

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: APRIL 27, 2011

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
BELDEN
STRAINER
GOODSPEED
MCCOY
CONOVER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
DANIEL STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS CHAMPAGNE

LOEB
TAYLOR
THOMAS
WOOD

MIKE CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL
CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS

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 10:10 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Goodspeed 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 with the agenda review, Ms. Johnson requested to amend the 2011 County budget to increase estimated revenues and appropriations in the amount of \$79,912 to reflect the receipt of New York State's Matching Funds grant funding.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to amend the 2011 County budget as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson requested authorization for a contract with Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, Inc. for the marketing services portion of New York State Matching Funds for a term commencing January 1, 2011 and terminating December 31, 2011 in an amount not to exceed \$127,778. She explained that one of the reasons Warren County had been awarded New York State Matching Funds was due to their contributions towards marketing the Adirondack Region. She noted it was through the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, Inc. that Warren County ran the campaigns for snowmobiling, fishing, group tours, etc.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Belden to authorize a contract with Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, Inc. 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 20, 2011 Board meeting.*

(Note: Subsequent to the meeting, it was determined that the contract with Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, Inc. had been authorized for 2011 by Resolution No. 787 of 2010.)

Ms. Johnson requested authorization for a contract with Sue Pierson Design for data entry assistance with printed brochures for a term commencing June 12, 2011 and terminating December 31, 2013 at a rate of \$25 per hour not to exceed \$6,000.

Motion was made by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to authorize a contract with Sue Pierson Design 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 20, 2011 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson requested to amend Resolution No. 793 of 2010, which authorized attendance at 2011 in-state, out-of-state and Canada Motorcoach Trade Shows/Sales Blitz/Marketplaces by Tourism Department personnel and County Supervisors, to add/delete shows and correct dates, as per the attachment included in the agenda packet.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Goodspeed and carried unanimously to amend Resolution No. 793 of 2010 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 20, 2011 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson said the Department was now able to track the average daily spending habits of tourists using data collected from Departmental surveys. She reported the following statistics:

- ▶ the average lodging rate for the area was \$128 a night;
- ▶ the average number of people per party of tourists was 3.12;
- ▶ an overnight tourist spent an average of \$141.28 per day; and
- ▶ a day tripper spent an average of \$100.25 per visit.

Ms. Johnson circulated a copy of the Warren County Tourism Department Marketing Plan for 2011 to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes.* She noted the Marketing Plan was completed annually as part of the New York State Matching Funds application and contained both long term and short term marketing goals.

Ms. Johnson announced that the print and online advertisements had begun running in early March for the upcoming summer season. As of the end of March, she continued, there was an increase in inquiries of 14.23% compared to 2010. She commented that she had begun purchasing ad space for the fall campaign and the fall brochure was currently in production.

Ms. Johnson pointed out the Midweek Getaway Lodging Deals would run from May 1, 2011 through July 31, 2011 and 22 lodging properties had submitted midweek deals. She said Mr. Kenny would have information to present at the next Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meeting pertaining to what time period the lodging properties felt was the best to offer deals to increase business. She noted a second Midweek Getaway Lodging Deals program would be offered from December through March. She mentioned there was a landing page on the website for the Midweek Getaway Lodging Deals which contained direct links to the websites of participating lodging properties.

Ms. Johnson commented that the cover of the Fishing and Boating Map had been redesigned by Peter Girard, Creative Director of the Tourism Department; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.* She noted the Map was distributed at outdoor and sports shows, was used for fulfillment for fishing inquiries and was made available to local businesses and guides.

Ms. Johnson stated the Summer Coupon Program for 2011 had 32 participants which was a decrease from 40 participants in 2010. She said the coupons could be downloaded from the website and 5,500 sets of coupons had been downloaded in 2010 with 58,000 copies printed and distributed. She noted the Summer Coupon Program was the fulfillment piece to the Summer Television Campaign. This week, Ms. Johnson continued, the Department would correspond with all of the tourism related businesses and request that they stop by the Office to pick up supplies and information for their guests. She added the Department also ensured the businesses were aware of ongoing marketing efforts in which they could participate.

Ms. Johnson reported she had been contacted by a area balloonist pertaining to the possibility of producing an online Hot Air Balloon Brochure and seven area balloonists would participate in the new Balloon landing page on the website which would also promote the Adirondack Hot Air Balloon Festival. She said the seven participants were asked to supply images and text for the landing page.

The Winter Conversion Survey was completed, Ms. Johnson pointed out, by guests who responded to the Winter Television Campaign or signed up for the Winter Getaways. She said the response was decreased from previous years and noted the Summer Conversion Survey had a much higher participation rate. She reported 100% of the people who responded to the study said they would recommend the area to family and friends. Mr. Kenny questioned the response rate and Ms. Johnson replied that almost 1,700 copies of the survey had been mailed and there had been 104 surveys completed. She commented there had been no fair or poor responses to the question asking the visitors to rate their overall stay or the question pertaining to rating their customer service experience.

Ms. Johnson announced she had recently been interviewed by CBS Network Radio in New York regarding the high gasoline prices and the efforts being undertaken to attract tourists. She said the Department had a new temporary summer assistant who would work from June 6, 2011 to August 26, 2011 for four days per week. At next month's Committee meeting, she stated, there would be a presentation from L & P Media who was completing the overhaul of the content management system for the Drupal website.

Mr. Kenny reminded the Committee that a promotion was completed two years ago to highlight the fact that the Lake George Region was a great day trip destination which could be reached on a tank of gas from select target locations. He asked Ms. Johnson if the promotion would be run a second time given the current price of gas. Ms. Johnson responded that the Tank of Gas promotion was part of the Summer Television Commercial. Mr. Kenny reported that he had asked Ms. Johnson about the possibility of assessing the importance of events sponsored by the County. He said he had requested a survey of lodging owners be completed and that the survey included a question pertaining to which weeks of the year they would steer business towards. He said the results of the survey were now available and he would review them during the upcoming Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee meeting.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, reviewed her Group Tour and Meeting/Convention Update for April 2011; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. She reported the new quarterly Group Loop Newsletter had been emailed on April 25, 2011 to a list of approximately 5,000 tour operators, group leaders, travel agents, group tour businesses, Chambers of Commerce and towns. She announced that three events had been submitted to the Adirondack Bus Association's Top 100 Events program: the Adirondack Balloon Festival; the Adirondack Nationals Car Show; and the Lake George Elvis Festival. She added the Adirondack Balloon Festival had received Top 100 honors in 1996 and 2001 and the Top 100 Events Program had been ongoing since 1982. Ms. Brand reported

a two day FAM (Familiarization) Tour had been organized in connection with I Love NY for May 2, 2011 for two Tour Operators from Denmark. She noted a mass mailing had been completed of the 2011 Group Travel Planner promotional kits to 650 Group Leaders in New York and New Jersey.

Pertaining to the Lakes to Locks partnership with National Geographic, Ms. Brand reported a meeting had been facilitated to discuss the geo-tourism project which included a newly designed website with an innovative map guide. She apprised the Golden Goal Tournament Park would host the Milan Cup, an international soccer tournament, which would bring approximately 750 players to the area for Memorial Day weekend. She added the Golden Goal Tournament Park had partnered with 14 Warren County hotels on their website for the tournament. Ms. Brand said she had discussed group tour opportunities and marketing strategies with the new owner of the Motel Montreal.

Ms. Brand apprised that she met monthly with Michael Consuelo, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), to discuss ongoing event coordination projects. She said a monthly calendar of large meetings and functions taking place in Warren County would be produced and submitted by Mr. Consuelo in order to create community awareness.

Ms. Brand listed the confirmed upcoming events, as follows:

- ▶ the Tour of the Adirondacks, September 17-18, 2011, with 500 riders anticipated;
- ▶ the Backyard Bike Tours, beginning in June, this New Jersey based bike tour company would begin to bring groups of cyclists from New York City to Montreal on a monthly basis; and
- ▶ the Warrior Run, a 5K (5 kilometer) challenge course to be held at West Mountain Ski Resort on June 18-19, 2011 with 820 registrants and 160 kids.

Ms. Brand announced the United States Racing Association (USRA) Lake George Half Marathon had attracted 299 runners and the 5K Race attracted 75 runners despite the weather. She noted the race results had reflected attendees from 12 States although the majority of the participants had been from the Albany area. She stated she had attended the Destinations Travel Show in Poughkeepsie on April 5-6, 2011 and would have a display booth at the New York By Rail Day at Penn Station on May 19, 2011.

Mr. Consuelo distributed copies of his Monthly Activity Report to the Committee members which he reviewed in detail; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. He advised he had changed the format of his report in order to provide the Committee members with the details which were of interest to them. He said the second page of the report contained a list of the definite bookings he had generated since he assumed the position in 2009. He noted there had been 12 confirmed bookings since 2009 which generated an estimated economic impact of \$1,158,548; 3,461 attendees; and 2,491 room nights. Mr. Consuelo commented that the next page of the report contained 9 tentative leads for June 2011 through September 2012 which represented a potential economic impact of \$1,901,080; 2,120 attendees; and 3,987 room nights. The last page of the report, Mr. Consuelo continued, represented the leads which he had worked on in April 2011. He noted the Adirondack Gold Star Mother's Convention had been held at the Fort William Henry Resort in April and he had assisted by coordinating their group transportation.

Pertaining to the upcoming Centurion Cycling Event, Mr. Consuelo said he had been able to secure the event for 2012 and he was working closely with the event promoters to coordinate their specific needs. He stated he had met with Denise DeCastro, of the American Diabetes Association, pertaining to the possibility of having some of their captains from the "Tour to Cure" Event participate in the Centurion Cycling Event. He apprised that he had also met with Lloyd Mott, of the Warren County

Safe and Quality Bicycling Committee, to discuss the possibility of volunteering and participating in the Centurion Cycling Event. He mentioned that representatives from the Centurion Cycling Event would return on May 16-20, 2011 to finalize the plans for the Preview Ride in June.

Discussion ensued.

Mr. Merlino commented that there were no pending items for this meeting and announced that the next Warren County Council of Chambers Dinner would be held on April 28, 2011 at Ciro's Restaurant in Lake Luzerne.

Luisa Craige-Sherman, President of the Warren County Council of Chambers, said she had prepared a monthly report and would email it to the Committee members. She announced that as of May 13, 2011 she would resign as Executive Director of the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and CVB. She stated that she would continue to be part of the tourism industry as she and her husband had launched a historic walking tour business. She added that she would also work as a consultant for small business districts and marketing for small businesses and would continue to volunteer on the Board of the Outdoor Drama Theater. Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that it had been a pleasure to serve as the Warren County Liaison for the Council of Chambers and she thanked Supervisors Belden and Merlino for urging the Council of Chambers to create the Liaison position to open lines of communication. She noted Supervisors Belden, Merlino and Thomas continued to have outstanding attendance at Warren County Council of Chambers functions and over recent years more Supervisors had followed their lead, specifically Supervisors Kenny, Strainer and McCoy. As her last act as Liaison, Ms. Craige-Sherman asked the Supervisors to please try to attend the Council of Chambers Dinners, particularly when they were hosted in their Town.

Mr. Belden thanked Ms. Craige-Sherman for her hard work and dedication to the Warren County Council of Chambers and added she had done an outstanding job of keeping the Tourism Committee informed. Mr. Merlino added his thanks and appreciation. Mr. Belden suggested Ms. Brand act as the County representative and attend future Council of Chambers meetings in order to offer her assistance. Mr. Merlino agreed that having a County representative attend the meetings would be beneficial to continuing a good working relationship. Ms. Craige-Sherman opined that the Warren County Council of Chambers was a private business organization and there were times when they may not agree with the actions of government. She said there was a role for a County representative as a dues paying member of the Council of Chambers; however, she added, they needed the County to allow them the responsibility and respect to function as a private business organization. She advised that she was sure the President of the Council of Chambers would make a point of meeting with a County representative on a monthly basis; however, she continued, she felt it would be up to the President to determine if it was appropriate to have a County representative attend the meetings. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Consuelo announced that the Lake George and Bolton Chambers of Commerce had partnered for the Golf for Tourism Event to be held at the Sagamore Resort on May 25, 2011.

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

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist