

## WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

**COMMITTEE: TOURISM**

**DATE: JUNE 1, 2011**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS MERLINO  
KENNY  
BELDEN  
STRAINER  
MCCOY  
CONOVER

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:  
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR  
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER  
DANIEL STEC, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR  
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER  
SUPERVISOR TAYLOR  
MICHAEL CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR  
JOHN DANIELS, L & P MEDIA  
DREW ALBERTI, LAKES TO LOCKS PASSAGE  
LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS  
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*  
JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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**COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:**

SUPERVISOR GOODSPEED

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 9:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. McCoy 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.*

Ms. Johnson presented a request for a contract with Kenyon Press, for printing services of the 2011 Fall Brochure, for the term commencing July 1, 2011 and terminating August 19, 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$6,827.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. McCoy and carried unanimously to approve the request for a contract with Kenyon Press as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 17, 2011 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Commencing her monthly report, Ms. Johnson apprised she met with Vicki Gerbino, the new Director of the Economic Development Corporation (EDC), to get acquainted and prepare for future collaborative efforts. She said she had also conversed with the Saratoga/North Creek Railway marketing contact person to share information regarding programs and opportunities, as well as rates and dates. She stated a Westbrook Conservation Project meeting and tour was held on May 11<sup>th</sup> and included Mr. Merlino, Ms. Brand, and herself in attendance and discussions included the future promotion of the festival space. Pertaining to the May 2011 Newsletter, Ms. Johnson reported excellent participation from businesses as well as the EDC. Ms. Johnson referenced several consumer publications and newspaper inserts which comprised the collection of publications for the month from which she anticipated over 5,000 requests for information. The publications, she noted, showcased Warren County and the businesses which advertise in a collaborative manner.

Ms. Johnson summarized the email blast results for the added value programs which included Great Vacation Get-Aways and Campground Owners of New York. She apprised of the Super Saver yellow sticker designed by Peter Girard, Creative Director, which would encourage on-line activity. With regard to the Beekmantown Welcome Center, Ms. Johnson stated the Center opened on May 9, 2011 and she was asked to extend thanks to the Warren County Board of Supervisors for the letter of support, which was instrumental in its success. She reported that she met recently with Amy Bartlett, First Assistant County Attorney and Edward Bartholomew, Economic Development Director for the City of Glens Falls, to discuss the new video screens for the Glens Falls Civic Center (GFCC) for which the County contributed. She stated the goal for completed installation and operation was September 2011 with the first home hockey game to take place in October. She said the Tourism Department would produce a new 60 second video to encompass all seasons in Warren County and would include a crawl bar at the bottom of the screen to name various events. She stated she would request the names of three recognizable events from each municipality to be featured in the video.

Addressing public relations efforts, Ms. Johnson reported that the June AAA newsletter featured the Forty Coolest Spots in NY State and noted the Lake George Steamboat Company and Island Camping on Lake George appeared on the list as numbers 18 and 37, respectively. She noted a camping ad in USA Today Magazine which cited the [visitlakegeorge.com](http://visitlakegeorge.com) website address. Ms. Johnson credited Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Director, for arranging a story on the region. She added that Warren County was featured as the theme of the north in an Albany County newspaper.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Peter Girard who stated his continuous efforts with regard to email promotions and he noted that responses increased as the summer approached. He summarized the Summer Camping Contest Promotion results, as well as the Mid-Week Specials, Summer Coupons and Memorial Day event promotions.

Mr. Girard summarized the news bulletin which included area events, travel trends, recent developments and upcoming promotions. Ms. Johnson noted that the bulletin was sent to over 700 local businesses and positive feedback had been received. She added that this was the first time the newsletter was added to the local media list which also resulted in positive feedback.

Mr. Girard displayed the summer saving coupons and noted a pilot trial which included a link to the summer TV ad with smart phone scanning capabilities. Photographic opportunities, he stated, were maximized on a continuous basis and he reported visits to the Fish Hatchery and the Town of Thurman's Town Wide Sale and apprised that a professional high definition (HD) video shoot was scheduled for June 9<sup>th</sup> aboard a fishing charter boat on Lake George. He pointed out that still photographs could be extracted from the video. He apprised that he had produced a decal for Pam Vogel, County Clerk, for the Return the Favor Discount Program for veteran's. The decal, he noted would be applied to the windows and entry doors of local businesses to signify their participation in the program. Mr. Girard reported that he had attended SUNY (State University of New York) Adirondack's Hospitality and Tourism Management Presentation which was an excellent showcase of the College's progress in terms of recognizing the significant role of tourism in the area as it related to programming. He noted that the college had developed the hospitality and tourism programming to encompass culinary arts, hotel management, event planning and related course work. The college, he said, hoped to attract students to stay and apply their skills in the local tourism community. Michael Consuelo, Special Events Coordinator, noted the significance of the internship program which was available to businesses in the region and would encourage the retention of students in the local industry.

Mr. Conover asked about successful tracking strategies and Ms. Johnson stated that every promotion was coded for tracking purposes. She stated the data was used for future planning and noted the comprehensive quality of the surveys. She added that regional figures were available which offered a detailed review. Mr. Conover noted that the summer and winter surveys may not reflect shoulder season data and Ms. Johnson concurred. She apprised that lodging properties were surveyed for occupancy trends. Mr. Conover praised the overall efforts of the Department.

Concluding his report, Mr. Girard apprised that fine tuning of the website's homepage was underway and informed that a model for self-management in terms of speed and accuracy was used. He stated that the current site had an intuitive capacity within the navigation structure which would be strategically retained to avoid user alienation.

Privilege of the floor was extended to John Daniels, Web & Applications Developer with L & P Media, who stated that the statistics provided an understanding of the user base which enabled optimum home page design architecture based on user preferences and he noted the core content included on the home page would assist in search engine optimization. Mr. Daniels underscored the growth of social media links and the importance of ease of use which scrolling provided. He apprised that he planned to meet with Mr. Girard and the Warren County Information Technology Department to work out the details of the database feeds. The second step, he said, was the secondary page layout and design which contained the core content and directed information delivery while maintaining brand and identity. Regarding the time line, Mr. Daniels stated that the homepage was currently under review for approval, and would be followed by the lower level page design and layout; page cutting; building of the content management system; the test phase; database connectivity; data delivery in early September; and a full program launch in October. Mr. Daniels thanked Mr. Girard for his collaborative efforts.

Mr. Girard explained the ease of use of the website and the map of events throughout the County. In terms of annual events, Mr. Conover noted the value of dramatic imagery and Mr. Girard concurred. Mr. Daniels noted the system could dedicate a page to any flagship event and include a photo gallery. Mr. Girard stated that imagery was the preferred method by which to showcase any event. Mr. McCoy added that imagery for events such as Americade, was a significant marketing tool. Ms. Johnson stated the new system enabled speed and ease of use. Mr. Girard said he anticipated excellent results in terms of efficiency and response rates.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, who reported that solicitation of the 2012 Group Travel Planner would be delivered next week. She informed of changes to the template and layout design for ads and itinerary pages which she had recommended. She apprised that a two day familiarization (FAM) tour was organized for two Tour Operators from Denmark and included a variety of attractions. She said the Operators would create itineraries with which to promote our area to couples and families.

Addressing confirmed events, Ms. Brand stated that the Warrior Run on West Mountain had an astounding popularity with 1,740 participants already registered for the Fathers Day weekend event. She said the Anderson Coach Birthday Bash currently had seven buses scheduled for the three-day event to be held in September. The event, she said, would include boat cruises, dinner theater, 170 rooms among 3 hotels, and visits to Racquet Lake and the Adirondack Museum. She noted that the American Bus Association (ABA) had tabulated that each motor coach injected approximately \$12,000 into the local economy per day; thereby resulting in a potential impact of up to \$84,000 per day for the event. Ms. Brand apprised of monthly meetings with Mr. Consuelo to collaborate on the monthly newsletter which was sent to all local businesses and listed all events in the County.

Lastly, Ms. Brand reported that 1,000 travel guides were distributed on May 19 at Penn Station's New York By Rail Day. She noted promotional visits to the New York Police and Fire Departments and one travel agency, as well.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Drew Alberti, Program Coordinator for the Lake to Locks Passage. He advised that Lakes to Locks Passage and National Geographic had partnered to launch a new website to promote Geo-Tours. He explained that Geo-Tours encompassed several niche tours such as agricultural (agri), adventure, and ecological (eco)-tours and the purpose of the program was to define the unique and authentic qualities of the region which included natural, cultural, recreational and historical sites and experiences along New York's Scenic Byway and the Lakes to Locks Corridor. Mr. Alberti noted that the effort highlighted local lodging, dining and specialty businesses such as producers of local goods. The website, he said, relied on user generated contact and included unlimited text, audio and video capabilities. He stated that individuals created the entries on the site which were edited by both partnering entities. He reported there were currently 250 content nominations and 20 of those were from Warren County. Mr. Alberti advised the activity of populating the website was a process which would evolve and the first year phase focused on information gathering. The non-live website, he reported, had 20,000 hits in the month of March, and approximately 40,000 hits since its inception in March 2011. He apprised that one content nomination was from the Town of Thurman which recommended a story covering the 1946 D & H train wreck in the Town of Thurman. An early indicator of success, he said, was evidenced by a call received from National Geographic, London, who expressed interest in promoting the region to the German tourist market. He stated that subsequent meetings would be held and the goal to launch the live website, which would include itinerary builders, was slated for June or July. Mr. Alberti apprised that promotional bookmarks were available for the municipalities.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Consuelo, who reviewed the Lake George Regional Convention & Visitor's Bureau booked events as well as tentative leads for the period from June 3<sup>rd</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup>. He noted two additional events booked since the previous report. He summarized new leads generated in May and noted promotional and advertising referrals for the Tourism Department not included in the report. Mr. Consuelo informed that a Certificate of Appreciation was received from the American Gold Star Mothers event held in April and he thanked Mr. McCoy for his assistance in providing transportation for the group. He apprised of the Annual Golf Tournament which generated return business from a group from Long Island.

Mr. Merlino note the positive exchange of information which took place at the last meeting of the Warren County Council of Chambers held in Warrensburg.

Mr. Strainer asked Ms. Johnson if brochures would be available at the Dome during the New York State Girls' Softball Tournament to be held on June 11. Ms. Johnson stated she would see that brochures were delivered to the Dome. Mr. Strainer announced that volunteers were needed for the Tournament.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. McCoy, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 10:33 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist