

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: OCTOBER 2, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR STRAINER

SUPERVISORS BENTLEY
FRASIER
LOEB
MASON
MONTESI
TAYLOR
WESTCOTT

MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB

CHRISTINA CURLEY, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE
REGIONAL CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*

THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

FOR ALL OTHERS PRESENT, PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEET

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:12 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood 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 the Tourism Department had met with the Budget Review Team to discuss their 2014 Budget requests. He added he had also met with Kate Johnson, Tourism Director, to discuss the marketing plan for 2014.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Johnson 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 requested a contract with Kenyon Press, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$4,113 for a term commencing November 25, 2013 and terminating December 31, 2013 to print 45,000 copies of the 2014 Whitewater Rafting brochure. She noted four vendors had been solicited and Kenyon Press, Inc. had been the lowest responsible bidder. She added this project would cost approximately \$800 less than the amount budgeted.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to authorize the contract with Kenyon Press, Inc. as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the October 18, 2013 Board Meeting.*

Mr. Merlino informed a letter had been received from Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, requesting \$25,000 in funding for the Lake George Visitor Center; *a copy of the letter is on file with the minutes*. He noted the County had contributed \$167,000 towards the operation of the Lake George Visitor Center since 2007. He advised the funds for this item had been budgeted.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to authorize continuation of Intermunicipal Agreement with the Village of Lake George to provide funding for promotion space within the Lake George Visitor Center for the Tourism Department, for a term commencing January 1, 2014 and terminating December 31, 2014, in an amount not to exceed \$25,000. *The necessary resolution was authorized for the October 18, 2013 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson reported Tourism Department leads reflected a 10% increase as of the end of August compared to the same time period in 2012. She commented the Department had handled 179,331 Requests for Information this year. She informed the Fall Campaign was in progress and had garnered positive results thus far. She mentioned the 2013-2014 winter advertising placements had been completed and she listed the publications for the Committee members. She said the Winter Placemats and Winter Events Brochure had arrived and were being distributed; *copies of same are on file with the minutes*. She advised the 2014 Travel Guide was at the printer with a proof copy expected today for review and approval and the final shipment anticipated to arrive on October 30, 2013. Ms. Johnson reported the Department had recently had a display at the Women's Travel Expo in Hartford, Connecticut. She informed of the mailing of solicitations to local properties to participate in brochure distribution at 2014 Consumer Shows. She added the Towns and Chambers of Commerce were offered brochure distribution at the Consumer Shows free of charge.

Ms. Johnson informed of a new campaign entitled, "New York's Best Experiences" and she circulated a map containing the "Epicenters of Experience" and pictures of the campaign truck. She explained the concept of the campaign was that there were 15 epicenters of experience in New York State, 9 of which were outlined on the map, including Lake George. She noted the first 8 epicenters to sign on to the campaign would be showcased in the design painted on the campaign truck and she pointed out the Lake George Area of the Adirondacks would be showcased on the driver's side door.

Ms. Johnson informed the Lake George Area would be featured in the November 11, 2013 Adirondack Regional Tourism Council's email blast. She apprised of the banner ads to direct consumers to the Winter Getaway Giveaway promotion landing page of the Warren County Tourism website and she listed the websites of the online publications containing the banner ads.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that Public Relations Reports for August and September were included in the agenda packet; *copies of same are on file with the minutes*. She reported 6,000 visitors to date at the satellite Tourism Office in the Adirondack Outlet Mall. She said the visitors signed a Visitor's Register which she circulated to the Committee members. Ms. Johnson stated she had met with Eric Gilbert, Park President for Six Flags Great Escape. She reported her intention to attend the Lakes to Locks Annual Meeting on October 10, 2013 in Glens Falls. She informed that staff members had met with the area whitewater rafting guides to discuss the details of the brochure layout. She commented that she had met with Mayor Blais regarding his concerns pertaining to the Adirondack Nationals Car Show.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, distributed copies of her August/September 2013 Group Tour Update to the Committee members and reviewed the document in detail; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes*.

Ms. Brand informed the 2014 Group Travel Planner was currently at the printer with the delivery of 3,000 copies anticipated for October 16, 2013. A picture of the Group Travel Planner cover was displayed to the Committee members and Ms. Brand commented that new additions to the Planner included an Information Center page; a Chambers of Commerce page; a Communities of Warren County page; a page highlighting Agritourism activities; and a newly modernized itinerary section.

Ms. Brand reported the Department was partnering with Saratoga County for a Destinations of New York Travel Show. She explained the Travel Show would be held over a three day period and would consist of both a trade show with exhibits from Warren and Saratoga Counties, as well as two days of organized Familiarization Tours for Tour Operators and Group Leaders. She advised the goal was to focus primarily on new Group Tour opportunities in both Counties. She said the Travel Show portion of the event would be held in Saratoga County with all of the lodging for participants in Warren County.

Ms. Brand reminded the Committee members that she selected niche groups to focus efforts on each year. She said the 2014 niche group marketing efforts would be focused on International Travelers and Agritourism and she reviewed a list of her intended marketing efforts, as outlined on the Group Tour Update. She stated that in order to focus on International Travelers it would be necessary to reach out to Receptive Tour Operators. She explained a Receptive Tour Operator was defined as a local tour company that specialized in tourism experiences and managed products and services for incoming visitors, most often booked through International Tour Operators. She further explained that Agritourism could take many forms including overnight farm stays; retail sales; hay rides; corn mazes; pick your own operations; woodlands; farms; ranches; and hunting.

Ms. Brand reported her intention to attend the 2014 American Bus Association (ABA) Marketplace in Nashville, Tennessee on January 12-16, 2014 and a picture of the Tour Operator Binder was displayed to the Committee members. She said this year the binder featured Agritourism opportunities, breweries and farmer's markets. She explained the Tour Operator Binders would be distributed to approximately 350 Tour Operators.

Ms. Brand informed the 2013 Adirondack Balloon Festival had been impacted by the weather; however, she continued, the number of Motorcoaches was about the same as last year. She noted she had an opportunity to welcome some of the Motorcoaches and distribute promotional materials. She advised that due to the Adirondack Balloon Festival being nominated as an ABA Top 100 Event representatives from QVC were present and this attendance had been reported on by *The Post Star* and the *Chronicle*.

Ms. Brand reported her attendance at the "I ♥ NY" Canada Road Show on September 30-October 2, 2013 in Montreal, Canada. She explained the event had been organized by the New York State Division of Tourism to showcase New York State Tourism offerings to Canadian Travel Agents and media. Photos of various advertisements were displayed to the Committee members and Ms. Brand reviewed the publications in which they had been placed.

Peter Girard, Creative Director, displayed the new "Towns" Poster to the Committee members and explained the posters had been created utilizing the individual posters created for each Town and 18,000 copies had been printed. He said 18,000 copies of the Poster had been printed to distribute at Shows, Marketplaces and Visitor Centers. He displayed the new Winter Placemat and pointed out the QR (quick reponse) Code directed consumers to the Winter Video on the Warren County Tourism website. He displayed the Winter brochure to the Committee members and pointed out the images

were shot on the high tech "red" camera which allowed the photographer to video the subject with the ability to pull still photos from that video.

Mr. Girard displayed three recent email blasts to the Committee members and he said the subjects of the email blasts had been Outdoor Adventure; Fall Getaway Giveaway; and Scenic Road Trips. He said the Outdoor Adventure email blast was released on August 7, 2013 to approximately 153,000 subscribers and was opened by approximately 10,000 people. He noted the Fall Getaway Giveaway email blast was released on August 21, 2013 to approximately 154,000 subscribers and was opened by approximately 9,000 people. He stated the Scenic Road Trips email blast was released on September 11, 2013 to approximately 157,000 subscribers and was opened by 12,785 people. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard informed of a one-day promotion which would only be available today to Time Warner Roadrunner customers. He explained that when Time Warner set up new Roadrunner customers, their home page was the Roadrunner home page until it was changed. He said the one day promotion was a landing page takeover and featured the Warren County Tourism free travel pack and an opportunity to win a Fall Getaway.

Mr. Girard displayed various Fall banner ads to the Committee members. He informed of a new process through Google Analytics which allowed the Department to further track users. He displayed various photos taken by Department staff members and the videographer to the Committee members.

Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), distributed her September 2013 Monthly Report to the Committee members and reviewed it in detail; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Curley informed of her attendance at the Cadillac LaSalle Club's 2013 Grand Nationals Event in Boston, Massachusetts in order to complete pre-convention promotion for next year's event in Lake George. She mentioned some area hotels that were doing very well with bookings for the event and she said she anticipated this would be a great event for the area. She reported she would conduct a site tour on October 3, 2013 with the National Livestock Producers Association for the Board of Directors Meeting on August 13-16, 2013 for about 25 people. She apprised she would attend the Rejuvenate Conference in Daytona Beach, Florida on October 28-31, 2013 and she would schedule appointments throughout the Conference. Ms. Curley informed she would attend the TEAMS Conference in Salt Lake City, Utah on November 4-8, 2013 and would also schedule appointments throughout that Conference.

Ms. Curley stated she had met with the meeting planner from the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association (HVVFA) to work on the final details of a Request for Proposals for their 2015, 2016 and 2017 events. In September, she said, she had attended the Empire State Society of Association Executives (ESSAE) Wellness & Wisdom Day at the Sagamore Resort and the CVB had provided a complimentary cruise for the event. She advised of a conversation with a gentleman who was planning a fishing derby on Lake George for Columbus Day Weekend in 2014. She noted the gentleman was meeting with representatives from fishing derby's held on Lake Champlain in order to learn more about the process. She reported she had received a lead for Game Day USA who were looking at locations across the Country to hold a 2014 Baseball and/or Fast Pitch Tournament.

Mr. Dickinson stated the Cadillac LaSalle Club's Event would be a significant event for Lake George and Ms. Curley said she anticipated the event would garner approximately 700 or more people. Mr.

Dickinson suggested the gentleman planning the fishing derby should contact the Lake George Park Commission. Mr. Montesi commented the West Glens Falls Fire Company would again sponsor the HVVFA Convention in June of 2014 and he anticipated over 10,000 people would attend. He noted the event would be extended an additional two days and would include two parades, music and a carnival. He stated the New York Cross Country Championships would be held in Queensbury on November 6, 2013 and he anticipated approximately 3,000 athletes and their families.

Mr. Merlino informed the Committee members that they continued to look at the possibility of purchasing a building on Route 9N in order to relocate the Tourism Department. He added they were waiting to meet with the Queensbury Zoning Enforcement Officer to discuss details on the building. He apprised if it was determined that they should move forward, a proposal would be developed for presentation to the Committee.

Mr. Conover mentioned the First Annual Festival for the Lake, a huge three day block party event to benefit S.A.V.E. (Stop Aquatic Invasives from Entering) Lake George, had been held on September 27-29, 2013. He stated the Festival had been well attended and he commended those involved in organizing the event. He apprised this would become an annual shoulder season event and the funds raised were used to protect Lake George. Mr. Dickinson explained the event had included musical performances, such as Rich Ortiz and the Stony Creek Band; carnival rides on Beach Road; a climbing wall on Canada Street; and a 5K Moonlight & Glow/Flashlight Run with approximately 200 entrants. He stated the local businesses had done well and Mayor Blais had estimated \$40,000 had been raised. Mr. Conover apprised this event had the potential to become a major event for Lake George.

Mr. Taylor stated that he disagreed with the proposal to purchase a new Tourism Building. He said the Tourism Department did an excellent job of attracting tourists to our region using state-of-the-art internet and television advertising, as well as high quality video. He said the Tourism Department targeted out-of-area tourists by setting up displays at airports and attracting Motorcoaches. He apprised that travelers did not drive around the area prior to settling on a hotel. He added tourists were technically savvy and planned their trips in advance utilizing the internet to plan and book their vacations. He said the responsibility of the Tourism Department was to attract tourists to our area and once they were here it was the responsibility of the individual businesses to compete for their business.

Mr. Taylor stated he was opposed to purchasing additional real estate for the following reasons:

- ▶ our occupancy tax revenues are better utilized by funding internet and television advertising;
- ▶ the purchase of a building will remove it from the tax assessment rolls;
- ▶ the County will incur building maintenance costs, plumbing and electrical maintenance, as well as heating and air conditioning costs;
- ▶ there will be a cost associated with renovating the building for the Tourism Department's use;
- ▶ if occupancy tax revenues were not used to purchase the building, then bonding for the purchase would add to the County's debt; and
- ▶ the justification for purchasing the building has been a lack of space for the Court System; however, other areas could be more effectively utilized.

Pertaining to the lack of space for the Court System, Mr. Taylor opined the Board of Supervisors had more space than was necessary, as the entire second floor of the Municipal Center was utilized by them and their support staff. He stated the Board of Supervisors Room was approximately 1,300 square feet and was only utilized once a month. Over the past few years, Mr. Taylor opined, the County had made significant financial progress and had ceased borrowing funds for operational

expenses. He added the County now had a healthy fund balance which had been accomplished by making sound financial decisions. He opined that purchasing additional real estate was not a sound financial decision.

Mr. Montesi agreed with Mr. Taylor's comments and he mentioned the existing traffic congestion problems in front of the Outlets was already ruining a positive shopping experience for tourists. He added there were plans to build two additional shopping centers in that area and the State, County and Town of Queensbury needed to find a way to improve the flow of traffic. Mr. Mason stated that he agreed with every comment made by Mr. Taylor. Mr. Kenny disagreed and he added the Tourism Department needed to be more visible to the tourists and Route 9N was an ideal location. He apprised that 6,000 visitors to date at the Tourism Satellite Office in the Adirondack Outlet Mall was a good indication of how popular a Tourism Department Building in that location would be. Mr. Dickinson agreed with Mr. Taylor's comments and requested a copy of his written statement.

Mr. Kenny informed of the release of a survey to area properties requesting feedback on the area's most popular events. He said the survey listed every event sponsored by Warren County Occupancy Tax Special Event Funding and requested the recipient to vote for five events. He advised that Americade had been voted the most popular event with 35 of the 47 surveys returned, voting it number 1. He mentioned the second most popular event had been the Adirondack Nationals Car Show; the third was the Adirondack Balloon Festival and the fourth had been the World's Largest Garage Sale. He pointed out that although the surveys were anonymous, it was not difficult to determine the municipality from which they were received as most selected events from their municipality. He added all but five events had received at least one vote. He said the cumulative result of Special Event Funding lead to hundreds of thousands of tourists who might not otherwise visit the area.

Mr. Dickinson opined that although the weather had been positive, the attendance at Americade had decreased this year. He said the Adirondack Nationals Car Show had been more successful this year than in the past. Unfortunately, he continued, there had been some very dangerous and upsetting incidents, such as burn outs on Canada Street. He advised there had been a meeting of Mayor Blais and Sheriff York to discuss ways to keep the event under control in the future. Mr. Dickinson opined the majority of the trouble was caused by people who were not part of the actual Car Show. A brief discussion ensued pertaining to disruptive behavior at the Adirondack Nationals Car Show.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Conover and seconded by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist