

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: MAY 29, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON
CONOVER
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

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR WOOD

SUPERVISORS BROCK

SEEBER

SIMPSON

STROUGH

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

DOUGLAS KENYON, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY RESIDENT

TONY HALL, *LAKE GEORGE MIRROR*

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:34 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, 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, Mr. Merlino said the first item was a request for funding support from the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival. He informed of a meeting with the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival Committee during which they had indicated the need for an additional \$15,000 in financial assistance from the County. He said the concept of allocating \$5,000 from parking revenues generated during the event had been considered; however, he continued, Ms. Johnson had informed the entire \$15,000 could be allocated from the Tourism Department Budget. He advised the size and quantity of some of the Tourism Department brochures had been reduced resulting in savings on printing and mailing expenses. In answer to the question of availability of funds, Ms. Johnson responded the funds could be transferred from the postage code. Mr. Kenny opined the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival was a signature event and the County should do what they could to ensure its continuation. Paul Dusek, County Administrator, noted that approval of this allocation would amend the existing agreement with the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival. Mr. Dickinson asked the amount of Special Event Funding previously awarded to the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival and Mr. Kenny replied \$25,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to amend Resolution No. 71 of 2014, which authorized an agreement with Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival, Inc., in order to include an allocation of \$15,000 from the Tourism Department Budget (A.6417 480 Tourism Occupancy, Tourism-Special Events) to Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival, Inc. to assist

with the costs associated with promoting the event. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 20, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson requested authorization for a contract with Offset House, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$7,765 for a term commencing July 3, 2014 and terminating July 31, 2014 to print 90,000 copies of the 2014 Fall Brochures. She noted Offset House, Inc. had been the lowest responsible bidder of the three companies that responded to the Request for Proposal (RFP) and delivery of the Fall Brochures was anticipated no later than July 31, 2014.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mrs. Frasier and carried unanimously to authorize the contract with Offset House, 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 June 20, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Mr. Merlino informed that he had requested Ms. Johnson to provide each of the Committee members with their own agenda packet. He said often when items or articles were discussed and circulated during the Committee Meetings, the topic of conversation changed by the time everyone had a chance to view them.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that the results of the 2013-2014 Winter Conversion Survey were included in the agenda packet. Also included in the agenda packet, she continued, was a Conversion Survey Comparison which compared the results of this recent survey with the Winter and Summer Surveys for 2012 and 2013. She noted 4,702 Winter Conversion Surveys had been emailed and 512 people responded, reflecting 10.90% participation. She provided the following statistics from the Survey: 97% of the responders to the Survey had visited the area before; 48% were day-trippers; 52% were overnight visitors; the primary source of lodging was listed as hotels; the majority of the visitors stayed in Lake George, Queensbury and Bolton Landing; the majority of the trip planners were females with an average age of 50; the most popular winter activities had been snow tubing, downhill skiing and snowmobiling; top activities were listed as dining, shopping and cultural outings; primary reasons for not visiting during the winter months were financial, illness and lack of time off; and overall the vacation stays were rated as excellent and very good. She stated 100% of those surveyed said they would recommend vacationing in the Lake George Area to others. She noted the surveyed visitors had mostly been from New York State, New Jersey, Connecticut and Canada.

Ms. Johnson circulated a series of magazines which contained advertisements for the Lake George Area and various advertisements were displayed for the Committee members. She displayed the 21st Annual Golfer's Guide for the Committee members and noted the QR (quick response) Code would lead to a list of golf courses and driving ranges. She informed of a new slogan for the summer campaign, "It Just Wouldn't Be Summer Without a Lake George Vacation". Ms. Johnson said each of the Counties in the Adirondack Region had a post card created and the Lake George Area postcard encouraged people to visit the www.VisitLakeGeorge.com website to learn more about the area.

Ms. Johnson announced the Summer Television Campaign had commenced on April 28, 2014 and would run through August 10, 2014. She displayed a map of the primary marketing areas and noted that 15-second and 30-second summer television commercials had been produced. She stated the 2014 Super Summer Savings coupon program had commenced with 14 participants; *a copy of the 2014 Super Summer Savings Coupons is on file with the minutes.* Ms. Johnson apprised the Summer Mid-Week Lodging Program had commenced on April 28, 2014 with 9 participating properties and would terminate at the end of July. She noted each property had contributed one image and up to

three custom mid-week lodging packages. Peter Girard, Creative Director, pointed out that a button link to the Summer Mid-Week Lodging Program was predominantly placed on the home page of the website.

Ms. Johnson reminded the Committee members of a discussion at a previous meeting wherein the Department had been requested to highlight top events. She said the Department had commenced this effort immediately by creating a letter to be sent to the promoters of the top ten events in Warren County which requested certain materials from the promoters, such as images, videos, testimonials, etc. to be placed on the Warren County Tourism website. She listed the top ten events which would be highlighted on the website, as follows: Americade, the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association Convention; the Adirondacks Nationals Car Show; the Lake George Jazz Festival; the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival; the World's Largest Garage Sale; the Lake George Winter Carnival; the New York State Boys Basketball Tournament; the Whitewater Derby; and the Lake George Elvis Festival.

Ms. Johnson informed that last year the New York State Division of Tourism had researched the State's top events and decided they wanted to have a presence at these events to encourage travel around the State. She added three area events had been selected by "I ♥ NY" as follows: Americade; the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival; and the World's Largest Garage Sale. She noted that during Americade, the Warren County Tourism Department always had a table set up during registration and this year "I ♥ NY" would have a banner back drop and a presence outside of the Tour Expo. She added Warren County Tourism Department staff would assist with the "I ♥ NY" tent at Americade, as needed. Ms. Johnson stated the Department would also have a table set up at the World's Largest Garage Sale alongside the "I ♥ NY" table. She pointed out that during the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival, the Department had a table set up in the Tourism Tent and she anticipated "I ♥ NY" would be present, as well. She apprised the three events would be ideal for display of the three banners which represented all of the Towns in Warren County.

Ms. Johnson displayed examples of positive public relations from various sources for the Committee members. She announced that *MSN (Microsoft Network)* had recently ranked Lake George among the 17 most popular lakes and *AAA (American Automobile Association) Car and Travel Magazine* had recently mentioned the Sagamore Resort in an article pertaining to the "Seven Unforgettable New York Experiences". She noted an upcoming issue of *AAA Car and Travel Magazine* would feature an article entitled "The Hidden Adirondacks" which would be represented on the cover, as well. She apprised that www.travelandleisure.com had recently featured Lake George as one of "America's Most Beautiful Lakes". She said copies of Joanne Conley's, Assistant Tourism Coordinator, Public Relations Reports for April and May were included in the agenda packet.

Ms. Johnson informed of her attendance at the New York State Tourism Conference in Syracuse and the Adirondack Day at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. She commented that Sue Tucker, Senior Tourism Specialist, had attended the New York by Rail Event at Penn Station and reported she had distributed 600 Travel Guides during the event. Ms. Johnson commented she had attended a meeting in Lake George for the Saratoga & North Creek Railway (SNCR) where the new north end local service was discussed. She apprised of a mural on the wall at John F. Kennedy International Airport depicting images of the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival as part of the Governor's initiative to encourage tourism in New York State.

Mr. Conover pointed out there had been an article entitled "Hang Out at These Beaches on Memorial Day" featured on the USA Today Travel website which included Rogers Memorial Park Beach and Veteran's Memorial Park Beach in Bolton Landing. He suggested Ms. Johnson visit the website in

order to view the article. Mr. Vanselow mentioned at the North Creek Business Alliance meeting held that morning, Laurie Arnheiter, of the Hudson River Trading Company, had been discussing selling advertisements for the guide and said she was enthusiastic about the number of inquiries she had received.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, stated the Group Travel Planner would be redesigned for 2015 and an image of same was displayed for the Committee members. She noted information would be consolidated to reduce the overall size of the planner and make it more visually appealing. She commented the advertising rates had also been reduced from \$250 for a full page ad to \$75 for a quarter page ad. She mentioned QR Codes would provide specific links to the Warren County Tourism website eliminating the need for lengthy content. She noted solicitation for the 2015 Group Travel Planner would be mailed on June 6, 2014 with a return deadline of July 9, 2014.

Ms. Brand informed the May Group Loop Newsletter had been emailed to 1,402 contacts including National and International Tour Operators, Group Leaders, group tour media outlets, local media, Warren County group tour partners and Chambers of Commerce. She said information pertaining to the new Motorcoach Parking Permit fee for the 2014 Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival had been announced in the Newsletter. She commented many of the area hoteliers were displeased with the short notice of the new fee, as they had already sold their package deals for the Balloon Festival. She added the Destinations of New York Group Travel Show and FAM (familiarization) Tours, to be held in September, had been promoted in the Newsletter, as well.

Pertaining to the Destinations of New York Group Travel Show, Ms. Brand reminded the Committee members that Warren County was partnering with Saratoga Springs for the Travel Show. She apprised that currently 9 buses were booked for the Show: 2 buses of Tour Operators and 7 buses of Group Leaders. She explained she would need to create 7 different itineraries for the Group Leaders and 1 itinerary for both of the Tour Operator buses. She advised she had attempted to include as many partners as she could in the itineraries and she had invited partners to come and display materials at meeting places for the itineraries, such as the luncheon locations. She mentioned the host hotels for the Tour Operators were as follows: The Comfort Suites; The Clarion Inn & Suites; and The Country Inn & Suites. She commented the host hotels for the Group Leaders included: The Tiki Resort; The Wingate; The Quality Inn; Surfside on the Lake; Sleep Inn & Suites; and the Ramada Inn of Glens Falls. Ms. Brand advised she was in the process of soliciting dining establishments for the Tour Operators and Group Leaders during their stay. She anticipated good attendance for the Destinations of New York Group Travel Show, as 50 to 75 Tour Operators had already committed to coming. She stated she was in the process of selecting local guides for certain segments of the Tour Operator FAM Tour and informed some guides would portray historical characters in period costumes. She informed the Travel Expo portion of the Show would be held at the Saratoga City Center on September 9, 2014 and over 100 exhibitors were anticipated.

Ms. Brand apprised of Warren County's collaboration with 21 New York State Counties in the Haunted History of New York State Initiative. She noted the initiative included a website, brochure and audio tour which explored the ghostly visitations of New York State. She added the website highlighted not only haunted attractions in the State but also family friendly attractions, as well. She informed they had been allowed to nominate ten attractions or events. She said the Warren County Tourism Department received leads from the website which would be fulfilled with the Warren County Travel Guide. Thus far, Ms. Brand continued, Warren County's Haunted History attractions included: the Fort William Henry's Spirits of History Tour; local cemetery walks; and Dinner with the Dead. She noted they could add content to the site as more attractions became available.

Ms. Brand informed of her attendance at North American Journeys East Summit in New York City on May 14-15, 2014. She advised she had conducted 18 ten-minute appointments with New York City based International Receptive Operators. She mentioned this was her second time attending the show but her first time using the Adirondack Regional Itinerary during appointments. She stated the show had been successful and Tour Operators agreed that selling the Lake George Area as part of the Adirondack Region was a better strategy. She advised international tourism was an emerging market and noted the New York State Tourism Summit had been held in New York City on the same dates as the North American Journeys East Summit. She apprised that at the New York State Tourism Summit the Governor announced his commitment of \$45 million to be used to promote tourism State-wide and "I ♥ NY" announced a strong international marketing effort for 2014 and 2015.

Pertaining to the newly established Motorcoach Premier Parking Pass fees for the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival, Mr. Conover asked if the issue had been that the hotel packages had already been offered before the decision for the fee was made and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively. He suggested an email be sent to Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, to ensure he was aware of the impact of the late decision. Ms. Brand mentioned some hoteliers and Receptive Operators would be required to pay the fee themselves as their package deals had already been offered. She pointed out the Motorcoach Premier Parking Pass fee could lead to traffic issues as Tour Operators might decide to drop off and pick up their passengers rather than pay the fee. Mr. Merlino asked the amount charged previously for parking Motorcoaches and Ms. Brand replied it had always been free in the past. Ms. Johnson advised the Motorcoach Premier Parking Pass fee for the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival was \$100 per day or \$150 for the duration of the event. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard displayed recent updates to the Warren County Tourism website for the Committee members. He noted a link had been added for the Lake George Boat Wash & Inspection Program sponsored by the Lake George Park Commission. He added a link had also been added for Common Aquatic Invasive Species in New York which lead to an informational page on the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation website. Mr. Girard recalled that at the previous Committee meeting they had discussed the possibility of creating Prezi Presentations for all of the County's top events; however, he continued, it had been determined that the Prezi Presentation Software was not currently compatible with Android phones and tablets which would make the web pages un-viewable by a large amount of the public. He advised they were waiting for Prezi to update their software before creating the Prezi Presentations for the top events. In the meantime, Mr. Girard continued, they planned to create event web pages and he displayed the web page which had been created for Americade. He noted the Americade event web page included: a video for the event; testimonials; event description; several images; and a predominant button on the home page which linked to the event web page. He commented the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association Convention had provided content which would be used to create a similar event web page. Mr. Girard said the Warren County Tourism website had been switched over to the summer format and he displayed the website to the Committee members. He noted a feature button on the home page linked to a list of the top summer activities.

Mr. Girard informed that three email blasts had been released since the last Committee meeting. He noted the Camping email blast had been released on April 2, 2014 to approximately 118,000 subscribers and was opened by 10,600 people. He added the Camping email blast had resulted in over 2,000 entries for the Camping package giveaway contest. Mr. Girard apprised the Summer Vacation email blast had been released on May 7, 2014 to approximately 122,000 subscribers and was opened by 8,795 people. He mentioned the Memorial Day Weekend email blast was released on May 19, 2014 to approximately 123,000 subscribers and was opened by about 10,000 people.

Pertaining to the Memorial Day Weekend email blast, he apprised the Summer Activities, Events, Rates & Dates portion of the email blast had been clicked 4,614 times within a one week period; the Events portion had been clicked 651 times; and the Americade portion had been clicked 133 times. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Merlino inquired about the success so far with the Boat Wash & Inspection Program and Mr. Dickinson replied it was going well. Mr. Conover noted the Lake George Park Commission was "working out the kinks" in the Program but overall it was successful. He advised some of the haul boats had been late in submitting their Memorandums of Understanding (MOU's) and he noted the haul boats had been required to provide a list of their Lake George customers. He explained the MOU's would allow the haul boats to bypass the boat inspection process by certifying that the boats in use were washed and inspected, as needed. Mr. Conover opined the real test for the Boat Wash & Inspection Program would be Fourth of July Weekend. Mr. Dickinson said the Lake George Boat Wash Station was located on Transfer Road and he noted it was a good location with a lot of space. He commented there had been approximately 10,000 boats involved with the Frozen Boat Program, the Hauling Program and the Marina Program. Mr. Merlino commented on the timeliness in which the Boat Wash & Inspection signs had been erected. Mr. Dickinson replied the signs had been created by Warren County and erected by the Lake George Park Commission. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard displayed the Tourism Department Quarterly Newsletter for the Committee members and noted that information contained in the document informed the Lake George Area had been featured as a top destination by *MSN* and *AAA Car and Travel Magazine*. He informed of his attendance at Google Partners Connect and explained it had been a live stream conference in Lake Placid to learn the behind the scenes of Google operations. He noted the County's media buyer, Ad Workshop, was a Google Partner. He commented the conference showed ways to optimize your Google site and build your site ranking. Mr. Girard played the summer television advertisement for the Committee members and he apprised that next year an entirely new summer television commercial would be created. He displayed banner ads, web ads and the landing page takeover for the Committee members. He explained the landing page takeover involved a one-day takeover of the landing page for people with Time Warner Cable or Comcast Cable email accounts. Mr. Girard displayed an image of the newly purchased Hero3+ waterproof high definition camera by GoPro. He explained the camera was small and lightweight and could be mounted in places, such as the handlebars of a motorcycle. Mr. Conover asked if the County maintained ownership of the images posted on the website and Mr. Girard replied affirmatively. Ms. Johnson stated the policy for use of County photographs had recently been updated. A brief discussion ensued.

Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), distributed copies of her April 2014 Monthly Report to the Committee members; *a copy of the report is on file with the minutes*. Ms. Curley said she was presenting her April 2014 Report because she had been unable to attend the previous Committee meeting. She informed the CVB Meetings were going well and averaged 12 to 15 attendees. She said the meetings allowed hoteliers and attraction owners to enter into productive dialog. She noted a general meeting had been held at the beginning of May and had been attended by representatives from 16 properties. She advised a representative of the Saratoga Rowing Association (SRA) had attended the April meeting and they were looking for hotels for a National Regatta which would be held the same week as Americade. Ms. Curley explained SRA had been aware of the possible conflict but had a limited number of dates to choose from for the National Regatta. She advised the CVB had been able to find some hotel rooms for the SRA and she noted the SRA listed these hotels on their website as affiliated hotels. She apprised the SRA had several Canadian Teams that attended their

event and preferred to stay in hotels in the Lake George Area. Mr. Dickinson asked the location of the National Regatta and Ms. Curley replied it would be held on Saratoga Lake at Fish Creek.

Ms. Curley informed of her attendance at the National Association of Sports Commissions (NASC) Symposium in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma on April 4, 2014. She said she had held 20 one-on-one appointments at the Symposium some of which she listed, as follows: the International Quidditch Association; Sommer Sports Xtreme Obstacle Challenge; the American Junior Golf Association; the Amateur Softball Association; Flex Events; the Biggest Loser Walk/Run; and the American Cornhole Association. Mr. Dickinson asked what quidditch was and Ms. Curley explained that quidditch was a soccer-like game played on flying broomsticks in the popular Harry Potter books and movies. She noted a non-flying version of the game had become very popular. Ms. Curley informed she had also met with representatives from Orienteering USA who had held a successful international event in the Lake George Area last year. She said the organization did not have immediate plans for another event but there was the possibility of another international event in 2015 or 2016. She apprised that a journalist from *Small Market Meetings Magazine* was supposed to come to the area last week but had been unable to due to a medical emergency. She stated the journalist was waiting for doctor approval to travel but if she were unable to come, she planned to complete phone interviews with area attractions for her article.

Ms. Curley mentioned she had received a Request for Proposals (RFP) from the Northeast Campus Store Association for their Annual Regional Campus Store Education Program and Trade Show to be held in March of 2015. She stated 250 people were anticipated to attend the event for a total of 285 room nights. She advised she had been invited to speak at MPI (Meeting Professionals International) on the topic of de-mything CVB's. She noted she had been included on a panel with representatives from CVB's in Buffalo; Niagara; Albany and Saratoga. She noted there were many people in attendance who had been unaware that Lake George had a CVB.

Mr. Conover stated the Town of Bolton website had been much improved but was not on the same level as the Warren County Tourism website. He noted the Town of Lake George was consistently updating their website. He asked the level of collaboration which took place between the Towns and the County for the development of the websites. He asked if Mr. Girard could look at the Town and Chamber of Commerce websites and possibly suggest software or tools which might be valuable or helpful. Mr. Girard responded he did not often view the Town or Chamber of Commerce websites as his role was the development and maintenance of the Warren County Tourism website. He commented there were navigational links on the Warren County Tourism website which led to the individual Town or Chamber of Commerce websites. He noted the majority of the content on the website pertained to tourism and tourism related businesses. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Merlino reported the April Warren County Council of Chambers meeting had been held at The Boathouse Restaurant in Lake George. He remarked the restaurant and scenery were beautiful and the food was really good. He noted Supervisors Dickinson, Simpson and Strough had been in attendance.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist