurred by their event. Mr. Geraghty advised the Sheriff had reduced his overtime budget in keeping with County-wide budgetary

restraints. The total amount necessary to cover the Sheriff's overtime for special events was \$88,000, Mr. Geraghty advised and he asserted that public safety was a critical public service provided for both local residents and tourists.

Mr. Kenny noted he felt the purpose of the Sheriff's Office was to provide law enforcement for the entire County, and tourism regions necessitated increased patrol and related expenses. He said he felt it made sense to use Occupancy Tax funds, especially for large events, and he noted that extra Patrols were provided for many special events, with only two events sharing overtime expenses. Mr. Kenny advised that sales tax revenue from Americade and other special events combined was approximately \$6 million and \$50 million, respectively. However, Mr. Kenny cautioned, requests for additional costs could drive special events away from the region, and he noted that every year there was a new proposal for the use of Occupancy Tax funds; therefore, he said, he was not in favor of the idea.

Mr. Dickinson requested a copy of the detailed report for Sheriff overtime expenditures and Mr. Geraghty stated that copies were distributed at the Budget Committee meeting and could be provided to the Occupancy Tax Committee, as well. Mr. Dickinson stated his appreciation for the services provided by the Sheriff's Office and noted that he had received only positive feedback. Mr. Conover said he was pleased the Centurion Cycling event paid for the additional Sheriff patrols and noted the event was expected to grow. He pointed out that not all events required Sheriff patrol services.

In closing, Mr. Geraghty asked the Committee to consider the request because he felt the funding should come from the Tourism budget (Occupancy Tax). Mr. Kenny stated the matter would be discussed further at next month's Occupancy Tax Committee meeting.

Commencing the agenda review, Mr. Kenny summarized the 2012 Occupancy Tax Event Survey; a copy of which is on file with the minutes. He cited the following events which had the highest number of scoring points:

- Americade - 171
- Adirondack Balloon Festival - 64
- Adirondack Nationals Car Show - 63
- Bolton Girlfriends Weekend - 57
- World's Largest Garage Sale - 54
- Crossroads French and Indian War - 38

Privilege of the floor was extended to Michael Swan, Treasurer, who distributed copies of the Occupancy Tax Report for 2012 which included 2011 Revenues, Occupancy Tax Fund Balance, Designated Reserve and Reserve Balances for Prior Years; and Occupancy Tax Payment to Towns for the Year Ended December 31, 2011. Mr. Swan summarized the reports and Mr. Conover thanked him for the work he had done regarding the financial reporting format. In furtherance of improved reporting methods Mr. Swan stated that he had spoken with Mr. Geraghty to align the budget process with the Treasurer's reporting methods in order to continue to improve the process for greater understanding and transparency.

Mr. Kenny announced the next meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee would consist of a workshop session to evaluate funding applications and he noted that the necessary materials would be distributed to the Committee members one week prior to the workshop. Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk for the Tourism Department, informed that the application deadline was November 1.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 12:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist

