

Warren County Board of Supervisors

Committee: Tourism

Date: October 24, 2012

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Merlino
Kenny
Dickinson
Strainer
Conover
Wood
Vanselow

Others Present:

Representing the Tourism Department:
Kate Johnson, Director
Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter
Daniel G. Stec, Chairman of the Board
Amanda Allen, Deputy Clerk of the Board
Kevin Geraghty, Budget Officer
Supervisor Bentley
Supervisor Frasier
Supervisor Mason
Supervisor Thomas
Mike Swan, County Treasurer
Tom Connors, Ad Workshop
Michael Consuelo, Executive Director, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce
David Kenny, Adirondack Outlet Mall
Gary Thornquist, Lake George RV Park
Fred Austin, Fort William Henry
Don Lehman, *The Post Star*
Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:57 a.m.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Strainer 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 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.*

Commencing the Action Agenda review, Ms. Johnson presented a request for a new contract with Benchmark Printing Inc., to print 50,000 copies of the 2013 Whitewater Rafting Brochure for a total amount not to exceed \$4,267, commencing November 28, 2012 and terminating December 31, 2012. She pointed out that the cost of the contract was less than they had budgeted for, as well.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the request for a new contract with Benchmark Printing Inc. as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the November 16, 2012 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Proceeding with the Updates & Items of Interest portion of the Agenda, Ms. Johnson advised that she and Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, would provide written reports to the Committee members due to the lack of time. *Please note: Subsequent to the meeting, written reports were received and are on file with the minutes.* Ms. Johnson recognized Tom Connors, of the Ad Workshop, who was at the meeting to present a recap on the summer and fall 2012 Broadcast.

Mr. Connors provided a power point presentation that highlighted the markets Warren County had been promoted in recently, from Montreal, Canada through New Jersey and Pennsylvania. He mentioned that the broadcasts ran from the end of April to the first week of October. Mr. Connors remarked that the response level had decreased 1% for the summer and the web visits had increased 5%; however, he said, the response levels for fall had decreased 15%. He explained a contributing factor for the decrease was that it was an election year which made it difficult for cable buys, due to the number of political ads. He noted that the web visits had increased 19% for the fall. Mr. Connors informed that 6,000 entries were received from a sweepstakes initiative with Cablevision New York this summer to win a two-day vacation in Lake George, which also generated over 17,500 emails that were added to the database. He apprised the number one referral site for VisitLakeGeorge.com was 'Visit Adirondacks' which resulted in a 20% increase in visits to the Adirondack region to date this year. He added that the database for the Adirondack region included 121,000 names and addresses, which he believed was higher than New York State. Mr. Connors commented that the Lake George region was listed in over 70 news and media features this year.

Mr. Merlino stated Christina Curley, Special Events & Sales Director with the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, was at a conference and unable to attend the meeting today; therefore, he said, Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce, would provide the Committee with a brief update on the Sales/Special Event/Convention Report.

Mr. Consuelo advised a religious group had recently spent eight nights in Lake George for a conference and discussions were being held about their return next year and possibly in subsequent years. He added Ms. Curley was working with a cheerleading group that was interested in utilizing the Glens Falls Civic Center for an event, as well as soccer groups that were considering using the Dome for events. Mr. Consuelo reported that the Gardner Group was a Fortune 500 Company from Stanford, Connecticut that was currently in negotiations with the Sagamore Resort to hold a customer event there.

Mr. Conover commented on the Fishing brochure that was distributed with the Agenda, and noted that the Tourism Department had done a terrific job communicating the "Clean, Dry and Drained" program not only on the website, but also on the materials they produced. He commended the Department for embracing this important program. Ms. Johnson remarked they had added a panel on invasive species to that brochure this year.

Under the New Business portion of the Agenda, Mr. Merlino requested Supervisor Dickinson to provide a report on the local tourism industry in the Town of Lake George. Mr. Dickinson said the nice weather this fall had created busy weekends in the Town. He noted the Moonglow associated with the Adirondack Balloon Festival was a great success despite the construction in the Village and was followed by an excellent fireworks display. He referenced a fairly new event in Lake George called Octoberfest, in which one of the main blocks in the Village was closed to provide areas for tents that contained crafts, food, entertainment and bands. Mr. Dickinson expounded the event was another great success. Lastly, he stated, many events were planned for the upcoming Halloween holiday throughout the Town and Village of Lake George, such as the Lazy River Haunted House.

Mr. Merlino asked Mr. Vanselow to provide a report next month on the tourism industry in the Town of Johnsbury and Mr. Vanselow acknowledged the request.

Mr. Merlino advised that the next item under the New Business portion of the Agenda concerned the Tourism tent at the Adirondack Balloon Festival. Ms. Johnson explained that at the last County Facilities Committee meeting, Mark Donahue, Chairman of the Adirondack Balloon Festival Board of Directors, had suggested the Tourism tent be staffed at all times during the event. She pointed out that she was not in attendance at that meeting; however, she said, she did receive the referral. Ms. Johnson further stated the Tourism Department has had a presence at the Festival for well over twenty-five years in a tent with a table that displayed brochures. She informed that for the past fifteen to twenty years, Lou Tessier, former Supervisor for the Town of Lake George, had stayed at the Airport in his motor home during the Festival and he would restock the table throughout the weekend. Ms. Johnson asserted if the Committee desired to have the tent staffed during the event, it could be arranged. Mr. Merlino stated there was adequate time to make a decision prior to next years event.

Mr. Merlino directed the Committee members to the Pending Item referred from the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meeting on September 28, 2012 concerning the establishment of a temporary or permanent information center in or near the Adirondack Outlet Mall on Route 9 in Lake George in order to market all Warren County municipalities as year-round destinations. He recommended proceeding with the information center for a one-year trial period and he proposed utilizing \$15,000 for rent; \$25,000 to hire part-time staff; and \$10,000 for the necessary office furniture, for a total of \$50,000 to be appropriated from the Occupancy Tax Reserve fund.

Mr. Kenny supported the proposal and clarified that the Tourism budget would be expanded by \$50,000 for next year to cover these associated costs. He expressed his opinion that a prominent sign would be needed on the roadside in order for visitors to know the information center was there. Discussion ensued relative to allowable signage for tenants in the Outlet Mall. Mr. Merlino added that there were many details that would need to be worked out over the next few weeks.

Following discussions, motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to refer the request to establish an information center in the Adirondack Outlet Mall for one year with the source of funding to be appropriated from the Occupancy Tax Reserve fund in the amount of \$50,000 to the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee for further review.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Dickinson and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:25 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk