

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: MARCH 28, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON
STRAINER
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS MASON
MCDEVITT
TAYLOR

CHRISTINA CURLEY, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE/CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

MICHAEL SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER

KEVIN MARKHAM, RAMANDA INN

MICHAEL SPILMAN, HOLIDAY INN RESORT

GARY THORNQUIST, LAKE GEORGE RV PARK

DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:05 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.

Mr. Merlino informed that Mark Matucci, a resident of the Town of Hague and a large supporter of tourism, had passed away suddenly the previous evening and he commented that Mr. Matucci had a straight laced attitude and his passing was a great loss.

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 agenda review, Ms. Johnson noted there were no resolution requests to be presented this month. She circulated a copy of the 2012 Year in Review Binder to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.* New in the Binder this year, she mentioned, was a page containing website details and improvements. She advised the quarterly Group Loop Newsletters were included in the Binder and 1,300 tourism related properties were showcased. Also in the Binder, she continued, were visitor data compiled from the conversion and occupancy tax surveys; monthly public relations activities; advertisement data; the 2012 marketing plan and conversion research; demographics and activity of inquiries; email subscriber numbers and web stats; office expenses; and copies of collateral and advertisements. Ms. Johnson reported approximately 504,000 visits to the Warren County Tourism website in 2012, of which approximately 107,000 visits were accessed using a mobile device. She reported the number one referring website to the Warren County Tourism website was www.visitadirondacks.com. She stated the average length of time spent on the website was 3.42 minutes and the heaviest traffic day had been August 21, 2012. She noted consumer inquiries had decreased 2.5% compared to 2011, which she

attributed to the reduction in New York State Matching Funds which affected the regional campaigns, an increase in political ads during the Presidential Election and Super Storm Sandy.

Ms. Johnson reminded the Committee members that late summer/early spring print ads had been displayed at the previous Committee meeting. She apprised the stats were run at the end of every month and would be run the following week; however, she reported, inquires for the month of February had increased 24% compared to February of 2011.

Ms. Johnson displayed the Summer 2013 Activities, Events, Rates & Dates Brochure to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. She credited Ellen Himmelblau, Senior Tourism Specialist, with compiling the necessary data for the Brochure. She said the brochure covered the months of April through September and 105,000 copies had been printed. She noted the Brochure included 579 summer activities and 319 events. She stated the new design included images taken throughout 2012. She reported 16 Bicentennial events had been included in the Calendar of Events section of the Brochure and were indicated by an orange star. She commented the Activities, Events, Rates & Dates Brochure was the primary fulfillment piece for any request for information.

Ms. Johnson circulated a Disabled Access Facilities pamphlet to the Committee members and credited its creation to Sue Tucker, Senior Tourism Specialist; *a copy of the pamphlet is on file with the minutes*. She explained the pamphlet informed of all of the lodging and dining properties and attractions, recreation and camping facilities which provided access to the disabled, as well as the features offered; *a copy of the pamphlet is on file with the minutes*. She said the information would be added to the Warren County Tourism website under Resources. Another informational piece which was new this year, she continued, was a rack card that would be printed on green cardstock entitled "Grown and Produced in the Lake George Area" which highlighted cheese farms, farmer's markets, maple farms, micro breweries and wineries in the area and included a convenient shopping list on the back; *a copy of the rack card is on file with the minutes*. She advised the rack card would be available at consumer shows and in locations where other Tourism Department brochures were available and the information would be placed on the website. A brief discussion ensued.

Ms. Johnson stated broadcast buying for the Summer TV Campaign was currently ongoing and the Summer TV Commercial would be played at the next Committee meeting. She commented there were several new partners that had joined in the Summer Coupon Program. She informed of the new category of Environmental Resources and Education which had been added to the Warren County Tourism website, as well as the Summer 2013 Activities, Events, Rates & Dates Brochure. She said the majority of the 2013 Consumer Shows were completed and the New York by Rail Show at Penn Station would be held on May 16, 2013. Ms. Johnson reported a new fishing video was embedded on the Warren County Tourism website and would be played at sports related consumer shows on a loop. She stated the Warren County Tourism Department had an exhibit at the New York State Basketball Tournament at the Glens Falls Civic Center.

Ms. Johnson pointed out Public Relations (PR) Reports for February and March were included in the agenda packet and she said they had been very busy with PR during those months. She advised they had responded to requests for information, had hosted some writers and had issued press releases. She reported that the previous day a staff member had assisted a representative from Ad Workshop with a tour of some local properties.

Ms. Johnson informed of her attendance at the Adirondack Regional meeting in Lake Placid on February 12, 2013 where Ad Workshop had presented a review of the 2012 campaigns. She noted

the Governor's Adirondack Challenge had been discussed at the meeting. She said the New York State Travel and Vacation Association, of which she was a Board member, held a recent meeting in Syracuse where the upcoming Empire State Tourism Conference had been discussed. She stated Tourism Legislative Day had been held in Albany on March 5, 2013. She apprised she had met with Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George; Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce/Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB); and Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce, to discuss the production of a brochure for the Festival Space, as well as a website.

Ms. Johnson advised she had submitted the New York State Matching Funds Grant final report. She stated Senator Betty Little had asked the Executive Director for the Region to hold an Adirondack Day in Albany on April 29, 2013. She added he would invite up to five outdoor recreation attractions to partner with him. She further added the theme would be "New York's Adirondack Park: Its not What You Think" and the goal was to educate elected officials about the Adirondack Region. She stated the Governor's Adirondack Challenge was scheduled for July but was still in the planning stages. She said she had been asked to suggest companies in the area which would be capable of hosting the event and she had supplied several suggestions.

Pertaining to the Tourism Satellite Office in the Factory Outlet Mall, Ms. Johnson reported 395 visitors in the month of March. She said a display entitled "The Road to Lake George" was on exhibit at the Tourism Satellite Office which had been constructed by the Chapman Museum several years ago. She stated the guest book was filled with positive comments about the staff and the displays.

Ms. Johnson informed that Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, had been unable to attend the Committee meeting but had provided a written February/March 2013 Group Tour Update report; *a copy of the report is on file with the minutes.*

Peter Girard, Creative Director, informed that the Four Season Stickers had recently been printed which contained one of several scenic photo backgrounds and the tagline "Four great seasons-one outstanding destination"; *examples of the Four Season Stickers are on file with the minutes.* He said the stickers were distributed at travel shows and used for mailing materials from the Office. He stated labels had been printed for the Super Savers Discount Program and he displayed pictures for the Committee members. He informed of and displayed a modified logo he had created as a gift to commemorate the 25th Anniversary of the Sister Cities Program and he noted a commemorative poster had been produced, as well.

Pertaining to recent email blasts, Mr. Girard informed that a Travel Guide and Bicentennial email blast had been released on February 13, 2013 to approximately 136,000 subscribers and was viewed by approximately 12,000 people in the three day tracking period. He stated a Whitewater Rafting Contest email blast was released on March 13, 2013 to approximately 138,000 subscribers and was viewed by approximately 11,000 people in the three day tracking period. Mr. Girard displayed images of the email blasts to the Committee members.

Mr. Girard informed there had been a request at the previous Committee meeting to place the results of the occupancy tax survey on the County website and he displayed the page to the Committee members. He displayed a Google Analytics Report, which he reviewed and explained the different features for the Committee members. He played a fishing video which was embedded on the Warren County Tourism website for the Committee members. Ms. Johnson noted the video had been compiled from scenes which had been shot for the Lakes Region Fishing Show.

Mr. Girard stated the Warren County Tourism website had been switched to the spring format and was loaded with spring activities on the Feature Bar. He displayed various spring activities highlighted on the website. He said the Brochures Page now featured thumbnail photos of the individual brochures. He pointed out a new feature of pop-up information boxes which would be added above the Feature Bar and would expand when rolled over by the mouse pointer. He added the information boxes were still being perfected on the test site and would go live when completed.

Mr. Dickinson commented that he was always impressed with the materials presented at the Tourism Committee meetings and opined it was nice to see the tax dollars at work.

Ms. Curley distributed copies of her March 2013 Monthly Report to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Curley informed she had been contacted by CDMS, a media research company, regarding an event for Cyclewise, a company planning a Ducati Unveiling Party for Ducati's 2013 Motorcycle line. Due to a scheduling conflict, she continued, Ducati would hold their event in Vermont for 2013; however, she added, they would consider the Lake George area for their 2014 event.

Ms. Curley reported her attendance at the Occupancy Tax Committee meeting where representatives from Medalist Sports had given a presentation concerning their application for funding for their September 27-29, 2014 race. She noted this race would replace the Centurion event in June and Medalist Sports had been awarded funding in the amount that had originally been awarded to Centurion.

Ms. Curley stated the HITS Triathlon Series North Country Triathlon was seeking a host hotel for their June 29-30, 2013 event. She noted four proposals were received from hotels and one had been selected. She apprised that Ms. Brand had received a lead for a Polish Festival at the Warren County Fairgrounds in June of 2013. She added the promoter of the event was considering other ethnic festivals depending on the success of the Polish Festival. She stated the Cadillac & LaSalle Club would hold their 2014 Grand Nationals in July in Lake George. She said the club had formed in 1958 and since the dates in 1958 coincided with the dates in 2014, they would like to create a commemorative 1958/2014 calendar to promote the event. Ms. Curley reported The Big Apple Circus had given a presentation at a recent Monthly CVB Meeting. She said they were interested in partnering with local hotels on package deals for hotel stays and Circus tickets. She informed of a lead received from USA Cycling for a Road & Mountain Bike Race Director Summit which would include over 100 National and International Race Directors for a three day meeting. She noted this event was anticipated to require over 150 hotel rooms and would be held on November 6-9, 2013. Ms. Curley stated she was working on her appointments for the National Association of Sports Commissions Symposium which was scheduled for April 21-25, 2013 in Louisville, Kentucky.

Mr. Strainer asked if there would be future monthly Warren County Council of Chambers Dinner Meetings as there had not been any recently and Ms. Curley replied affirmatively. Ms. Johnson noted the meeting that would be held later that evening was a Delegates Only Meeting. Mr. Conover thanked Mr. Girard for providing the explanation of the Google Analytics Report. Mr. Strainer commented that he had attended a few of the New York State Basketball Tournament games and he was impressed with the placement of the Warren County Tourism Logo on the Glens Falls Civic Center floor.

Mr. Merlino said he had met recently with Ms. Johnson, Mr. Kenny, Mr. Mason and representatives from the Lake George Chamber of Commerce pertaining to cooperative efforts. He informed the

Lake George Chamber of Commerce was considering the purchase of the Rest Area at Exit 18 of I-87. He advised this would be an ideal location to display tourism materials and he was supportive of this endeavor.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 10:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist