

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: GASLIGHT VILLAGE AD HOC**

**DATE: MAY 10, 2010**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS KENNY  
MONROE  
THOMAS  
MERLINO  
BELDEN  
MCCOY  
CONOVER

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

WILLIAM LAMY, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS  
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR OF TOURISM  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/COMMISSIONER OF ADMINISTRATIVE & FISCAL SERVICES  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISORS BENTLEY  
CHAMPAGNE  
LOEB  
MCDEVITT  
PITKIN  
SOKOL  
STEC  
STRAINER  
TAYLOR  
VANNESS  
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER, TOURISM  
ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE  
PETER BAUER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE FUND FOR LAKE GEORGE  
JOHN WHEATLEY, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION, WARREN COUNTY, NEW YORK  
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY  
DAVID CEDERSTROM, *THE CHRONICLE*  
THOM RANDALL, *THE ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*  
TONY HALL, *THE LAKE GEORGE MIRROR*  
CHARLENE DiRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST  
*PLEASE SEE ATTACHED SIGN-IN SHEETS FOR ALL OTHERS PRESENT.*

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Mr. Kenny called the meeting of the Gaslight Village Ad Hoc Committee to order at 9:32 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Mr. Kenny reminded the Committee at the April 16, 2010 Board meeting a decision had been made to demolish the Opera House Building and reserve decision on the Cavalcade of Cars Building pending the results of the study commissioned by the EDC (Economic Development Corporation). He stated he had spoken with Chairman Monroe and Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, pertaining to arriving at a final decision as to the fate of both buildings. He apprised the only two options were to reach a unanimous decision between the 3M's (three

municipalities; the County, the Town of Lake George and the Village of Lake George) or to allow a court to settle the issue. He added Mayor Blais had informed him he was working on a compromise to resolve the issue. Mr. Kenny explained he held a meeting with Chairman Monroe, Frank McCoy, Supervisor of the Town of Lake George, and Mayor Blais to review the Village's proposed compromise. He continued by saying that prior to the meeting Chairman Monroe, Mayor Blais and himself had been in agreement that all buildings on the property should be demolished, while Mr. McCoy had been adamant the Cavalcade of Cars Building should remain intact. Given the complexity of the project, Mr. Kenny added, it was not surprising that there were differences of opinion.

Copies of the proposal from the Village of Lake George were distributed to the Committee members; a copy of same is on file with the minutes. Mr. Kenny explained the Village's proposal included the commissioning of a study on the Cavalcade of Cars Building to determine the feasibility and cost-effectiveness of renovating the building into an open air pavilion or constructing a new pavilion. He noted the cost of the study would be borne by the Village of Lake George and the Town of Lake George. Mr. Kenny pointed out the two options listed in the Village's proposal were to demolish the Cavalcade of Cars Building and construct a new pavilion or to renovate the building into a pavilion. He noted that it was a significant compromise for the Village and the Town to have reached this decision.

Mr. Kenny stated renovating the Cavalcade of Cars Building into a pavilion or constructing a new pavilion would resolve many issues, some of which he listed as follows:

- ▶ would eliminate the possibility of competing with the local businesses who offered indoor conference spaces;
- ▶ would eliminate the need for air conditioning;
- ▶ would eliminate the need to insulate the structure;
- ▶ would eliminate the need to heat the structure;
- ▶ would eliminate the need for complex maintenance;
- ▶ would eliminate the need to have bathroom facilities inside the building as the bathrooms could be located nearby; and
- ▶ Americade and the Tow Truck Operators had stated they would use the property with a pavilion in place but it was unknown if they would utilize the property with an enclosed building.

Mr. Kenny advised they had also discussed the ramifications of one or more of the municipalities involved disagreeing with the decision for the property, which he explained would lead to a litigation process. He said the most likely result of a court case involving tenants-in-common would be the court-ordered sale of the property in order to divide the assets. He commented at the time of the meeting neither Mayor Blais nor Mr. McCoy had received the approval of their respective Boards to proceed with the Village's proposal. He requested Mayor Blais and Mr. McCoy update the Committee on the decision reached by their respective Boards.

Mayor Blais stated the Village Board had met on Thursday, May 6, 2010 and voted unanimously to support the compromise proposed by the Village. He apprised as the property was in the Town and the Village of Lake George, they would reap the greatest benefit from whichever amenities existed on the property. He explained all of the groups currently using Shepard Park and the Village parking lot for their events had expressed an interest in

relocating to the Gaslight Village property. He added this would generate revenues as early as next summer as many of the groups would utilize open space. He noted the Gaslight Village property was included in the Village's Lakefront Master Plan under which the Village had applied for and received six grants over the past 18 years. He said a key element of the Village's proposal was that no construction or renovation would commence prior to receiving grant funding to cover at least 50% of the cost. He commented that a representative from the Department of State had encouraged him to submit an application that would provide approximately \$295,000 in funding with the majority of the local match being met through workforce labor.

Mr. McCoy stated the Town Board would meet later that night. He displayed drawings of his vision for the Gaslight Village property which included renovating the Cavalcade of Cars Building as an enclosed structure and he noted the Town would apply for the same grant funding which had been mentioned by the Mayor. He explained the building would be renovated to include an Adirondack style facade with large windows to give it a more open appearance and advised the grant funding available for demolition would be used to remove the current facade with the Town of Lake George providing all necessary labor. He added the sides of the building would be prefabricated and a local company, such as Lincoln Logs in Chestertown, New York could be contracted to complete them. He pointed out the vision he was presenting would cost approximately \$200,000 to \$250,000 to complete. He apprised he would present both his vision for the property and the Village's proposal at the Town Board meeting that evening. He voiced his opinion that it was necessary to increase winter tourism in Lake George. He noted the Town could use Occupancy Tax revenues to meet any required local match not covered by workforce labor.

Mr. Merlino agreed with Mr. McCoy's vision for the property. He voiced his opinion that the Village's proposal would keep Lake George as a summer destination and essentially close it down for the winter. He agreed there was a need to increase winter tourism. Mr. Merlino stated he had attended a meeting seven years ago in Saratoga where it was decided to discontinue use of the tagline "The August Place to Be" in order to help promote year round tourism. He stated the larger local properties generated sufficient revenues during the four month season that they could afford to be closed the remainder of the year, but the smaller properties did not. He advised it would be unfair to the smaller businesses to convert the Gaslight Village property into a parking lot.

Mr. Conover advised he would not support any approach which ended in litigation. He said the Town was dedicated to the project and the County should support the Town's vision. He added the choice seemed to be between an open air pavilion and a enclosed building. He stated his understanding was Mr. McCoy's vision would be at no cost to the County taxpayers and Mr. McCoy agreed.

Mr. Kenny said the possibility of hiring someone to manage the property had been discussed at a previous meeting and added he believed it would be necessary to go out to bid for such a service. He apprised Clark Patterson Lee had completed a study to determine the estimated cost of converting the Cavalcade of Cars Building into an open air pavilion and had presented a detailed estimate of \$700,000. He questioned how the Town proposed converting the building into an enclosed structure for approximately \$250,000.

Chairman Monroe said there had been discussions in the past pertaining to the Town recouping the cost of renovations through revenues generated from renting the building. Mr. McCoy responded he had been advised that the Town could recoup the cost of labor for maintenance provided by the Town, but otherwise the revenues were to be given to the County to be used for maintenance of the property. Paul Dusek, County Attorney/Commissioner of Administrative & Fiscal Services, advised the Conservation Easement stated revenues from the property could be used to maintain the festival space with the balance of the funds being used to maintain the remainder of the property.

Mr. Belden reminded the Committee it was the responsibility of the 3M's to maintain all 13 acres of the property and not just the 2.5 acres of festival space. He advised it would cost more than the anticipated \$15,000 per year in parking fee revenues to maintain 13 acres of property and suggested the annual maintenance costs would likely be \$70,000 to \$100,000. Mr. Kenny commented he was surprised to discover the former Armory in the City of Glens Falls had included costs of approximately \$17,000 per month during the winter for utilities.

Mayor Blais said he had worked for over 22 years to attempt to get a convention center on the Gaslight Village property but was unable to obtain support from the Board of Supervisors. He explained they had completed a study at the time which stated the convention center would be successful to the community although the building itself would operate at a deficit. He explained if it was true the building would operate at a deficit, then it was unlikely to generate revenue to alleviate the cost of maintaining the property. He noted most successful conference centers were located in hotels and were not free standing buildings. Mayor Blais apprised the Village generated in excess of \$30,000 annual revenue from the Village Parking Lot and Shepard Park with no overhead except the cost of a street sweeper. He stated the building in Mr. McCoy's vision was not an adequate size to compete in today's market and would not contain the necessary amenities to attract events. He advised the Sagamore Resort had one of the best conference centers in the area and they had to close down last winter due to lack of customers. He stated once the pavilion was constructed on the Gaslight Village property it would have virtually no overhead.

Mr. McCoy asked Mr. Dusek if it was allowable to construct a conference center on the property. Mr. Dusek responded a convention center could not be constructed on the property without special State Legislation. He said the County had initiated the application process but the Board had decided against submitting the application. Mr. McCoy explained his vision was for the construction of a community and trade show center. He said the intention was not to attract conferences or conventions as much as it was to attract small groups such as a Snowmobile and ATV (all terrain vehicle) clubs or Ski Shows. He added the building would be more like the Lake George Forum than a convention center. Mr. McCoy said it was difficult to utilize the Forum during the winter as they made ice on the floor for ice skating. Mr. Kenny noted the Glens Falls Civic Center made ice on the floor in the winter but covered it with wood flooring for other uses. He added he was unsure if the Forum had the same capability.

Mr. Kenny apprised he was convinced that groups would not come to Lake George in the winter. He added the winter business could be expanded to encourage more tourism but it was doubtful they would attract groups. He said the Lake was the main attraction drawing groups

to the area during the summer months and the same attractions were not available in the winter. Mr. Thomas interjected several groups came to the Saratoga Civic Center in the winter. Mr. Kenny countered the Saratoga Civic Center was a convention center with additional rooms to accommodate the needs of the groups.

Mr. Bentley voiced his opinion that he was in favor of Mr. McCoy's vision. He added it would increase the possibility of expanding the tourist season and would decrease unemployment caused by the Lake George businesses closing in the winter. Mr. Pitkin stated he was in favor of the concept of increasing winter business; however, he added, he felt the estimated \$250,000 for construction was unrealistic. Mr. McCoy replied whatever the cost of construction, it would be paid for by the Town using Occupancy Tax revenues.

Mr. VanNess apprised he still supported the concept of a pole barn style building. He added if it was desired to convert it to an ice rink in the winter, they could allow nature to create the ice. He said he had spoken to several people who were in favor of demolishing both buildings but had agreed an open air building would be acceptable. He felt they had made great progress by reaching a decision on the Opera House Building but it was now necessary to determine the future of the Cavalcade of Cars Building. He added there was no rush to make a final decision and all options should be weighed.

Mr. Champagne said he was under the impression that a decision had been agreed upon by the Village and the Town. Mr. McCoy responded that morning's edition of *The Post Star* had been inaccurate as Mr. McCoy did not agree to the Village's proposal; he had merely said he would present the proposal to the Town Board.

Mr. Kenny extended privilege of the floor to the public.

Robert Flacke, President of the Fort William Henry Resort and co-owner of the Lincoln Log Colony, said he had been involved in the tourism industry in Lake George since 1958 and every year was difficult for the local businesses. He stated when the Lake George Forum was constructed it was believed there would be an increase in business for the surrounding businesses but the expectant results were not realized. He noted the Forum did have the capability to place a floor over the ice rink in the winter. He explained the Fort William Henry Resort had constructed a conference center in an attempt to extend the season into the shoulder season and had been successful. He voiced his opinion that there was not sufficient business in the winter to support a building as depicted in Mr. McCoy's vision. He apprised trade shows and conferences had seasons and no one traveled in November and December. Mr. Flacke stated there had been a 26% tax increase in the Town of Lake George and he felt there was no need to construct a building that would operate at a deficit. He advised the conference center at the Fort William Henry Resort did not operate at a profit and was constructed for the purpose of renting additional hotel rooms. He stated the original concept for the project was to save the Lake and did not include any buildings on the property. He urged the Committee to either approve the Village's proposal or demolish all of the buildings.

Mr. Kenny mentioned the previous Supervisor of the Town of Lake George had been in favor of converting the Opera House Building and had stated it would be completed and paid for by the Town. He voiced his opinion that the Opera House Building was a disgraceful and unsafe

structure and noted that a metal roof had been placed on top of rotten wood. He said he was apprehensive about allowing the Town to move forward with the construction of a building when he did not feel the staff was properly equipped to complete the engineering and construction. Mr. McCoy countered the Opera House Building was currently in the middle of the rehabilitation process. He explained the metal roof was placed over the rotten wood in an effort to encapsulate the wood which would have included contraction of an inner roof under the rotten wood. Brief discussion ensued.

George Green, resident of the Town of Lake George, listed his credentials which included an engineering background and he agreed the Opera House Building was structurally sound. He commended Mr. McCoy on working towards a compromise with the County and the Village. He said there was an opportunity to give families an additional activity during their vacation. He noted the local hotels used to require guests who stayed on Friday and Saturday to pay for Sunday as well. Mr. Green apprised the soil in Westbrook contained large amounts of sawdust that would pollute the Lake if disturbed by construction. He mentioned the Town had offered to complete the labor for the construction of the building and added he would be able to assist in obtaining inmate labor as well. He compared the building in Mr. McCoy's vision to that of the Holiday Inn.

Jan Strachan, resident of the Town of Lake George, voiced her opinion that the terms convention and conference were outdated and had been replaced by meeting and expo. She noted the building proposed by Mr. McCoy would be capable of accommodating a group of up to 500 people. Referring to a comment as to the building being free standing and therefore not suitable for conventions, Ms. Strachan said the last two conventions she had attended had been at convention centers which were miles away from the hotel in which she had stayed. She added walking was becoming a way of life and would continue to be so. She advised it was necessary to generate revenue in order to maintain the property. She said when the high speed train was completed it would be possible to travel from Warren County to New York City in a few hours. She urged the Committee to think of the future needs for the property and not base their decision on what had been the trend in the past.

Fred Austin, of the Fort William Henry, apprised the trade and tourism journals highlighted eco-tourism as a major portion of the tourism industry now and in the future. He said the Gaslight Village property with the original concept of a constructed wetland, fitness trail and a playground could be the center of attracting eco-tourism. He added other attractions for eco-tourists in Warren County included the Fish Hatchery, Up Yonda Farm and the Adirondack Museum.

John Vice, resident of the Town of Lake George, stated he had not heard the opinion of a professional engineer as to what would be best for the taxpayers. He added the study that was part of the Village's proposal would provide this by showing which option would cost less. He apprised not one solid estimate of cost or potential income had been provided. He expressed that tourists did not visit Lake George in the winter and this trend would not change merely by the addition of a building. He said although he had been opposed to any buildings on the property, a pavilion could add value. He advised people could not compare Lake George to Saratoga, as the same shops and culture did not exist in both. He voiced his opinion that the only attraction for tourists in Lake George was the Lake itself which was frozen in the winter

and most tourists visited warmer locations such as Florida during that time period. Mr. Vice stated the money spent on renovations would come from the taxpayers and Mr. McCoy countered that Occupancy Tax revenues would be utilized. Mr. Vice asked what the Occupancy Tax revenues currently funded and Mr. McCoy responded they were used to fund the libraries, Historical Society, etc. Mr. Vice questioned if the same amount of funding would go to those entities and Mr. McCoy replied in the negative and added Occupancy Tax revenues were not intended for funding such entities. Mr. Vice pointed out the funding of the entities in question would become the burden of the taxpayers. He stated he was strongly in support of the Village's proposal.

Janie Green, resident of the Town of Lake George, commented it was not necessary to spend further money on an engineering report as there had been several already completed. The facts were known, she added, and it was time to make a decision. She stated there were events that could be housed in whatever structure occupied the property. She apprised a commercial property had been removed from the tax rolls and some type of structure was necessary in order to generate revenue. She said she was in favor of Mr. McCoy's vision which would provide tourists with an additional activity. She urged the newly appointed Supervisors to read the minutes from the past meetings and she urged the Committee to make a wise decision.

Caryl Clark, resident of the Village of Lake George, advised she was a lifetime resident of the Village which incorporated 565 taxpayers. She stated when she was a child, Lake George had many winter sports, such as horse racing on the ice and tobogganing. She questioned what happened to eco-tourism in the winter months. She voiced her opinion that once the buildings were demolished on the Gaslight Village property it would be difficult to obtain SEQRA (State Environmental Quality Review Act) approval for construction of another building. She questioned Mayor Blais as to the amount of LWRP (Local Waterfront Revitalization Program) Grant funding received for construction of the Lake George Visitor's Center and the amount of taxpayer's dollars which were necessary for completion. Mayor Blais responded \$750,000 had been received in LWRP Grant funding and an additional \$1.3 million in taxpayer funds was used. Mrs. Clark said a statement had been made by Mr. Flacke pertaining to the neighbors of the Lake George Forum being in favor of its construction and added this confused her as she remembered there being lawsuits opposing this at the time. Mrs. Clark referred to an article from *The Lake George Mirror* in which Tom LaBelle, Executive Director of the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, had indicated the convention needed to locate a single space that was large enough to accommodate their needs. She added Mr. LaBelle had indicated the Fort William Henry Resort had been successful but it had been necessary to spread the exhibits over difficult terrain and weather had been an issue. She continued by saying Mr. LaBelle had indicated the Lake George Forum was not large enough to be considered a convention center. She stated \$250,000 had been expended by the County for the rental of tents for the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs Convention which she noted was a significant amount of money. Mr. Vice clarified the tents had been air conditioned.

John Carr, resident of the Town of Lake George and business owner in the Village of Lake George, voiced his opinion that the Chairman of the Gaslight Village Ad Hoc Committee should be a neutral as possible. He expressed his thanks to the Board of Supervisors for trying to work towards a compromise with the Village and the Town. He added Mr. McCoy had compromised

his position in agreeing to the demolition of the Opera House Building. He stated he had spoken to Mike Fazio, President of Warren County Association of Snowmobile Clubs, who had been working diligently to expand the snowmobile trails. Mr. Carr voiced his opinion that statements pertaining to tourists not wanting to visit in the winter did an injustice to people like Mr. Fazio who were working to increase winter tourism. He advised both the Town and the Villages currently had pavilions which were not used in the winter. He said the Town wanted an enclosed building and the Village wanted a pavilion and questioned why not have both. He suggested the Cavalcade of Cars Building be converted into an enclosed building and the Opera House Building be converted into an open air pavilion.

A resident of Warren County questioned the significance of snowmobilers and skiers pertaining to whether there was a building or a pavilion on the Gaslight Village property.

Luisa Craige-Sherman, of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce, responded to the previous question by saying a building on the Gaslight Village property would provide a gathering place for snowmobile clubs which would allow the members to drive their snowmobiles right up to the building. She referred to Lake George as being the opposite of Lake Placid whose tourism season was during the winter months and she noted Lake Placid was currently building a large convention center in order to extend their tourist season into the summer. She advised many of the businesses in Lake George had indicated they would remain open or reopen if they knew a large convention was coming to the area in the winter. She stated the Board of Directors of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce had passed a resolution in support of an enclosed year-round building. She questioned the Mayor's statement on immediate revenues generated from a pavilion when the plan included not commencing construction until at least 50% of the necessary funds were obtained through grants. She was unsure how it was possible to say there would be no overhead for a pavilion as there would be normal wear and tear, as well as the cost of cleaning after use. She noted a Special Events Coordinator had been hired using County Occupancy Tax funds who had generated over \$300,000 of contracted business and an additional \$1.2 million in possible leads.

Joanne Gavin, resident of the Town of Lake George, expressed that many of the comments made had been heard repeatedly over the past two years. She noted last month Mr. Conover had stated they needed to find a way to come to a consensus. She advised the Mayor had done a good job of attempting a compromise with the development of his proposal. She stated it was extremely important for the County Board of Supervisors to recognize that the citizens of Lake George did not have the money to fund this project. She said the County, the Village and the Town needed to find a way to work together. She voiced her opinion that all entities were asked to work towards a compromise and the Town of Lake George did the complete opposite. She expounded there had been a public hearing approximately one year ago and stated the argument was the same but the pictures had been different. She said she felt there was an attitude of "it's my way or no way" and advised the buildings should be demolished.

Patty Kirkpatrick, resident and business owner in the Village of Lake George, noted she was also the Director of the Chamber of Commerce which had a sub-committee entitled 'Vision 2020'. She advised it was important to plan for the future. She stated at the last meeting there had been comments that the Town had not developed a plan for the property. She noted the

Town now had a plan in place and should be given an opportunity to tell the public where the funds would be obtained from. She agreed it would be difficult to obtain SEQRA approval if the buildings were removed.

Jim Gitto, resident of the Town of Lake George and owner of Upstate Structural, advised there was no way the building depicted in the drawings presented by Mr. McCoy could be constructed for \$250,000. He asked William Lamy, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works, if the Cavalcade of Cars Building had bar joists and center columns and not trusses and Mr. Lamy replied he believed that was correct. Mr. Gitto referred to a previous meeting in which one of the Supervisors had said the Cavalcade of Cars Building was a 'butler' building and he agreed, but noted it was of a low quality, adding if it had been a higher end building it would have trusses.

Mr. Kenny stated the Town Board meeting would be held that evening and Mr. McCoy would advise the Committee as to the decision reached. He added further discussion on the Gaslight Village property would be held at the May 21, 2010 Board meeting.

As there was no further business to come before the Gaslight Village Ad Hoc Committee, on motion made by Mr. Merlino and seconded by Mr. McCoy, Mr. Kenny adjourned the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Charlene DiResta, Senior Legislative Office Specialist