

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: APRIL 30, 2015

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
JOHN DANIELS, L&P MEDIA
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS SEEBER
SIMPSON
TAYLOR
DAVID STRAINER, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY RESIDENT
KATHY MUNCIL, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:49 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Vanselow 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 a contract with Trampoline Design, LLC in an amount not to exceed \$40,000 to provide social media manager services to create interest in Warren County as a four season, multi-faceted destination through social media platforms, blogs, video, etc. and by interacting, attending events and functions and developing County-wide relationships for a term commencing June 1, 2015 and terminating May 31, 2016 with the option to renew for 3 additional 1-year terms.

Ms. Johnson said they had discussed this matter at the previous Committee meeting following which an RFP (Request for Proposals) was released resulting in the receipt of 5 proposals. She apprised that Julie Butler, Purchasing Agent, Mr. Merlino, Peter Girard, Creative Director, and herself had separately reviewed the 5 proposals and had unanimously each selected Trampoline Design, LLC based in the City of Glens Falls. Mr. Girard clarified that he, Mr. Merlino, Ms. Johnson and Mrs. Butler had reviewed the 5 proposals independently and had each determined that Trampoline Design, LLC would provide the best value on a County-wide basis. He noted the Best Value grading system had measured criteria, such as the company's ability to show examples of their work product and what services they would offer. He commented that he, Mr. Merlino, Ms. Johnson and Mrs. Butler had met in person to review their selections and discovered they had all selected the same company. Mr. Conover asked if the funds to cover the cost of the contract were included within the Departmental budget and Ms. Johnson replied affirmatively.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mrs. Frasier to approve the contract with Trampoline Design, LLC as outlined above.

Mr. Merlino commented he was pleased that a local company had met the necessary criteria to be selected. Ms. Johnson pointed out that both she and Mr. Girard had the opportunity to work with this company in the past. Mr. Conover asked if there was a means to measure the success of this contract and Mr. Girard responded the company would assume the administration of the Tourism Department's Facebook account and they would track the growth of this by an increase in the number of "likes". Mr. Girard said the company would also write content articles on events and activities in the County and they would track to see how well these articles did online. He mentioned the company would also create a Warren County Tourism Twitter account and they would track the number of "followers" garnered; he added a Warren County Tourism Pinterest account would also be created. He mentioned there was no baseline data available to compare this contract as this would be the first year.

Following further discussion on the matter, Mr. Merlino called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the contract with Trampoline Design, LLC as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 15, 2015 Board meeting.*

Continuing, Ms. Johnson said the summer television campaign had commenced on Monday, April 27, 2015 in Metro New York and would begin in other markets within the next two weeks. She apprised there were 15-second and 30-second commercials being aired and a map of the broadcast areas was displayed for the Committee members. She noted they were using the same summer television commercial as last year; however, she continued, video shoots were scheduled to compile footage for a new commercial for next summer. She stated print ads were placed in the May issues of the following magazines: *Good Housekeeping*; *Women's Day*; *Country Living*; *Better Homes and Gardens*; *Family Circle*; *More Magazine*; and *Family Fun*; copies of print ads were displayed for the Committee members. She informed of co-op ads in the May issue of *AAA Car and Travel Magazine* and the April issue of *Great Vacation Getaways*; she explained these ads were offered through membership in the New York State Travel & Vacation Association (NYSTVA). She circulated a copy of *The Oprah Magazine* to the Committee members and pointed out this was an example of a co-op ad. She said all of the co-op ads provided bonus online listings and some provided bonus banner ads or email blasts. She said further magazine ad placements included: *National Geographic Traveler*; *AAA Club Magazine* of New Jersey, Massachusetts and Connecticut; *Amtrak's New York by Rail*; and the *Newark Star Ledger*.

Ms. Johnson mentioned online ad placements on www.guestquest.com; www.escapemaker.com; and www.meridethtravel.com which included digital, video and social media components. She advised of a new digital campaign through the New York State Travel Industry Association (NYSTIA) for which Warren County was participating with re-targeting and specific demographics; she mentioned Ad Workshop was the agency running this digital campaign. She reported about a new free opportunity to place banner ads on the website, www.4kidsinpa.com, where Warren County would appear with other New York State destinations to encourage attractions and events; samples of the banner ads were displayed for the Committee members. She commented the email sponsor ads would be run on segmented lists this year through the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC) using their software; she noted Warren County would advertise in spring and early summer with themes of fishing, paddling outfitters, crafts and heritage. She commented these email blasts typically garnered between 250 and 600 clicks.

Ms. Johnson informed the summer Mid Week Getaway Lodging campaign had recently launched and lodging properties were encouraged to partner with area attractions to create value added packages. She stated 22 lodging properties were participating this year, as follows: Lake George Beach Cottages; 1,000 Acres Ranch Resort; Cornerstone Victorian Bed & Breakfast; The Sagamore Resort;

Depe Dene Lakeside Resort; the Fort William Henry Hotel and Conference Center; Contessa Resort; Rancho Pines Campground; Melody Manor Resort; Surf Side on the Lake; Clarion Inn & Suites; Lamplight Inn Bed & Breakfast; Painted Pony Ranch; The Fern Lodge; Alpine Lodge; Antigua Resort on Plum Point; Wingate by Wyndham; Ramada Glens Falls; Adirondack Pines Bed & Breakfast; Landon Hill Bed & Breakfast; Scotty's Lakeside Resort; and the Inn on the Hill. She pointed out some of the attractions which had partnered with lodging properties, as follows: Bob's Fishing Charters; Jeff's Fishing Charters; Hopy Trails Brew Bus; The Fun Spot; Six Flags Great Escape; and Rafting on the Hudson. She explained the summer Mid Week Getaway Lodging campaign included a promotional feature button on the Warren County Tourism website homepage with a link to the listings. She noted the campaign would be highlighted on the May 6, 2015 email blast and had been posted on the Warren County Tourism Facebook page. She commented each of the lodging properties had an image and a link to their website on the campaign's landing page.

Ms. Johnson reported that she and Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, had returned yesterday from the Empire State Tourism Conference in Albany, New York. She noted the theme of the conference had been the "targeted traveler" and various sessions had been offered, such as targeted travelers, agritourism, craft beverages, watchable wildlife, bikes bring business, history sells, how to incorporate railroad stations into your tourism infrastructure and "I ♥ NY" year in review. She noted the Hopy Trails Brew Bus had been well received during the craft beverages session. She said the targeted travelers session had been geared towards women and the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) segment. She apprised that "I ♥ NY" had recently completed their first LGBT vacation planning brochure; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson said the Third Annual Adirondack Day had taken place on Monday, April 27, 2015 at the Legislative Office Building in Albany. She mentioned various Adirondack institutions, businesses and agencies attended to raise awareness about the Adirondacks. She noted a section of the space was transformed into a mini Adirondack Park; she added the event ended with The Taste of the Adirondacks which featured local food and drink samples from several Adirondack eateries and craft beverage companies. She advised that Gavin Landry, Executive Director of Empire State Development, had spoken at last month's ARTC meeting, as well as Richard Newman, Executive Vice President of State Marketing Strategy. She noted each of the tourism directors had an opportunity to introduce themselves and provide a brief marketing plan outline.

Ms. Johnson informed that she and Ms Brand would go to Brooklyn, New York tomorrow for the Escape Maker Food & Travel Expo where they would market the locally grown and produced products of Warren County. She added there had been an opportunity to ask one of the producers to join them and Barkeater Chocolates had been selected. She pointed out that the Public Relations Reports for March and April, created by Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Coordinator, were included in the agenda packet.

Ms. Brand reviewed her March/April 2015 Group Tour Update in detail; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.* She advised the April edition of the Group Loop Newsletter would be emailed later that day and a copy of same was displayed for the Committee members. She noted the Newsletter would be distributed to about 3,300 group tour industry professionals. She advised the Newsletter contained an interactive map which highlighted not only the Lake George Area but other regional activities, as well. She commented the Adirondack Wine & Food Festival had been featured, as well as a call-to-action on the 2015 Warren & Saratoga Counties Destinations of New York State FAM (familiarization) Tour.

Ms. Brand announced the 2015 Warren & Saratoga Counties Destinations of New York State FAM Tour would be held on September 14-16, 2015 and they expected to surpass last year's participation

of 57 Tour Operators, as more than 75 operators were anticipated. She noted the Save the Date invitations would be sent electronically and paper copies of the invitation would be handed directly to Tour Operators at shows and conferences. She explained they had wanted the host hotels for the FAM Tour to be within the Village of Lake George to allow sightseeing and shopping by attendees; she listed the participating host hotels, as follows: The Wingate Inn, the Lake George Econolodge and the Georgian Resort. She noted they had contracted with the Lake George Steamboat Company to host an Icebreaker Reception and dinner aboard the Lac Du St. Sacramento on Sunday, September 13th which would present an opportunity for group friendly suppliers to meet with Tour Operators. She advised the Fam Tour would showcase Warren County attractions on Sunday, September 13th and Monday, September 14th. She said the Fort William Henry Resort would offer a dinner and reception on the lawn on Monday evening. She apprised the FAM Tour would highlight Saratoga Springs on Tuesday, September 15th with a reception at the Canfield Casino. She noted the FAM Tour would also include the Destinations of New York State Travel Show at the Saratoga City Center on Wednesday, September 16th and Warren County suppliers were encouraged to exhibit at the show. She listed other attractions to be visited, as follows: Prospect Mountain Memorial Highway (by request), Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course, a tour of The Sagamore, Painted Pony Ranch, Main Street in Lake Luzerne and Davidson Brothers Brewery. She added a lunch would be held at the Up River Café in Lake Luzerne again this year because the Tour Operators had enjoyed the experience last year.

Ms. Brand informed she had been working on two upcoming "I ♥ NY" events to assist with the Warren County portion. The first of which was the "I ♥ NY" UK (United Kingdom) Cyclists FAM Tour on May 20-28, 2015 (May 21-22 in Warren County), she continued, and they would host 8 journalists and UK Tour Operators who were looking for specific cyclist offerings to couple with attractions, lodging and dining. She said the FAM Tour would include an overnight stay at the Wingate and the participants would travel the Warren County Bikeway into the Village of Lake George and would have dinner and a tour at the Adirondack Pub & Brewery. She added the participants would also tour Prospect Mountain and would try go-carting before heading to Saratoga to continue the tour. Ms. Brand informed that "I ♥ NY" had recently opened an office in Australia to promote New York State offerings to Australian travelers. She advised "I ♥ NY" was conducting an Australia Ready Workshop in Albany in May to familiarize New York Tourism Promotion Agencies with the interests of Australian travelers. She indicated that she had informed Warren County partners of the opportunity to attend the Workshop. She said she would attend the Workshop and would conduct some appointments with 14 to 20 Australia based Tour Operators, as well.

Ms. Brand commented she had attended the Yankee Trails World Travel Expo on April 2, 2015 and some Warren County partners had attended, as well. She stated the Lake George Steamboat Company, the Georgian Resort and Racket Lake Navigations had all sent representatives. She apprised about 250 information packets had been distributed and images of the Travel Expo were displayed for the Committee members. She informed of recent ads in *Group Tour Magazine* and *Groups Today Magazine* and copies of the ads were displayed to the Committee members. She circulated a Lake George Area feature article which had appeared in *Student Group Tour Magazine* to the Committee members; *a copy of the article is on file with the minutes.*

Lastly, Ms. Brand informed that she and Mr. Merlino had attended the monthly Warren County Council of Chambers Dinner at the Up River Café in the Town of Lake Luzerne. She said an Upper Hudson River First Wilderness Heritage Corridor (FWHC) Map had been produced by Pam Morin, FWHC Event Coordinator. Ms. Brand announced the Town of Lake Luzerne had hired a Step-on Guide in conjunction with the Saratoga & North Creek Railway (SNCR) and Mr. Merlino explained the Step-on Guide was a three month position and the employee would greet people who boarded the train in Saratoga and would point out attractions and events in the Towns along the way to North

Creek. Ms. Brand pointed out the Step-on Guide would distribute the Upper Hudson River FWHC Map, as well. Mr. Merlino announced that on July 25th the Town of Lake Luzerne would hold their History Day and the SNCR would offer \$10 tickets to Veterans who could ride the train from Saratoga to the Hadley Train Station. He advised the event would include attractions, such as a rodeo and a hobo lunch. He noted the Veterans could disembark the train in Hadley/Luzerne for four hours before re-boarding for the trip back. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard mentioned there had been two email blasts released since the previous Committee meeting and these would be the last two email blasts using the old system. He advised the Whitewater Rafting Contest email blast had been released on March 11, 2015 to 130,350 subscribers and had been opened by 10,992 people with 1,889 clicks on links contained in the blast. He added the Camping Contest email blast had been released on April 1, 2015 to 131,193 subscribers and had been opened by 9,921 people with 1,905 clicks on links contained in the blast. Mr. Girard informed that future email blasts would be sent using the new Benchmark Email Blast Program which he displayed for the Committee members. He reminded the Committee members that the Program would provide detailed data, such as which subscribers opened the blasts and which links they clicked on. He pointed out the new Program eliminated the size and content constraints which existed with the previous system; he noted this allowed the Department to accept more advertisers for each email blast where in the past only three advertisers were allowed per blast. Ms. Johnson commented that advertisers who had been rejected on past email blasts would be selected first for upcoming blasts; she noted the advertising rate would be adjusted based on the new Program.

Mr. Girard stated The Fund for Lake George had requested video for a special Earth Day multimedia presentation in New York City. He said representatives from The Fund for Lake George had sifted through various videos on the Warren County website and had requested certain segments from the videos which were uploaded onto a thumb drive for their use. Pertaining to the Hoppy Trails Brew Bus, Mr. Girard informed a video shoot was planned for late May for the Bus and its various stops. He noted a lot of the properties offered dining so they would be able to capture some dining footage and stills, as well. He commented a mini video would be created highlighting the Hoppy Trails Brew Bus. He informed of a second video shoot scheduled for late summer on parasailing and lake activities to create video footage which would be used in the 2016 summer tv commercials. Ms. Johnson informed the ARCC (Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce) and the Craft Beverage Trail Map had applied for a Consolidated Funding Application and the Hoppy Trails Brew Bus video had allowed the Tourism Department to partner with them.

Mr. Girard commented the new Warren County Tourism website had launched and he displayed the website to the Committee members while explaining its various features. He pointed out the rotating banner ads at the top of the homepage currently displayed ads for the Travel Guide, the current contests and two of the Top Ten events; the Whitewater Derby and the Elvis Festival. He noted these had been the last of the Top Ten events to be promoted and he added the homepage contained a feature button for the Top Ten events. He pointed out that the video imbedded on the homepage could now be updated and changed in house, as opposed to by L&P Media. He stated the consistent footer was viewable regardless of what page the visitor was on and it contained buttons for "Getting Here", "Travel from Canada" and "What's New". He commented that a link to the Facebook page was also imbedded on the homepage which would be a key factor with the new Social Media Manager contract.

John Daniels, of L&P Media, mentioned that year-to-date there had been about 112,000 visits to the Warren County Tourism website. He said about 10,000 visitors had viewed the lodging pages and a significant number of visitors had viewed the outlet stores and "to do" pages. He stated the new website contained a top menu with drop down boxes to allow quick navigation to popular pages. He

informed the new website was fully adaptable to use with computers, laptops, tablets, iPhones and android cell phones. Mr. Girard displayed for the Committee members how the website shifted and stacked content based on the size of the screen of the device used to access it. Mr. Daniels informed that website statistics showed 55-60% of the visitors to the website were from the United States, in particular New York City and the tri-state area and International visitors were mostly from Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany and Brazil. A discussion ensued pertaining to website statistics.

Mr. Girard informed of a recent meeting he attended at the Fort William Henry where reputation management had been discussed. He said it was possible for people to be discussing the Lake George Area on several different websites, in both positive and negative ways. He stated that reputation management would be part of the Social Media Manager contract.

Mr. Merlino advised that Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), was out on medical leave. He said Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and CVB, was attending the shows and conferences in Ms. Curley's place until her return. He noted that Ms. Curley had emailed her March and April Reports to the Committee members; *copies of the reports are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Wood reported she had recently received an email from a new Amazon service entitled Amazon Destinations. She said the website focused on the local getaways in the user's area and the Adirondacks had been listed as number 2 when she had visited. She apprised the only Warren County establishment listed on the website was a hotel in the Town of Johnsburg but Gore Mountain had also been mentioned. Ms. Wood pointed out that as she perused the website, it had recommended restaurants, hotels and events in the Adirondacks. She suggested the Tourism Department research how local establishments and attractions could be included to be listed on this website and Ms. Johnson agreed.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Ms. Wood, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist