

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: AUGUST 28, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW
FRASIER

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR DICKINSON

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER

AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

SUPERVISORS BEATY

BROCK

GIRARD

MCDEVITT

SEEBER

SIMPSON

TAYLOR

WESTCOTT

TOM CONNORS, ADVERTISERS WORKSHOP, INC.

CHARLIE DALEY, DESTINATIONS OF NEW YORK STATE

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

MICHAEL SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER

RONALD MONTESI, DEPUTY SUPERVISOR, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY

AMY T. COLLINS, CITY OF GLENS FALLS RESIDENT

MICHAEL SPILLMAN, HOLIDAY INN TURF

DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*

CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:04 a.m.

Motion was made by Mrs. Frasier, seconded by Ms. Wood 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.*

Ms. Johnson explained that she, Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, and Peter Girard, Creative Director, would inform of recent tourism initiatives and upcoming promotions. She apprised that Tom Connors, of Advertisers Workshop, Inc., was present to discuss the Summer and Fall television campaigns and Charlie Daley, of Destinations of New York State, was present to discuss the Lake George Area & Saratoga Springs Destinations of New York State Travel Show and FAM (familiarization) Tour Event.

Ms. Johnson informed the Department remained busy and inquiries continued to be high from all sources. She noted she had recently compared June through August 2013 to June through August 2014 in the Smith Travel Report and occupancy reflected a 4% increase and the average daily room rate reflected a 5% increase. She commented several local Chambers of Commerce and businesses had come to the Department repeatedly to stock up on brochures and she added the local businesses reported this summer season had been exceptional. She opined the weekend weather had been great for the entire summer which had a positive effect on the tourism related businesses. Ms. Johnson advised the Satellite Warren County Tourism Office at the Adirondack Outlet Mall was

doing well. She displayed a photo of the Satellite Office and commented the signatures in the guest book reflected visitors from 19 different states and 9 different countries and all of the feedback had been positive. She stated there had been 1,000 guests who had engaged in conversation with staff at the Satellite Office in the month of July and 1,300 thus far for the month of August. Ms. Johnson informed she and Mr. Merlino had discussed the possibility of having Community Days at the Exit 17 Service Area and had contacted Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), to discuss the concept with him. She said the concept involved the possibility of towns or Chambers of Commerce having an exhibit displayed at the Service Area during various times throughout the year. She apprised Mr. Consuelo was in favor of the concept and she reminded the Committee members that Warren County had assisted with funding for the Exit 17 Service Area in 2013 and 2014.

Ms. Johnson pointed out the Winter Events Brochure and Winter Events Placemat were being printed and images of both were displayed to the Committee members. She said the 2015 Travel Guide was in production and the Third Quarter Newsletter would be emailed later that day. She advised a Public Relations Report for August 2014 was included in the agenda packet. She stated they had recently hosted Steve Jermanok, Travel Writer for *The Boston Globe*, on August 3-7, 2014 and the itinerary for his stay was included in the agenda packet. She noted Mr. Jermanok had provided some great coverage on his *Active Travels Blog* and his article in *The Boston Globe* would be forthcoming. Ms. Johnson advised staff had manned a Warren County Tourism information table at the recent Stony Creek Mountain Days and Horicon Days events and a photo of the table was displayed for the Committee members. She noted the Department's 2015 Budget request had been presented. She said she was invited to an upcoming focus group regarding the Lake George Master Plan. She informed of her attendance at several meetings and teleconferences for the New York State Travel Industry Association. Ms. Johnson stated the Department had received many nice comments and she read a few of them for the Committee members.

Ms. Brand stated her report would be dedicated to the Lake George & Saratoga Springs Destinations of New York State Travel Show and FAM Tour Event to be held on September 8-10, 2014. She noted this event had involved a year long collaboration effort with Destinations of New York State, ALON Marketing Group and the Saratoga CVB. She advised they had created a regional itinerary which highlighted favorite Lake George and Saratoga Springs group tour attractions. She noted an emphasis had also been placed on unique and "off the beaten path" attractions which Tour Operators might not be familiar with. She stated 2 buses of Tour Operators and 4 buses of Group Leader Companies would attend the three day event. She circulated the formal itinerary, which would be issued to the Tour Operators upon arrival at the hotels, to the Committee members. She noted the original intention had been for one bus of Tour Operators but increased interest in participating had made it necessary to book an additional bus. She commented the 2 buses would accommodate 50 domestic and international Tour Operators for the FAM Tour. She mentioned the Tour Operators would be coming from all over the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and Columbia and they had been assigned custom itineraries for the three days to include visits to communities and attractions throughout Warren and Saratoga Counties.

Day 1 of the Tour Operator itinerary, Ms. Brand explained would focus on Northern Warren County with a meet and greet and tasting at Oscar's Smokehouse in Warrensburg. She added the luncheon would be held at Basil and Wicks Restaurant in North Creek with additional vendors in attendance from North Creek, Thurman and Pottersville to network with the Tour Operators. She listed the anticipated vendors, as follows: Gore Mountain Ski Resort; Gore Mountain Chamber of Commerce; Hudson River Trading Company; Whitewater Challengers; Mountainside Adventurers; Saratoga & North Creek Railway; Nettle Meadow Cheese Farm; Martin's Lumber; Toad Hill Maple Farm; Natural Stone Bridge & Caves; and Perky Granger. She noted each Tour Operator would be presented with

a customized presentation folder with resource information and donated local products as gifts and she displayed one of the presentation folders for the Committee members. She informed the Tour Operators would spend the afternoon conducting site tours of the Saratoga & North Creek Railway; the Depot Museum; Railroads on Parade; the Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course; and the Sagamore Resort. She added the site tour portion would also include some shopping on Main Street. She explained a customized map, referred to as a pass map, had been created and many group-friendly venues along which would not be visited on the itinerary route would be pointed out to the Tour Operators for each day of the tour. She stated the end of Day 1 would include an evening networking session with the suppliers of the Destinations of New York State Travel Show to be held at the Saratoga Casino & Raceway.

Day 2 of the Tour Operators itinerary, Ms. Brand informed would have an early day focus on Saratoga Springs beginning with the Destinations of New York State Travel Show to be held at the Saratoga City Center. She said the Travel Show would include meetings with suppliers from all over the east coast. She noted a press conference would be held prior to the Travel Show and Ms. Johnson would attend. She advised Warren County Tourism would have an information table at the Travel Show and resource materials would be pre-packaged for the Tour Operators and Group Leaders on the FAM Tour. Before touring Saratoga Springs, she continued, the Tour Operators would attend a luncheon at the Wishing Well Restaurant. She said the afternoon portion of Day 2 of the FAM Tour would return to Warren County for a "Spotlight on Glens Falls" networking reception to be held at the Queensbury Hotel with Glens Falls vendors in a mini trade show format. She listed the anticipated vendors, as follows: the City of Glens Falls; the Adirondack Balloon Festival; The Hyde Collection; the World's Awareness Children's Museum; the Shirt Factory Gallery; the Chapman Museum; Common Roots Brewery; the Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce; and the Adirondack Theatre Festival.

Day 3 of the Tour Operators itinerary, Ms. Brand explained would include a tour of "Lake George Village Favorites" and she pointed out Mr. Merlino would join the FAM Tour at this point. She said a meet and greet would take place at the Lake George Steamboat Company and Shoreline Cruises before the group was taken to Lake Luzerne. She advised the tour would stop at Painted Pony Rodeo; The Adirondack Folk School; the Lake Luzerne Historical Society; The Harmon House; The Bridge of Hope; Bow Bridge; and the Sacandaga Outdoor Center. She stated the stops would be enhanced by Lake Luzerne and Hadley residents portraying historical citizens, such as: Eunice Rockwell; Frances Kinnear; and Colonel Benjamin Butler. She commented a farewell luncheon would be held at the Up River Café and she noted Warren County Tourism had partnered with the Lake Luzerne Chamber of Commerce to offer a farewell ice cream social dessert at The Harmon House. She mentioned the Tour Operators would view a brand new Lake Luzerne promotional video while they enjoyed their dessert and would be provided with a presentation folder focusing on Lake Luzerne and Hadley attractions and she displayed one of the folders for the Committee members.

Ms. Brand informed there were 4 additional buses of Group Leader Companies, including: Lakefront Lines; Know How Tours/Niagara Scenic; Oneonta Bus; and Susquehanna Trailways. She noted each company would receive a customized itinerary to use throughout the three day Fam Tour and she added the itineraries had been developed to best represent their clients interests. She commented the Group Leader itineraries included attractions and dining opportunities throughout Warren and Saratoga Counties and many of the dining opportunities would include presentations from local historians, attraction representatives and speakers. She noted the Group Leaders itineraries for Warren County were diverse and included the following: the Saratoga & North Creek Railway; The Sagamore Resort; Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course; the Thurman Farm Tour; History in Lake George Village and Millionaires Row; Outlet Shopping; Dinner Theatre; Wine & Beer Tasting; and downtown Glens Falls Museums. She added the Group Leaders dining opportunities included: the

Log Jam; The Algonquin; Lizzie Keays; Giovanna's at the Georgian; the Fort William Henry; and the Up River Café. She pointed out the Group Leaders would also attend the Destinations of New York State Travel Show on Day 2 of the FAM Tour and would have a luncheon and entertainment at the Holiday Inn in Saratoga.

Ms. Brand thanked all of the Warren County businesses that offered their support and contributions in making this FAM Tour a success and she thanked Destinations of New York State and ALON Marketing Group for selecting Warren County for this opportunity. She commented there would be a full feedback survey conducted at the end of the FAM Tour and the results of this survey would be reviewed at the next Committee Meeting. Ms. Johnson thanked Ms. Brand for all the hard work she put into this FAM Tour over the last year.

Mr. Daley thanked the Board of Supervisors for the Warren County Occupancy Tax funding which had been awarded in connection with the Destinations of New York State Travel Show and FAM Tour. He referred to FAM Tours as "the sizzle not the steak" and said seeing was believing. He noted international receptive operators from the United Kingdom, Sweden and New York City would also attend the FAM Tour. He stated most Tour Operators were familiar with Lake George and Saratoga but were not familiar with the other areas of Warren and Saratoga Counties. He said the combination of Warren and Saratoga Counties for this FAM Tour was a valuable partnership. He commented the theme of the Travel Show and FAM Tour was "Follow the Rail" which he noted had been well received. He stated Group Leaders would be coming from Ohio, Western New York, Pennsylvania and Central New York. He apprised the Group Leaders would bring their best clients who purchased group tours and many would be coming for the first time. He said during the course of the three day, two night FAM Tour the Tour Operators and Group Leaders would see new "products" that they could incorporate into their tours. He stated the Travel Show would include exhibitors who were local, as well as some from further away. He noted Universal Orlando; Atlantic City, New Jersey; and Visit Savannah, Georgia would be exhibiting at the Trade Show.

Mr. Daley pointed out there would be a Seminar portion of the Trade Show held on Monday, September 8, 2014 from 12:00 p.m. until 5:00 p.m. at the Saratoga Hilton. He mentioned Peter Pantuso, President and Chief Executive Officer of American Bus Association (ABA), was a key promoter of group travel throughout North America and would speak at the seminar on "Trends in the Group Tour Industry". He stated Mr. Pantuso would be part of a panel of speakers for the seminar, along with Camilla Morris, Owner of Oneonta Bus; and Stewart Wiseburg, of North Carolina, who had been involved in the group tour industry since the 1970's. He mentioned Ms. Morris would be the incoming President and Chairman of the ABA Convention which would be held in St. Louis, Missouri in January of 2015. Mr. Daley thanked the "I ♥ NY" Division of Tourism and he noted they supported the FAM Tour Program. He stated FAM Tours were proven to bring business back tenfold.

Mr. Girard apprised the Department was in the process of undergoing a website redesign which was anticipated to be completed by mid December and he displayed the website for the Committee members. He said the redesign would include larger feature blocks; enhanced listings; mobile friendly navigation; adaptive content; and improved site speed. He explained the adaptive website would "pare down" content based on the type of device utilized. He advised the Tourism Department was working with the Information Technology Department to establish a better database which would be more efficient for use by staff members. Mr. Girard reminded the Committee members they had discussed using feature buttons to highlight the Top Ten Events and he noted feature buttons for the Adirondack Nationals Car Show and the Adirondack Balloon Festival were currently displayed on the home page. He added the next event to receive a prominent feature button would be the Lake George Jazz Festival. He commented the feature bar included the Fall Wellness Getaway

Package giveaway which featured lodging properties with fitness centers, indoor pools, spas and would include an Adirondack Wellness Gift Basket. He said the email blast announcing the giveaway had been released on August 20, 2014 to approximately 131,000 email subscribers. He noted the email blast had also featured the Adirondack Balloon Festival and he added the information on how many people viewed the email blast was not currently available.

Mr. Connors displayed the broadcast coverage map for the Summer and Fall television commercial campaigns which ranged from Montreal, Canada to Eastern Pennsylvania. He noted there were 7.5 million households within the broadcast coverage area and the commercials were aired on broadcast and cable stations. He commented the commercial directed viewers to the www.lakegeorgeny.com website which had experienced 17,755 visits during the Summer television campaign that aired from April 28, 2014 until August 27, 2014 and 92% of those were from new visitors. He commented the website was adaptive to all mobile devices noting that 62.5% of the visits were from desktop computers and 37.5% were from tablets or other mobile devices. He stated there had been an additional 16,000 direct responses via interactive television through remote controls.

Mr. Girard pointed out almost half the visitors were accessing the website with mobile devices and he displayed how the website "pared" down the content based on the type of device used. Mr. Conover asked how the statistics compared to the previous year and Mr. Connors replied they were almost the same. Mr. Connors pointed out the number of direct responses through interactive television had decreased because Time Warner Cable was no longer offering the service; however, he added, Comcast Cable did offer interactive television and he was hopeful that after the merger Time Warner Cable would offer the service again.

Mr. Connors displayed a variety of banner ads which aired during the commercials in all the markets and he noted the banner ads clicked through to the www.lakegeorgeny.com website. He displayed the Time Warner Cable Summer Webmail Takeover for the Committee members and explained when a user attempted to view their emails they would see this page. He advised the webmail takeovers were for a 24 hour period and the Summer takeover had resulted in 2,328 clicks, over 88% of which new visitors.

Mr. Connors stated that Montreal had been targeted for a shopping campaign and the 2014 Summer YouTube Shopping Campaign had been successful. He said there were two Lake George Shopping videos aired on YouTube which had been viewed 26,179 times since May 1, 2014 and had resulted in 1,276 clicks on the description beneath the videos. He said the shopping videos had aired in Montreal and had targeted females between the ages of 18 and 64 with interests in shopping; beauty and fitness; home and garden; books and literature; beauty mavens; cooking enthusiasts; do-it-yourselfers; foodies; and fashionistas (interest categories as listed by YouTube). He explained there were about 240,000 people in the Montreal market with one or more of the aforementioned interests. He said the shopping videos were aired on YouTube and Pre-Roll.

Mr. Conover asked if there was any interaction with the owners of the Outlet Stores to validate that the Montreal shopping videos were working. Mr. Connors responded he had met with Dave Kenny, owner of the Adirondack Outlet Mall, to discuss the possibility of the outlet stores having French content websites. He noted French content Facebook pages were becoming popular. Mr. Beaty commented that it had been noted that 92% of the people who visited the website due to the Summer television commercial campaign were new visitors and he asked if this was the objective and Mr. Connors replied affirmatively. Mr. Connors advised the 2014 Summer Facebook Campaign also targeted the same group of Montreal shoppers and was run from May 1, 2014 through August 10, 2014. He noted the advertisements on the right side of the Facebook page contained French content and he said these ads out-performed the English ads 4 to 1 in Montreal. He pointed out

there had been 7,826 clicks through to the website from this Facebook page. He stated there was a lot of interest in the Montreal market for shopping in Lake George.

Mr. Connors apprised the Pre-Roll video for Lake George shopping had aired from June 13, 2014 until August 11, 2014 and had resulted in 3,314 clicks through to the website which was a 1.37% click through rate. He commented this was the highest rate he had ever seen with Pre-Roll and noted the average click through rate for Pre-Roll videos was 1% or lower. Mr. Beaty asked if there was any information available to the Montreal visitors to let them know if the stores had French speaking employees and Mr. Connors replied that information could be added. Mr. Connors explained the Montreal shopping campaign content did not click through to the www.lakegeorgeny.com website but instead directed visitors to the www.lakegeorghopping.com website and he noted there were direct links to the Factory Outlet websites on that page.

Mr. Connors displayed the Fall campaign banner ads and noted these ads directed visitors to the www.lakegeorgeny.com website. He said this campaign had recently been initiated and would run until October 15, 2014. He commented the webmail takeovers would be run twice during the Fall campaign.

Mr. Connors advised of a North Country Regional Economic Development Corporation campaign for Fishing in the Adirondacks and 1,000 Islands. He noted the commercial directed viewers to the www.gofishny.com website and the three-minute video was played for the Committee members. Ms. Johnson commented the video had been obtained from episodes of *Lakes Region Fishing with Nate Laskiewicz*. Mr. Connors said there had been five half-hour episodes which had been edited into the three-minute video. He stated New York State had developed the www.gofishny.com website which he displayed for the Committee members. He said there were seven regions within the Adirondacks and only three of the regions had an online fishing video. He said the other two regions were Franklin County and Clinton County and he opined the Warren County video was of a better quality than the other two.

Mr. Connors displayed the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC) website homepage and noted they ran advertisements further west in New York State and covered the Syracuse, Rochester and Binghamton areas, as well as through Central Pennsylvania. He played the ARTC television commercial video for the Committee members which directed viewers to the www.godacks.com website and he noted the same video aired the previous year. Mr. Connors played the ARTC Fall television commercial video for the Committee members which directed viewed to the www.golakes.com website. Ms. Johnson pointed out Warren County was one of the seven member counties of the ARTC.

Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and CVB, said she had discussed the site tour for the Special Olympics New York Falls Games to be held on October 17-18, 2014 at a previous Committee Meeting. She stated they had secured ten hotels in Warren County and three hotels in Saratoga County. She advised the group was 32 hotel rooms short of what they required and she was assisting them in obtaining the remaining rooms. She apprised she had met with the Volunteer Coordinator who would attend the September CVB Meeting to discuss the Games and the athletes, as well as their need for volunteers.

Ms. Curley stated she was working with the Woodworth Genealogical Family Reunion to be held on July 7-11, 2015 with 50 to 100 attendees. She noted this group had selected a Lake George hotel and she would obtain some welcome bags to be given to them. She commented the group was excited and had planned some cemetery tours in order to trace the family history.

Ms. Curley informed she was working with the event planner for the Hudson Valley Volunteer Firemen's Association (HVVFA) for their 2015 and 2016 conventions. She said they would meet with Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, to discuss possible use of the Festival Space. She reminded the Committee members that the journalist who had planned to visit the area from *Small Market Meetings Magazine* had become ill and the interviews had been performed via telephone and the internet. She apprised the article was completed and would be included in the August issue of the magazine. She noted the article had highlighted The Sagamore Resort and The Hyde Collection, among other venues. Ms. Curley reported she was working with the Muay Thai (kickboxing) Tournament for October of 2014. She noted there had been a lack of success and the group was now looking at a date in September of 2015. She informed she had released an RFP (request for proposals) to lodging facilities which could meet the group's needs. She noted the group would conduct a site tour in September of 2014 with three or four of the hotels that submitted proposals. She commented the promoters wanted to hold the tournament on the east coast because they had a lot of Canadian participants.

Ms. Curley informed the Shrine Circus would be held on September 13-14, 2014 and the area hotels had tickets for sale. She said the promoters were hopeful the event would be successful and if it was they were hoping to continue to use the Festival Space for the event in future years. Ms. Curley reported she had conducted a site tour a few weeks prior with the promoters of Cruiser Club USA for an event to be held on June 22-26, 2015. She mentioned the Club was a family oriented motorcycle club with many chapters in the United States.

Ms. Curley stated she had met with the Lake George Fishing Alliance and the Village of Lake George to discuss plans for the King George Fishing Derby to be held on July 10-13, 2015. She said she would be releasing an RFP for a host hotel for the event. She commented the New York State Association of Professional Land Surveyors had selected a hotel in Glens Falls for a meeting to be held on October 7, 2014 and she noted approximately 75 attendees were anticipated. She advised one hotel had submitted a proposal for the New York Library Association Leadership Institute to be held in August of 2015 but the rate was outside of the Association's acceptable price range.

Ms. Curley apprised she had met with the owners of the Adirondack-Albany Wedding Association/Total Entertainment pertaining to the banquet facility on Route 9 in Queensbury. She said the facility was not completed but did have a pavilion which was currently available for rent. She noted this facility would be a wedding and event facility which could accommodate 200 people.

Mr. Merlino advised the agenda packet contained a letter from Mayor Blais requesting dedicated occupancy tax funding to promote the Festival Space. He noted the matter should be referred to the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee and he asked if Mr. Kenny had any comments. Mr. Kenny said he was unsure if the dedicated funding should be 100% from the County's occupancy tax special event funding or if it should be split 2/3 County funding and 1/3 Village funding to reflect the percentage of ownership for the Festival Space. Ms. Johnson informed of a meeting with herself; Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of the DPW; Mayor Blais; Mr. Kenny; and Chairman Geraghty to discuss the management of the Festival Space. She said Mayor Blais had indicated he wanted the Village to continue to maintain the grounds for the next few years and he wanted to continue to be the point person for new or returning events wanting to use the Festival Space.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Conover and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:01 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist