

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: APRIL 2, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW
FRASIER

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
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS BROCK
SEEBER
TAYLOR
MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY RESORT
GARY THORNQUIST, LAKE GEORGE RV PARK
KEVIN MARKHAM, RAMADA INN
MICHAEL SPILLMAN, HOLIDAY INN TURF
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, EXPLORE HISTORY WALKING TOURS
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:01 a.m.

Motion was made by Ms. Wood, seconded by Mrs. Frasier 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 agenda review, Ms. Johnson requested to amend Resolution No. 61 of 2013, which revised the Warren County Tourism Policy concerning the publication of advertisements, in order to include verbiage relating to the use of images, advertisements, videos and/or text created and/or produced by the Tourism Department. She said the new verbiage would require the County's authority before any materials could be used. She noted the Department worked hard on branding Warren County and they wanted to be sure their work was utilized in ways which were conducive with that branding.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Ms. Wood and carried unanimously to amend Resolution No. 61 of 2013 as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the April 18, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson circulated a copy of the 2013 Year in Review Binder to the Committee members; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.* She advised the quarterly Tourism Department and Group Loop Newsletters were included in the Binder, which also contained visitor data compiled from the conversion and occupancy tax surveys; monthly public relations activities; advertisement data; the

media schedule; the 2013 marketing plan and conversion research; demographics and activity of inquiries; email subscriber numbers and web stats; office expenses; information on the Tourism Department Satellite Office; and copies of collateral and advertisements. She reported 260,214 inquiries were received by the Tourism Department in 2013 which was an increase of 18.8% compared to 2012. Ms. Johnson informed there had been 594,416 visits to the Warren County Tourism website in 2013 (a 17.9% increase compared to 2012), of which approximately 235,000 visits were accessed using a mobile device (a 90.4% increase compared to 2012). She noted mobile devices included cellular phones, tablets and laptop computers and she pointed out approximately 40% of the visits to the website originated from a mobile device. She advised the top viewed pages on the website were the home page; the things to do page; and the lodging page. She stated the average length of time spent on the website was 2.48 minutes and the number one referring website continued to be www.visitadirondacks.com. She mentioned visits to the website originated from the following locations (in order of quantity): New York; New Jersey; Massachusetts; Connecticut; Quebec; and Pennsylvania. She reported over 10,000 Travel Guides and 4,000 Rates & Dates & Events Brochures were downloaded from the website in 2013. She informed the YouTube and video views in 2013 totaled 22,750, with the most popular videos being the Four Season video on the homepage; the Shopping video; the Group Tour video; the Fall video; the Summer Television Commercial video; the Fishing video; and the Skiing video. She acknowledged Sue Tucker, Senior Tourism Specialist, for the work completed in compiling the information for the Year in Review Binder.

Ms. Johnson circulated a Press Clipping Binder to the Committee members and noted the binder contained examples of all the press received. She acknowledged the hard work completed by Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Coordinator, in developing the Department's press and working with the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC).

Various advertising samples were displayed for the Committee members and Ms. Johnson commented ads were running in several publications already and inquiries were starting to be received. She mentioned volunteers were assisting in the fulfillment of inquiries. She noted stats for each advertisement were run at the end of each month. She pointed out an increase in inquiries for January through March of 2014. Examples of various online and banner ads were displayed for the Committee members and Ms. Johnson noted banner ads were often offered as a "value added" when print advertising was purchased. She advised that last year's Summer Television Commercial would be revamped for use this year. She mentioned properties had been solicited for participation in the Super Saver Summer Discount/Coupon Program. She apprised of a packet sent to area properties and attractions to inform them of the free or low cost materials and services available through the Tourism Department; *a sample of the information packet is on file with the minutes*. She said the packet contained copies of the Summer Placemat and the Summer 2014 Activities, Events, Rates & Dates Brochure, which contained over 850 events and activities. She commented the Activities, Events, Rates & Dates Brochure had grown in size and she credited Ellen Himmelblau, Senior Tourism Specialist, with compiling and organizing the necessary information for inclusion in the Brochure.

Ms. Johnson stated the Tourism Department continued to provide information to tourists pertaining to stopping the spread of invasive species. She advised a feature tab had been added to the website for the Cleaned, Drained and Dry Program. She noted the feature tab included an introduction to the mandatory boat inspection and wash program commencing May 15, 2014 and a link to a PDF information document created by the Lake George Park Commission (LGPC); *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. Peter Girard, Creative Director, commented that invasive species information had been on the website on the boating and fishing landing pages for some time, as well as a button

with a link to the www.protectlakegeorge.com website. He explained the feature tabs were pull up/collapsible buttons which could be clicked on or hovered over in order to access additional information. Ms. Johnson noted the available invasive species literature would be included for fulfillment of fishing and boating inquiries and would be available at the Tourism Department Satellite Office.

Chairman Geraghty asked if the LGPC PDF referenced other Warren County waterbodies in addition to Lake George and Ms. Johnson replied in the negative. Mr. Conover commented inclusion of the other waterbodies in this document should be referred to the Invasive Species Sub Committee. He said they could include material pertaining to the efforts to combat invasive species in the Towns of Lake Luzerne, Chester, Horicon and Queensbury. Ms. Johnson clarified that the aquatic invasive species information on the website did include lakes other than Lake George; however, she continued, the feature tab link led directly to the LGPC PDF document which pertained only to Lake George. Mr. Conover asked if a link to the Lake George Association (LGA) was still available on the website and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively. A brief discussion ensued.

Continuing, Ms. Johnson informed the ARTC had asked for assistance with judging for awards to be presented at the Adirondack Park Local Government Day Conference. She noted this pertained to submissions received for the 2014 Adirondack Park Excellence Awards. She stated she had read all of the 47 applications which had been submitted and it had been enlightening to read about events that she had not previously been aware of. She advised the winners would be announced at the Adirondack Park Local Government Day Conference on April 10, 2014.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that Public Relations Reports for February and March were included in the agenda packet. She announced that Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, had sent Darlene Gunther, Village Clerk, to the Tourism Office with a Madison Handbags Brochure; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. She said the handbag company had completed a photo shoot last year for the brochure which included backgrounds, such as the Mini-Ha-Ha, the Adirondac Cruise Boat and the Carousel in Lake George.

Ms. Johnson informed of her participation in the Governor's Winter Challenge in Lake Placid on March 9, 2014. She noted she and Fred Monroe, Supervisor for the Town of Chester, participated in the bobsled challenge. An image of Ms. Johnson and Mr. Monroe with Governor Cuomo was displayed for the Committee members.

Mr. Dickinson entered the meeting at 10:18 a.m.

Ms. Johnson apprised that several months prior, Supervisor Dickinson had approached her and Mr. Girard in the search of data to assist him in trying to attract a large outdoor sports store chain to the area. She noted they had provided the necessary data and discussed ways to collect additional information. Mr. Dickinson apologized for his late arrival and commented that the meeting had not been listed on his personal calendar. He said there was a parcel at Exit 21 in the Town of Lake George, which he referred to as the old Ramada Inn, which had been unoccupied for the last nine years. He advised he was attempting to attract a large outdoor sports store, such as Bass Pro Shop or Cabela's. He informed of his attendance at the International Council of Shopping Centers Convention in New York City last December and said he had spoken with the Lead Developer for Bass Pro Shops. He commented there was some interest in opening a store in this area; however, he added, the problem would be with securing title for the property so they could proceed. He announced the Chazen Companies had been retained and had developed a bullet point brochure in order to help "sell" the area as an ideal location for this type of retail store. Mr. Dickinson stated he

had hoped to utilize the Warren County Tourism website in order to generate some outside interest from outdoor enthusiasts. He suggested the possibility of a questionnaire on the website with questions, such as sporting interests; how often they visited the area; length of stay, etc. He said he hoped to generate interest while accumulating data which could be presented to the prospective retail store. He commented both Bass Pro Shop and Cabela's were high powered stores and he felt the location would be good for them. He noted both of these chains usually selected high population cities for their stores and were able to draw large crowds all year long. He mentioned Lake George's tourist season was approximately six months long and he hoped to show the retailers the potential for large crowds during that season.

Mr. Girard stated he would use Survey Monkey to develop the survey and would embed it on the website. He added an email blast could be released in order to drive subscribers to the survey on the website. He said they would plan to release the email blast on May 1, 2014 and the only content in the blast would be a request to take the survey. He added a button link to the survey could be included on a subsequent email blast, possibly the fishing email blast scheduled to be released in June. He mentioned the possibility of dedicating a feature tab to the survey and he noted feature tabs received a large amount of hits. He indicated the survey could be kept on the website for a period of time in order to collect a large amount of data. Mr. Dickinson said the survey suggestion was exactly what he was hoping for and he felt the data collected would be useful in attracting a large outdoor sports chain. Mr. Merlino stated he felt this was a great idea and by September the survey would provide a lot of useful information. Mr. Kenny said he felt this was an excellent idea and commented that a large store, such as Bass Pro Shop or Cabela's, would generate increased sales tax revenues. Ms. Johnson suggested the Town and Village of Lake George Offices and the Lake George Visitors Center could retain hard copies of the survey for visitors to fill out. Mr. Dickinson noted both stores were decorated in an Adirondack style and both had peak seasons in the fall and winter which could extend the tourist season in Warren County. He noted the location he had in mind was visible from the Northway.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Conover and carried unanimously to move forward with the survey and email blasts in order to assist in gathering data which could be used to attract a large outdoor sports store chain, such as Bass Pro Shop or Cabela's.

Ms. Johnson announced that in 2013, Governor Cuomo had kicked off his tourism efforts by hosting the first summit in Albany where he announced \$60 million in tourism funding. She said one of the new initiatives included a new "I ♥ NY" marketing campaign with the Port Authority and Metro Transit Authority in New York City. As a result, she continued, a high volume winter out-of-home campaign had been completed in subways, on buses and in terminals. She displayed a poster from the "I ♥ NY" marketing campaign which featured Gore Mountain Ski Resort.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Operator, distributed copies of her February/March Group Tour Update to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes*. She informed the Quarterly Group Loop Newsletter was distributed to approximately 1,500 National and International Tour Operators, Group Leaders, Group Tour Media Outlets, Local Media, Warren County Group Tour Partners and Chambers of Commerce. An image of the current Group Loop Newsletter was displayed for the Committee members. She said the most viewed links on the Newsletter had been the Hyde Collection and the new Adirondack Regional Brochure.

Ms. Brand informed that when she assisted Tour Operators or Group Leaders, one of the most commonly asked questions pertained to which dining establishments were "group friendly". She noted the Group Tour Binder did not generally contain a lot of information on restaurants as there

were usually only two or three advertisers. She announced she had completed a mailing to 104 Warren County restaurants in an effort to develop a more substantial list of area dining properties which were willing and able to provide efficient group dining experiences. She explained that guidelines and criteria had been included in the mailing, such as ample seating capacity, motorcoach parking, group menus, etc. Ms. Brand informed that 20 area restaurants had completed the forms and she had been able to substantially increase the list of dining establishments which were "group friendly".

Ms. Brand apprised she was currently conducting a mailing of the Student Youth Tour Opportunities Profile Sheet to over 600 New York State high schools to promote history & heritage; science & ecology; arts & culture; and performance venues which were suitable for fun and educational field trips. She noted 17 Warren County partners had joined the brochure distribution program for 2014. She added there had only been 6 or 7 partners when the program had been initiated in 2011.

Ms. Brand informed of her participation in the "I ♥ NY" United Kingdom Ski Writers FAM (familiarization) Tour on February 25-27, 2014 to promote skiing in Upstate New York. She said the group of 8 ski writers had skied Gore Mountain Ski Resort; participated in a dinner and tour hosted by the Copperfield Inn; and had an overnight stay at the Alpine Lodge. An image of Ms. Brand with the 8 ski writers was displayed for the Committee members. Ms. Brand informed Peter Thompson of the Press Association had indicated his intention to return to the area to cover another feature. She said she anticipated coverage from the following publications as a result of the FAM Tour: www.wheretoskiandsnowboard.com; www.snowangel.co.uk; *Kensington and Chelsea Review*; *County & Town House*; *In the Snow Magazine*; and *Skier and Snowboarder Magazine*.

Ms. Brand announced she had been interviewed by *Group Tour Magazine* and an image of the article had been displayed for the Committee members. She noted a video had been embedded on the *Group Tour Magazine* webpage as a result of the interview.

Ms. Brand stated she and Ms. Johnson had attended a workgroup summit at WMHT, a public service television station based in Troy, New York, regarding Governor Cuomo's Path Through History Initiative. She noted this was a statewide effort to highlight New York State's historical and culturally significant sites, locations and events. She advised the workgroup summit included discussions pertaining to materials which could be used by tourism promotion agencies as part of the initiative including videos which could be embedded on the Warren County Tourism website. A Path Through History video, pertaining to the Fort William Henry Museum, which was embedded on the history landing page of the Warren County Tourism website was played for the Committee members. Ms. Johnson informed all of the available videos had been produced by WMHT. Ms. Brand stated they continued to nominate Warren County events, attractions and sites to be added to the content on the Path Through History website.

Ms. Brand informed a Weddings feature button had been added to the Warren County Tourism website which linked to the Meetings, Weddings & Special Events landing page. She said they hoped to redesign the landing page by next January to improve the overall look and indicate whether each venue was LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) friendly.

Various Group Tour advertisements were displayed for the Committee members. Ms. Brand announced she had received an invitation to the Destinations of New York Travel Show Event to be held in September and she circulated the invitation to the Committee members. She noted the invitation would be mailed to Tour Operator companies throughout the east coast. She added they were hoping to attract at least 75 Tour Operators for the FAM Tour bus. She noted the Travel Expo

portion of the event continued to be developed and would be held at the Saratoga City Center on September 9, 2014. Ms. Brand stated approximately 100 exhibitors were anticipated from the Adirondack Region, New York State and the entire east coast.

Ms. Brand reported the following leads that she was currently working on:

- ▶ New York State Association of Self Insured Counties Conference on September 30, 2015 through October 2, 2015 for approximately 150 attendees;
- ▶ New York State Elections Commissioners Association Conference to be held at the Georgian Resort on July 29, 2014 through August 1, 2014 for approximately 200 attendees;
- ▶ New York State Rural Letter Carriers Conference to be held on June 28, 2015 through July 1, 2015; and
- ▶ New York State Council of Probation Administrators Conference to be held in June of 2015.

Mr. Girard displayed various email blasts which had been recently released to the Committee members. He pointed out the "Help Us Pick a Poster to Print" email blast had been released to approximately 132,000 subscribers and asked them to forward the email to a friend. He explained that subscribers were asked to select one of the four season posters and those who selected the winning poster would receive the poster in the mail. He apprised 1,234 people entered the contest and the posters had received votes, as follows: Summer 467; Fall 414; Spring 272; and Winter 81. Mr. Girard commented that of the 467 people who selected the Summer poster, a few were randomly selected to receive an Adirondack gift basket. He mentioned other recent email blasts included the 2014 Travel Guide; a whitewater rafting contest; and a camping giveaway email blast which would be released later that day.

Mr. Girard displayed the current Tourism Department Quarterly Newsletter and credited new software the Office had purchased with giving him the ability to display the full document. He added that usually he provided an image of only a portion of the Newsletters content. Mr. Girard displayed four new pull up banners which contained the Towns Posters (4 Town Posters on each banner) for the Committee members. He mentioned the Towns Posters had been utilized on the Warren County Tourism website as thumbnail icons which contained links to the individual Town's landing page (example: click on the Bolton Town Poster icon to link to the Town of Bolton landing page). He announced the website had been converted to Spring which involved changing the backgrounds, image rotations, feature bar content, texts and hyperlinks. He advised the photo gallery had been updated and now included images from a recent shopping photo shoot.

Mr. Girard advised the Department had recently purchased Prezi Presentation Software which was similar to Power Point but more advanced. He said the software allowed them to present content in a different manner and integrated with the website better than compared to using PDF's. He displayed the newly created Digital Balloon Brochure which had been created using Prezi Presentation Software and noted the previous Digital Balloon Brochure had been a PDF document. He pointed out the Prezi Balloon Brochure would be placed on the website following an update to be completed next week. He explained the software allowed the creation of documents with "movement" and allowed for the inclusion of live website links or embedded videos. He noted this was the Department's first attempt at using the Prezi Presentation Software but it would be used for the creation of more digital brochures in the future.

Gary Thornquist, of Lake George RV Park, inquired about the possibility of creating a digital brochure with the Prezi Presentation Software to assist in promoting Americade. Ms. Johnson commented the Digital Ballooning Brochure had been completed after some area balloonists had requested a brochure similar to the Whitewater Rafting Brochure. She added the Brochure had been created

digitally as a cost saving measure. She noted the Department had not previously produced brochures for a specific event, as they covered promotion of events in several other ways. Mr. Thornquist stated Americade had a much larger impact on the County than the Adirondack Balloon Festival. Ms. Johnson replied that Americade and the Adirondack Balloon Festival were specific events and the Digital Ballooning Brochure highlighted area hot air balloon pilots and not a specific event. Mr. Dickinson and Mr. Kenny opined it would be a good idea to have a digital brochure produced for Americade given the size of the event. Mr. Thornquist stated it was important to do what we could to support Americade and he noted there had been a decline in attendance for the last couple of years. Mr. Dickinson pointed out Americade had been struggling with issues, such as poor weather and declining attendance. He noted in 2013 the first weekend of Laconia had coincided with the last weekend of Americade and due to the poor weather many Americade participants had left early in order to attend Laconia. He explained Laconia usually occurred the week after Americade but for 2013 Laconia had extended their season causing an overlap. Ms. Johnson suggested a button could be added to the website which would link to a visual presentation that included the dates of the Americade event.

Mr. Conover mentioned the New York Capital District Region of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club, Inc. National Grand Meet was a new event to the area which had the potential of becoming another large event. Mr. Dickinson noted the Fort William Henry Resort would be the base of operations for that event. He said as soon as the event had been announced, the Fort William Henry Resort and their two associate hotels had filled to capacity for the week of the event. Mr. Conover mentioned the website for the New York Capital District Region of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club, Inc. was promoting the event, as it was their showcase event.

Mr. Merlino asked the time and expense incurred in creating a Prezi Presentation and Mr. Girard replied it was difficult to answer that question because the Digital Ballooning Brochure had been built using work which had already been completed and merely reformatted to the Prezi Presentation Software. He said he would have a better idea of the time and expense within the next couple of weeks. Mr. Merlino agreed with Messrs. Dickinson and Kenny that a Prezi Brochure created for Americade would be a useful tool; however, he added, if the Tourism Department created a digital brochure for Americade, the other events would want one created for them, as well. He commented if the creation of a digital brochure with the Prezi Presentation Software did not take too much time or expense, it might be worth looking into creating digital brochures for a few of the larger events. Chairman Geraghty commented the survey results showed the top events and he suggested a little extra effort for these events would benefit the County. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Merlino stated the next item on the agenda was an update on Sales, Special Events and Conventions. Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), reported that Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, had been unable to attend because she was attending a National Sports Event Symposium in Oklahoma City. Mr. Consuelo opined the New York Capital District Region of the Cadillac & LaSalle Club, Inc. National Grand Meet had the potential to become a great event. He noted Ms. Curley was working with the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association for their 2015, 2016 and 2017 events. He added she was assisting them in finding suitable locations for lodging and a base of operations. Mr. Consuelo reported Ms. Curley was working with the Mountain Lakes Regional EMS (Emergency Medical Services) Council, as well as working with Mayor Blais for Festival Space events. He pointed out Ms. Curley was working with an internet marketing company and the American Canoe Association for potential future events. Mr. Consuelo reported Ms. Curley's efforts in working with The Golden Goal Complex for a potential Italian Soccer Tournament for 2015. He noted she was also working with Redneck

Trailer Suppliers for an upcoming event. Mr. Consuelo informed that in conjunction with the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association, the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB would host a Legislative Breakfast on May 9, 2014, 8:30-10:00 a.m. at the Holiday Inn Resort in Lake George. He noted this was an opportunity to invite State Legislators from Warren, Washington, Saratoga, Essex and surrounding Counties, for a round table discussion. He said the Breakfast would offer an opportunity to present key issues in the Region. He invited all the members of the Board of Supervisors to attend and noted that Senator Little and Assemblyman Stec would be in attendance, as well. Lastly, Mr. Consuelo announced the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce Visitors Center, between Exits 17 and 18 on the Northway, would open next month for seven days a week. He added currently the Visitors Center was only open on the weekends.

Pertaining to the Warren County Council of Chambers update, Mr. Merlino informed a Council Meeting had been held on the Saratoga North Creek Railway train which had left from Reparius. He said the Meeting had included a great meal and had been presented well. He stated next month's meeting would be held in Lake Luzerne at Ciro's Restaurant.

Mr. Kenny said he thought the Tourism Committee had previously discussed relocating the Towns Posters located outside the Committee Room. He noted the Posters were not viewable by the public in their current location. Mrs. Frasier agreed that she remembered the issue being discussed. Paul Dusek, County Administrator, suggested another set could be made for the downstairs hallway. Mr. Kenny stated the only people who viewed the Posters in their current location were the Supervisors and people who attended Committee meetings. Mr. Merlino commented the Department of Motor Vehicles hallway was one of the busiest locations. Mr. Consuelo said the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce had obtained a set of the Posters which would be displayed outside of the Gateway Information Center on the Northway. Ms. Johnson noted a set was on display at the Tourism Department Satellite Office in the Adirondack Outlet Mall.

Following a brief discussion, motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and carried unanimously to relocate the Towns Posters from the upstairs hallway outside of the Committee Room to a downstairs hallway, preferably the Department of Motor Vehicles hallway. *(Subsequent to the meeting, Ms. Johnson advised that it had been determined that the Town Posters would remain and a second set would be created and hung in the downstairs hallway.)*

Mr. Thornquist asked if the Year in Review Binder could be borrowed or viewed by members of the public and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist