

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: July 28, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:	OTHERS PRESENT:
SUPERVISORS	REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
MERLINO	KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
KENNY	PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
BELDEN	TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
STRAINER	PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR
MCCOY	JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
CONOVER	SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:	SUPERVISOR LOEB
SUPERVISORS	TOM CONNORS, AD WORKSHOP
MERLINO	LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS
	MICHAEL CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR
	FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY RESORT
	THOM RANDALL, ADIRONDACK JOURNAL
	JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the June 30, 2010 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Director of the Tourism Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Under Action Items, Ms. Johnson proceeded with a request for a contract with Kenyon Press, Inc., for the publication of the 2011 Warren County Travel Guide, commencing September 20, 2010 and terminating October 31, 2010, for a total amount not to exceed \$73,412. She noted that seven proposals were received and Kenyon Press, Inc., was the low bidder and had also completed the work last year.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract with Kenyon Press, Inc., as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 20, 2010 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson presented a request for a contract with Dupli, for publication of the 2011 Group Tour Planner, commencing August 27, 2010 and terminating October 31, 2010, for a total amount not to exceed \$3,332. She stated that 25 quotes had been received for the project.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract with Dupli as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the

August 20, 2010 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson stated that the third item was a request for a contract with Benchmark Printing, Inc., for publication of the 2010-2011 Warren County Winter Brochure, commencing September 1, 2010 and terminating September 30, 2010, for a total amount not to exceed \$3,814. Ms. Johnson noted that Benchmark Printing was the low bidder.

Motion was made by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract with Benchmark Printing, Inc., as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the August 20, 2010 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson apprised that she had received a copy of a letter which had been sent to Mr. Kenny from Lake George Village Mayor Robert Blais, requesting \$25,000 from Warren County towards operation of the Lake George Visitor Center for 2011. She noted that \$25,000 was approved for both 2008 and 2009, and \$12,500 for 2010 which was not included in the 2010 Budget; therefore funds were derived from the Tourism Promotion portion of the budget. Paul Dusek, County Attorney/Administrator stated that his findings indicated that the request was eligible for Special Events Funding which was a subset of Occupancy Tax Funding. Mr. McCoy expressed his support of the use of funds in this manner and he asserted that the Visitor Center was the information hub for tourists. Looking ahead to next year, Ms. Johnson informed that 2010 was the final year of funding to the City of Glens Falls for which the County had paid \$50,000 per year for four years, thereby enabling additional funds to be allocated for Lake George in the coming year. She expounded the three funding recipients were the City of Glens Falls, the Village of Lake George and the Tourism Department Budget. Mr. Dusek explained that there was a predetermined pool of money from Occupancy Tax for the Tourism budget use; therefore, he said, this was a matter of allocation of funds and would not infringe on other Tourism Department programs and would be a decision of the Committee.

Subsequent to further discussion on the matter, motion was made by Mr. McCoy and seconded by Mr. Belden to approve the request for funding for the Lake George Village Visitor Center in the amount of \$25,000 and to refer same to the Budget Committee.

Mr. Strainer pointed out that Lake George Village was able to operate with \$12,500 for 2010 and therefore questioned the need for \$25,000 for 2011. Stating his support for the funding, Mr. Conover opined that the Visitors Center was a priority for the region. He stated that the Center was built for the specific purpose of orienting visitors to the area which included Lake George Village, as well as areas outside of the Village. Ms. Johnson pointed out that number of brochures that were provided and distributed at the Center evidenced the traffic therein and its usefulness. She added that the Visitors Center was open year-round.

Mr. Merlino called the question and the motion was carried unanimously to approve the request for funding to support the Lake George Village Visitor Center in the amount of \$25,000 for 2011 and to refer same to the Budget Committee. *A copy of the application for contract funding is on file with the minutes.*

Regarding the 2011 Travel Guide, Ms. Johnson reported 68 advertising partners and \$72,000 in ad sales; she noted the Guide was reduced by 4 pages which would provide some postage savings. She informed that the "No Reply No Update" response system, in which no reply indicated sufficient information was received, had a positive outcome and reduced the need for time consuming follow-up work by the Tourism Department staff.

Pertaining to the New York State Tourism Department's Matching Funds, Ms. Johnson reported that 2011 funding was unknown at this time. She informed of the State's new concept of regional partnerships which could be implemented next year and would require each region to create a concept specific to their region for which the State would assist with advertising. She noted that planning was still underway and participating regions could earn up to \$1,000. She added that the Tourism Department had prepared two concepts for the program.

Ms. Johnson informed that the State was preparing two new 30 second commercials to run in August which were directed and produced pro bono. She cited possible programming opportunities with Rachael Ray and Jim Kelly for the summer. She reported that the State had funded the Visitor Center enabling it to continue operation on a part-time basis (Friday through Monday 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.) after August 1st.

The Mid-Week Lodging Program, Ms. Johnson apprised, ran from May through July and was promoted on the website. Ms. Johnson stated that she would canvas participants and Peter Girard, Creative Director, had created a new button and continued to work on the photo gallery and other related items.

With regard to the holiday and special event weekends, Ms. Johnson reported that the Smith Travel Report reflected a strong attendance for both Americade and Memorial Weekend. She noted that the Report evidenced an increase in occupancy of 19% over last year for the 4th of July. She further noted that AAA had forecast a 17% rise in travel for the 4th of July, and Warren County came in higher at 19%.

Ms. Johnson reviewed the many advertised local events which included the Haviland's Cove Water Festival held in June by the Up Yonda Farm staff; the Warren County Youth Fair scheduled for August 7th; and New York State Canal System events, such as the Canal Splash to run from August 13 through August 15, 2010. She referenced the blue tri-fold flier which included downtown Glens Falls venues, such as LARAC (Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council) and the Chapman Historical Museum.

Concluding her agenda review, Ms. Johnson cited the Town of Hague as the only Warren County Town to place an ad in the Travel Guide and she thanked Mr. Belden for his support. She noted that ads were an excellent use of Occupancy Tax dollars and could include recreation, retail, lodging, and history, and she added that various pricing options were available.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, who stated that the 2011 Group Tour Planner would be printed in color and included 41 advertisers, 8 of which were new to the Planner.

The Velo Quebec Grand Tour, Ms. Brand announced, would kick-off next weekend at Adirondack Community College (ACC). She informed that two small tours for the area had been incorporated for May and June 2011 and would pass through Glens Falls, Lake George and Bolton Landing. She reported that preparatory activities had begun for this year's event with 1,700 confirmed riders and 150 volunteers and employees to arrive on August 6th. She stated that buses would arrive and shuttle service would begin on August 7th, with cyclists commencing their tour between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on August 8th. Ms. Brand informed that the Tourism Department would set up a booth with informational materials at the campus. She cited an article in *The Post Star* regarding the Department's need for group volunteers to unload bicycles and provide valet service. Ms. Brand reported that she had acquired the assistance of the Queensbury Youth Baseball League and noted that participating civic groups could raise up to \$1,000 for their organization. Help was still needed, she said, for loading bags on August 8th from 6:00 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. and 4:00 a.m. to 7:00 a.m. shifts. She apprised that the Sheriff's Department had been made aware of the event and road closures would not be necessary.

Sheriff's Patrol, she said, would be located at Oneida Corners during the event. Lastly, she reported that a press release went out yesterday containing general information for spectator opportunities and general community awareness of the cycling traffic.

Continuing with her agenda review, Ms. Brand informed of a proposed conference between the Firemen's Association of the State of New York (FASNY) and the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC), at the Fort William Henry Resort, from September 25 through October 1, 2011. Ms. Brand pointed out that the information was the result of preliminary discussions and subsequent meetings would be held regarding finalization of the conference details. In closing, Ms. Brand cited the excellent 2-page coverage of the region published in the Mid-Atlantic Events Magazine.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Peter Girard, Creative Director, who stated that efforts for fall publications were underway as the summer campaign continued its course. Mr. Conover remarked about the overhead picture shown by Mr. Girard which captured a view of Lake George from Up Yonda Farm. Mr. Girard noted the quality of the picture taken with the video camera and he recognized the Up Yonda Farm staff for their cooperation and enthusiasm during the video shoot.

Mr. Girard apprised that he continued his efforts with email campaigns and sent approximately two e-mail blasts per month to 109,000 subscribers. He summarized viewer statistics and reported very favorable user click-through rates overall.

Mr. Girard reported that he continued to explore communities on Facebook and posted weekend events on Friday to encourage undecided travelers to the region. He reported approximately 1,500 fans at present for the interactive venue where interested parties could follow links for more information. He informed of his ongoing work with plans relative to web based social networks. He informed of the 30 second fall Video On Demand (VOD) spot for which the same speaker was used to perpetuate consumer brand recognition of the ads. The VOD, he said, was the first full High Definition (HD) TV spot for Warren County. Mr. Conover recommended that the 4th of July on Lake George at Bolton Landing be included in the film library. He praised the spectacular view which included fireworks and thousands of boats on the lake. It would have particular appeal to boaters, he said, and noted the Lake George Steamboat Company had planned to return to Bolton Landing with a cruise to Hague. Mr. Girard noted the ease with which the sole videographer could efficiently maneuver and capture many valuable shots and angles with the state-of-the-art equipment. He further explained that both video and still pictures could be derived from the footage quickly and with ease.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tom Connors, Ad Workshop, who apprised that there were 12 days remaining in the summer reporting season, so the full report was not available. He expounded that the most important part of the campaign was the TV coverage which had increased by approximately 20,000 over last year to date. The goal, he stated, was to double the response level recorded last year. He noted the 10 posters throughout Six Flags New England with Smart phone navigation capability. He added that Warren County sponsored Six Flags New England Park with a TV Ad Campaign and web banner ads ran on all sites of cable users which appeared on 35% of home pages. He commended Warren County Tourism for their impressive database of 108,000 recipients as compared to that of Six Flags which was 100,000.

New for this year, Mr. Connors explained, was the LakeGeorgeNY.com landing page where viewers could sign-up for information packets prior to visiting the Lake George site. He reported that an impressive 28% of those that went to the landing page received the travel guide. He reported that within a one month period 46 text messages were derived from the poster. He further reported that

45% of those that visited the website signed up for travel packets, and 55% of those filled out their travel packets. Mr. Connors praised the new capability to request travel packets via Smart phones. He stated that extensive tracking using Google Analytics was derived from the landing pages and he would have more data at the next meeting.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Luisa Craige-Sherman, Warren County Council of Chambers, who announced that the next meeting would be held in North Creek with details to follow. Regarding the Lake George Visitor Center, Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce had shown their commitment to the Visitor Center with a visitor fulfillment program for which they paid a fee towards 10 hours of staffing 7 days per week. Ms. Craige-Sherman expressed, on behalf of the Council of Chambers, the desire to assist in rallying volunteers for area events. She stated that the Council was an excellent vehicle by which to circulate messages and information throughout the County via the Council's delegate network.

Mr. Belden inquired about the status of the upcoming production of "Last Of The Mohicans" and Ms. Craige-Sherman reported that tickets had been sold to travelers in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New Jersey and Massachusetts for the program which would run from August 5 through 10, 2010. She informed that rack cards were available for the Towns and tickets could be purchased online or at the Lake George Chamber of Commerce Office.

Mr. Merlino referenced the Upper Hudson River Railroad's Adirondack Wilderness Train Corridor brochure and he noted that the Towns of Corinth, Lake Luzerne, Hadley, Warrensburg, Stony Creek and Thurman had collaborated to cover the cost of the brochure. He informed that the train ran every Wednesday and Saturday through August 21, 2010 and he reported the following attendance numbers: July 14th - 42 tickets, July 17th - 45 tickets; July 21st - 50 tickets and July 24th - 67 tickets sold. He advised of the various activities taking place at the stops, such as farmers markets, horse drawn carriage rides, music in the park and tours.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 10:51 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist