

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: JANUARY 28, 2009

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS TESSIER
KENNY
SHEEHAN
MERLINO
SIMMES
STRAINER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
FREDERICK MONROE, CHAIRMAN
HAL PAYNE, COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISOR THOMAS
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR BELDEN

Mr. Tessier called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 9:36 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. Sheehan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2008 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Tessier welcomed the Committee members to a new year and extended privilege of the floor to Kate Johnson, Director of the Tourism Department, who distributed copies of the Agenda to Committee members; *a copy of agenda is on file with the minutes*. She stated that 2009 would be a different year for the Tourism Department with the possible downturn in the leisure market; therefore, she asserted, it was critical that the Department expand all of the many positive aspects of the region, and implement strategies that would encourage return visitors to the area.

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Johnson noted that for years the Adirondack Regional Tourism Professionals had been expressing the need for joint efforts between the Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Warren County Tourism Department, as they shared common goals. She referenced statements from Marisa Lago, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Empire State Development Corporation on her persuasive approach in conveying the rich tourism opportunities in upstate New York.

Supervisor Simmes entered the meeting at 9:39 a.m.

Ms. Johnson stated the three key decision factors for vacation planners were affordability and value, accessibility, and diversity in activities which was highlighted

by the seasonality of the region. She reviewed two successful programs that had been implemented in the past which she planned to continue in 2009; the Mid week "Fill 'er Up" Program which offered mid-week values, and the summer coupon program in which 39 businesses participated last year.

Next, Ms. Johnson apprised that the Consumer Show schedule had commenced in Edison, New Jersey and the County's Tourism Department was well received. Another upcoming show, she said, was the New York Times Travel Show in February where Peter Girard, Creative Director, would join her this year. She added that attendance at this world wide show had resulted in positive outcomes for the Department.

Ms. Johnson apprised that she had met with Leonard Fosbrook, President of the Warren County EDC, and she had provided him with Tourism brochures which could be distributed during his travels and she suggested that the Tourism Department also obtain advertising materials used by the EDC for the same purpose. The two areas, she stated, were closely related, and had the shared objective of promoting the Adirondack region and she noted that the Tourism Department gave a half page ad space in the travel guide to the EDC on an annual basis. She suggested creating and using a video to collaborate with the EDC without added expenses. Additionally, Ms. Johnson recommended the placement of kiosks in both the Albany International Airport and the AMTRAK station.

Pertaining to photo shoots conducted throughout the year, Ms. Johnson stated that the winter shoot would take place during the schools' winter recess in February and she said an itinerary had been developed. She commented that the photo shoot would include the Lake George Park region, West Mountain and the new lodge, and would include both daytime and twilight photographs.

With respect to cost saving efforts, Ms. Johnson said the spring/summer placemats would be monochromatic and fewer in number, and that Public Relations was now being handled by the Department to eliminate the expense of an outside agency. Further, she noted, the Department was working with Lou Hammond Associates, a firm for the I Love New York (ILNY) campaign, for which the Adirondack region fit many of their marketing niches. Ms. Johnson apprised that the Tourism Department had worked with an ad agency for the Adirondack region.

Continuing, Ms. Johnson apprised that the Tourism Department had hosted several writers of well recognized publications and referred the Committee to the itineraries included in the packets. Further, she said, the January Snow Sports and Micro Brewery Familiarization (FAM) Tour for the Lake George area from North Creek to Lake Placid had just been posted.

Ms. Johnson expounded the benefits of sending large mailings via email, which were referred to as email blasts, and were specific to the activities related to each inquiry, and also contained pertinent information for the outdoor enthusiast and vacationer. She stated that the email blasts could be fine tuned to deliver weather sensitive information such as snowfall for skiing or snowmobiling conditions. She cited the importance of conveying weather sensitive information related to Winter Carnival

activities. Ms. Johnson shared the idea for another outreach effort which included showcasing the local shopping venues to Canadians prior to Canada Day.

Ms. Johnson stated that Mr. Girard would show the Committee two commercials that were televised in December and January which had generated 9,000 inquiries to date as compared to 10,000 in 2008. She noted that the second commercial which covered snowmobile activities was a result of a joint, multi-regional effort and included airing in other regions of New York State, as well as parts of Pennsylvania.

Ms. Johnson passed around a sheet containing the list of newspapers within which the County had placed ads for the region, and she stated that in 2008 the Department had also placed ads in *Redbook* and *People* magazine which yielded an excellent response, with respect to the demographic groups that it reached. In terms of decreased ad coverage, she stated that the Department had seen a decrease in responses from ads in the *Hartford Courant*, and subsequently adjusted the ad selections and costs accordingly.

Ms. Johnson noted the detail with which all inquiries and specific ad responses were tracked. She stated that Mr. Girard designed another ad for spring 2009 circulation entitled "Your Best Vacation Yet".

Ms. Johnson extended privilege of the floor to Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, who informed the Committee that Mr. Girard would show images on the screen as she presented her material. Commencing with the Group Tours portion of the presentation, Ms. Brand passed around a group planner for the Committee to peruse, for which 5,000 copies had been produced and 1,000 copies were used for both inquiry fulfillment and trade show follow-through.

Pertaining to meetings and conventions, Ms. Brand circulated a book to the Committee which included a free listing of meeting and convention spaces, and she noted, a gathering space also constituted family type facilities such as those used for family reunions and weddings. She stated her use of The Chronicle's Bridal section as a resource to seek new advertisers and that both Crandall Park and City Park were newly listed as viable locations. In order to better bring the Occupancy Tax Event Funding Application to the attention of businesses, she said, the form was moved forward to page two of the book, following the Request for Proposal (RFP) form in the front. Ms. Brand apprised that a 720 piece mailing was sent targeting meeting planners in the Washington, D.C. area, and the mailing included the Occupancy Tax Event Funding Form, which, she stated was an incentive for businesses to plan events in the area.

Ms. Brand reported on the largest trade show, the American Bus Association (ABA) Show, held in Charlotte, North Carolina. She stated that this was the third year that Warren County Tourism along with the Adirondack Region had sponsored a resource binder of which 375 copies were distributed to tour operators with whom she had met. Ms. Brand asserted that she scheduled 53 appointments, the maximum number possible, making this a very successful show. She stated that the feedback was positive regarding the books' value as a resource guide for their offices. She also noted that a press release had been done after the ABA show, which had reached

some northern towns in the region. New at the ABA show this year, she said, was the Mingle Stick, a green stick which enabled a paperless environment for the exchange of information.

Ms. Brand conveyed the need for display material, especially for Group Tour Shows and apprised that Mr. Girard had created images for this purpose. Mr. Girard noted the importance of linking actual activities including shopping, to the scenic images which showed the natural beauty of the area. Ms. Brand stated that 1,000 DVD's had been produced, and 700 had been distributed and included attendees at the ABA show. She added that the DVD served as an excellent resource for tour operators who could run the scenic footage set to music on the bus while in route to their destination.

Mr. Girard ran the six minute video for the Committee, which was set to music and without dialogue. Ms. Brand stated that the DVD was a valuable tool used by tour operators to sell destinations to their clients. Ms. Johnson noted that the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS) had broadcasted the same.

Ms. Brand stated that the Department had participated in an electronic FAM tour of Lake Champlain and the Adirondack Region, to air February 25th which appealed to tour operators as they could view the same from their offices. She said the 30 minute tour included ideas for easy stopovers and multi-day tours.

Addressing printed ads for magazines, Ms. Brand noted new magazines with whom the Department had worked and included *Rejuvenate*, *Spiritual*, and *Connect Magazines* all of which reached a wide variety of populations. She stated that Mr. Girard had created ads to appeal to the particular populations which the magazines addressed.

Ms. Brand reported that she had attended the Chazen Companies' meeting which addressed the possible uses for the Westbrook Project, the former Gaslight Village property. She stated that the Committee's next step would be to meet with the Village and the Town of Lake George, and then with the public.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Girard who apprised that he was aggressively pursuing the use of web-based communication and one success had been seen with the use of email blasts. He conveyed their effectiveness for reaching large, targeted populations, whereby the success of each ad could be assessed via individual responses. Mr. Girard asserted the critical significance of a cohesive, informative and easily navigable website and he noted the cost effectiveness of the stickers with the County's website printed on them. He further explained the website's capability to accept sign-ups for email lists and he said the website would be further enhanced with a weather button.

Mr. Thomas entered the meeting at 10:20 a.m.

Responding to an inquiry from Mr. Strainer, Mr. Girard stated that the effectiveness of the Information Technology Department had been very good to date, and he said that in terms of web development, constant updates, and relevance, he was very happy with the results and they were able to accomplish what the Tourism Department had required.

Mrs. Simmes noted that she had observed a high number of individuals with kayaks during previous seasons, and asked about advertising in that regard. Ms. Johnson pointed out the Tourism Department provided a whitewater rafting brochure annually and that a spring press release would be done, as well. She added that whitewater guides would be provided with the Brochures for distribution.

Mr. Tessier extended privilege of the floor to Luisa Craige-Sherman, Warren County Council of Chambers, who distributed copies of the 2008 Year End Survey Results. She stated that 63% of businesses supported the opportunity to attend seminars, and as a result, a spring 2009 seminar had been planned. She also noted the significance of the Occupancy Tax Event Planning incentive. She stated that she would apprise Mr. Girard of the Council of Chambers meeting dates in February and March for the purpose of making a presentation to those members.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Tessier adjourned the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist