

## Warren County Board of Supervisors

**Committee:           Occupancy Tax Coordination**

**Date:                   May 1, 2013**

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**Committee Members Present:**

Supervisors Kenny  
                  Merlino  
                  Bentley  
                  Conover  
                  Frasier  
                  Mason

**Others Present:**

Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk, Tourism  
Michael R. Swan, County Treasurer  
Kevin Geraghty, Chairman of the Board  
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board  
Frank Thomas, Budget Officer  
Supervisors Girard  
                  Loeb  
                  Montesi  
                  Strainer  
                  Taylor  
                  Westcott  
Frank Morehouse, Superintendent of Buildings  
Jeff Tennyson, Superintendent of Public Works  
Michael Consuelo, Executive Director, Lake George  
                  Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB  
Don Lehman, *The Post Star*  
Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk

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**Committee Member Absent:**

Supervisor Dickinson

Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, 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.

Commencing the Agenda review, Mr. Kenny remarked the first item was the Report on Revenues from the County Treasurer, Mike Swan, who distributed a handout to the Committee members, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Mr. Swan apprised the revenues collected through December 31, 2012 totaled \$3,533,154.97, an increase of \$159,306.95 or 4.51% from the previous year. He pointed out the balance of the Designated Reserve for 2012 totaled \$106,119.28. He noted the revenues collected through April 25, 2013 totaled \$287,017.68 compared to \$264,598.98 collected through the same time period last year, an increase of \$22,418.70 or 7.81%. Mr. Swan stated the third page in the handout listed the total amounts collected over the last three years; however, he said, all of the collections for 2012 had not yet been received due to one resort that was on a payment plan and still owed \$2,536. Mr. Swan informed the new software package developed by the Information Technology Department was operating smoothly and next month he planned to present a more detailed report.

Mr. Mason questioned the Designated Reserve balance of \$106,119.28 and Mr. Swan explained the minimum amount for the Reserve was set at \$500,000 and therefore the actual balance was \$606,119.28. Mr. Conover commended Mr. Swan for the report presented and added it was the best he had seen.

Under the Action Agenda, Mr. Kenny asserted the first item pertained to Improv Records and a reallocation request for \$1,000 from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Creekend to Fridays at the Lake concerts. Leisa Grant, Principal Account Clerk for the Tourism Department, explained Improv Records had three different events that were granted award money and the \$1,000 was awarded to the Creekend event; however, she said, due to zoning issues that event had been cancelled and they were requesting to reallocate that money to the Fridays at the Lake concert event.

Motion was made by Mr. Conover, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the request to reallocate \$1,000 from the 42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Creekend to Fridays at the Lake concerts as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny advised the next item on the Agenda concerned the Sunkiss Balloon Festival event which had been cancelled. He recalled \$1,500 had been awarded to that event and those funds needed to be returned to the active fund.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the request to return \$1,500 that was awarded to the Sunkiss Balloon Festival back to the active fund, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny stated an application for event funding had been submitted by Lake George Village for SOLFEST-Save Our Lake (Blues) Festival for an amount of \$4,000. He mentioned there was now \$1,500 in the active fund and the remaining \$2,500 could be appropriated from the Reserve. He opined this was for a great cause and he supported this event.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Mason and carried unanimously to approve the request for \$4,000 for the SOLFEST, with the source of funding to be \$1,500 from the active fund and \$2,500 from the Reserve, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny remarked the next item was for a discussion about the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce's desire to run the Exit 17 Information Center, at a cost of \$25,000 per year for two years, the initial term to be June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014, with a one year extension, and a requested source of funding to be the Occupancy Tax Designated Reserve. Michael Consuelo, Executive Director, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, explained the Exit 17 Information Center was currently managed by HA-PE-DE Inc., which was a Tourism consulting firm. He noted the building was owned and operated by the State of New York and the Chamber would need to lease that portion of the building from the State. Mr. Consuelo advised they were requesting funds to assist with the operation of the Information Center. He added the Chamber's intent was to make this not only an information center, but also a gateway and welcome center to those traveling to the area. He pointed out that a proposal from the Chamber was included in the Agenda packet, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino and seconded by Mr. Mason to approve the request as presented.

Mr. Merlino expressed his support of this proposal and said it would expand the County's promotional area. Mr. Mason agreed with Mr. Merlino and mentioned that additional exterior signage was needed. Mr. Consuelo recognized that need and pointed out the State had agreed to allow additional signs, as well as new landscaping and plants around the exterior of the building. Ms. Grant apprised that Kate Johnson, Director of Tourism, had requested that if this proposal was approved, it be done on a reimbursement basis as were the other Tourism contracts. She also requested that the Tourism Department brochures be displayed for free at the Information Center because currently the Department paid to have them there and Mr. Consuelo agreed.

Mr. Kenny called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the request for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce to run the Exit 17 Information Center, at a cost of \$25,000 per year for two years, the initial term to be June 1, 2013 to May 31, 2014, with a one year extension, and the source of funding to be the Occupancy Tax Designated Reserve. The necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting, and a copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny asserted the next item was a request for \$39,827 from the Reserve to pay the funds due to the towns. He remarked that an additional \$159,307 was collected in occupancy tax in 2012 and this was a reconciliation that took place every year. Ms. Grant added they budgeted based on collections from the previous year and because more occupancy tax funds were collected, more was due back to the towns.

Motion was made by Mr. Conover, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request for \$39,827 from the Reserve to pay the funds due to the towns as outlined above, and to refer the same to the Finance Committee. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny said the County Facilities Committee had requested \$800 from the Reserve to cover the cost of plexiglass for the town posters located in the hallway. He expressed his opinion that the use of occupancy tax funds for this purchase was not appropriate because the posters were only seen by the Supervisors. Mr. Girard interjected that Paul Dusek, County Administrator, had thought that occupancy tax funds was a reasonable option to the purchase of the plexiglass to protect the town posters. Mr. Mason added they were tourism-related posters and he felt utilizing the Reserve to cover the cost was appropriate. Mr. Bentley suggested the posters be relocated to the first floor of the Municipal Center Building where they would be viewed by more members of the public.

Motion was made by Mr. Mason, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to approve the request for \$800 from the Occupancy Tax Reserve to cover the cost of plexiglass for the town posters as outlined above, and to refer the same to the Finance Committee. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Kenny stated the next item was a request to make minor changes to the occupancy tax application and instructions. Ms. Grant explained they were recommending that two questions be included in the application, the first being what funding, if any, did the organization receive last year, and how many years had Warren County funded the event. She noted they generally reduced the amounts awarded from one year to the next as an event progressed.

Motion was made by Mr. Conover, seconded by Mr. Bentley and carried unanimously to approve the request to amend the occupancy tax application as outlined above, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Concluding the Action Agenda, Mr. Kenny informed there was a proposed change to the occupancy tax contract to reimburse events for up-front promotional expenses. He expounded that they had encountered a problem back in September with the Bike Race because the event organizers had requested money up-front to promote the event; however said, the County did not pay up-front but rather reimbursed events. He questioned if the Committee was interested in setting a percentage that the County would be willing to provide up-front. Ms. Grant further explained the issue was that the contract stated that in order to be reimbursed for promotional expenses, the first day of the event must have occurred.

Motion was made by Mr. Bentley, seconded by Mr. Mason to authorize a reimbursement of up to 50% of the amount expended for promotional expenses prior to the event taking place, with the stipulation that if the event was cancelled, Warren County would be reimbursed for monies expended. The necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2013 Board meeting and a copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Bentley and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 9:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Livingston, Second Deputy Clerk