

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: MAY 30, 2013

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON
STRAINER
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS FRASIER
MASON
TAYLOR
MICHAEL SPILMAN, HOLIDAY INN
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
CHARLENE DIRESTA, SR. LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 11:16 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mrs. Wood 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 the agenda review, Ms. Johnson requested a contract with Benchmark Printing, Inc. to print 100,000 copies of the 2013 Fall Brochure for a term commencing June 21, 2013 and terminating July 31, 2013 in an amount not to exceed \$7,297. She noted she had requested proposals from five agencies and Benchmark Printing, Inc. had submitted the lowest. She added the amount was \$39 over the amount budgeted for this project but she did not foresee an issue with allocating the funds.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to authorize the contract with Benchmark Printing, 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 June 21, 2013 Board meeting.*

Ms. Johnson requested a transfer of funds totaling \$4,500 in order to allocate funds originally budgeted for a temporary summer position into the Overtime and Postage accounts. She explained that she had decided the temporary summer position would not be needed and the funds would be better utilized to cover overtime and postage expenses.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mrs. Wood and carried unanimously to approve the request for a transfer of funds as outlined above and to forward same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the Request for Transfer of Funds form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson stated that Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), was attending an Empire State

Society of Association Executives (ESSAE) meeting and therefore would be unable to provide a report. She said Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB, had intended to provide the report but had also been unable to attend. *The May 2013 Monthly Report from the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson reported her attendance at two new events in Albany, the first of which had been the Adirondack Day sponsored by Senator Betty Little. She explained the Legislative Office Building had been transformed into a miniature Adirondack Park with the mission of bringing greater awareness of the many facets of the Adirondack Region to the Legislators and their staff. She said there had been many exhibits including one from the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council; pictures of the various exhibits were displayed to the Committee members. She opined the event had been successful and she anticipated it would be repeated in the future. The second event, she continued, was Governor Cuomo's New York State Tourism Summit held in Albany on May 8, 2013. She said the event had been by invitation only for State, National and International tourism professionals and associations. She noted strategies to help increase tourism in New York State were discussed. She pointed out the focus had been on Northern New York and the Adirondacks. She reported that Governor Cuomo had announced the launching of New York State's largest tourism campaign in decades and had committed nearly \$60 million to grow the tourism industry, create jobs and attract more visitors. Ms. Johnson apprised the Tourism Department had been asked to submit visual displays which identified the region for display at the Metropolitan Transport Authority, Times Square and the Airports.

Ms. Johnson stated the Governor's Adirondack Challenge would take place on July 21, 2013 in the Hamilton County area. She said it would be a week long celebration and Warren County Tourism had been requested to identify events in the County from July 12-21, 2013. She noted the events submitted would be tagged as Adirondack Challenge Events and would be added to the website. She apprised the Governor's Adirondack Challenge would feature an invitational whitewater race, an internationally competitive flat water race and a race day festival.

Mr. Conover questioned the criteria for determining which magazines were utilized for print ads and Ms. Johnson replied that she completed a media schedule for each season. She explained that print ads were tracked to determine which magazines were successful. Referring to a chart included in the agenda packet entitled, Advertising Placement for 2013 as of May 3, 2013, Ms. Johnson pointed out the chart detailed information such as the name of the publication, the cost of the ad, the number of inquiries received, and the cost per inquiry; *a copy of the chart is on file with the minutes.* In answer to a question concerning how the inquiries were tracked, Ms. Johnson replied each ad had a code number and visitors to the website were asked how they were directed to the website and given a selection of magazines to choose from. A discussion ensued pertaining to the selection of magazines for advertising.

Chairman Geraghty exited the meeting at 11:27 a.m.

Ms. Johnson informed the Summer Television Campaign had commenced on April 29, 2013 with all of the markets airing by the first week of May. She commented the new Summer Television Commercial contained golfing and shopping footage and the aerial footage at the end of the commercial had been replaced. Peter Girard, Creative Director, played the 30 second Summer Television Commercial for the Committee members. Ms. Johnson pointed out that a 60 second version of the commercial was available on Video on Demand. Pertaining to the Summer Coupons,

Ms. Johnson reported 19 participants this year versus 20 participants last year. She mentioned Facebook advertisements in Montreal which targeted particular demographics. A brief discussion ensued pertaining to the Summer Coupons.

Ms. Johnson announced that Tom Connors, of Ad Workshop, would attend the next Committee meeting in order to recap the Winter Campaign and discuss the Summer Campaign.

Ms. Johnson stated the Mid-Week Getaway Lodging Deals had been added to the website and this year the properties had been offered the opportunity to include an image. She explained each property was allowed to submit up to three lodging package deals and the program was offered free of charge. She noted one of the recent email blasts was focused on Mid-Week Getaway Lodging Deals and the website included a feature button which leads to the landing page. Mr. Girard displayed various Summer print ads to the Committee members.

Ms. Johnson commented work had commenced on the Fall Activities and Events Brochure and the 2014 Travel Guide. She advised the May Newsletter had been sent and an image of same was displayed to the Committee members. Mr. Girard noted approximately half of the recipients of the Newsletter opened it within the three day tracking period. Ms. Johnson pointed out the results of the Conversion Survey were included in the agenda packet and noted the Survey was performed twice annually and was sent to consumers who participated in a promotion where they had listed their email address. She briefly reviewed the results of the Conversion Survey with the Committee members; *a copy of the Conversion Survey is on file with the minutes*. Ms. Johnson commented a comparison of the Occupancy Tax Surveys from 1994 through 2012 was included in the agenda packet; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes*. She mentioned the annual Warren County Occupancy with Seasonal Adjustments was 46.35% compared to the Smith Travel Research report of 52.2%. A brief discussion ensued.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, distributed copies of her Group Tour Update; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. She reported over 350 solicitations had been sent to properties for the 2014 Group Travel Planner and she noted the contracts were due by July 5, 2013. In order to increase the dining section of the Group Travel Planner, she said, she went door-to-door to potential group tour restaurants. She mentioned the design of the Planner would be updated and new itineraries would be added, such as locally grown and produced products, sweet treat trail, the Warren County Military Trail and an earn your badges itinerary for Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts. She said an "Around the County" section would be included and would list all of the information centers in Warren County.

Ms. Brand informed the May Group Loop Newsletter had been distributed to over 2,600 contacts including National Tour Operators, Group Leaders, Group Tour media outlets, local media and Warren County Group Tour properties, as well as the Villages, Towns and Chambers of Commerce. Mr. Girard displayed an image of the May Group Loop Newsletter to the Committee members. She noted the most viewed links on the Newsletter had been the www.visitlakegeorge.com website, the Adirondack Extreme Adventure Course and nature trails and hikes. She advised the next Group Loop Newsletter would be released in August.

Ms. Brand stated that as a Destination Marketing Organization Member of the American Bus Association, she was allowed to submit three Group Tour events for the Top 100 Events designation. She said she had selected Warrensburg's World's Largest Garage Sale, the Lake George Elvis Festival and the Lake George Jazz Festival; however, she continued, the Lake George Jazz Festival had been unable to submit the requested information prior to the deadline.

Ms. Brand reported she and Ms. Johnson would meet later that afternoon with Destinations of New York to discuss a new event concept. She advised five buses carrying 200 students from Massachusetts were visiting Natural Stone Bridge and Caves in Pottersville today. She announced that Mayflower Tours would have three busses going to the Georgian Resort for two nights on September 29, 2013, October 5, 2013 and October 6, 2013 and each trip would include a cruise with the Lake George Steamboat Company. She mentioned Conway Tours had two buses going to the Adirondack Balloon Festival in September. She said Holy Cross Church Parishioners Group would send three buses from Brooklyn for a day trip including swimming and shopping. Ms. Brand noted a recent Quest Tours bus had made an unscheduled stop in the Village of Lake George to shop and dine on a return trip from Montreal. Wade Tours had planned four day trips for 2013, she continued, which included the Saratoga North Creek Railway, a lunch at the Sagamore and a cruise on the Morgan, a Lake George Dinner Cruise with fireworks and a Johnny Cash Tribute Artist Dinner Cruise.

Supervisors Wood and Vanselow exited the meeting at 11:45 a.m.

Mr. Girard advised the website had been converted to Summer images and backgrounds. He said a link had been added for the Governor's Adirondack Challenge and properties offering military discounts had been listed for Memorial Day. He pointed out a button had been added to "Help Stop the Spread of Aquatic Invasives" which linked to a frequently asked questions page on the www.protectlakegeorge.com website which contained a video of boat washing. Ms. Johnson noted the www.protectlakegeorge.com website contained a link to the Warren County Tourism website. Mr. Girard commented the boating and fishing landing pages of the Warren County website also contained links to the www.protectlakegeorge.com website.

Mr. Girard noted the Information Technology Department was assisting in condensing the fill-in fields to make them more user friendly regardless of which type of device was used to access the website. He commented that pull down menus did not work well on smart phones and they were working on switching them to fill-in boxes.

Mr. Girard stated four email blasts had been released since the previous Committee meeting including the Camping Contest, Staycations, Keep the Kids Amused and Memorial Day Weekend Events. He noted each of the email blasts were released to approximately 140,000 subscribers and were opened by approximately 10,000 to 12,000 people. He commented the sponsor ads on the bottom of email blasts had improved in appearance and the clicks on the links for the ads had increased significantly. Ms. Johnson mentioned there was a lot of repetition in the advertisers for the email blasts. Mr. Girard pointed out this was the first year the Memorial Day Weekend Events had been sent out as a separate email blast. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard explained that television commercials listed the website as www.lakegeorgeny.com as opposed to www.visitlakegeorge.com which allowed the Department to track the number of website visits resultant of the television commercials. Mr. Girard displayed the attributes of the new website and explained an adaptive website automatically adapted based on the device being used (computer, smart phone, iPad, etc.). He further explained when a person visited the website from a smart phone, the information would be "slimmed down" so just the core content would be viewed. He said the entire website had not been switched to an adaptive format yet but they were in the process. Pertaining to the website, Mr. Girard said the Info Boxes below the pictures on the main page were new and when clicked on they dropped down to reveal additional information. He displayed the new Boating Gallery which had been added to the website and noted users were able to submit content to be added. He said the addition of galleries to the website made requests for images easier to fulfill.

Mr. Girard explained that in the Events page of the website the Event Details did not currently allow modifications; however, he added, they were working on the ability to add video which might be available for certain events. He pointed out there was currently a video available for the Lake George Jazz Festival and they would add it to the appropriate Event page. Ms. Johnson pointed out that Supervisor Dickinson had been the person to bring the Lake George Jazz Festival video to the attention of the Department. She stated the solicitations for Winter Events would include a section to inform the event promoters of the ability to embed videos on the Tourism website.

Ms. Brand reported there would be a Warren County Council of Chambers Delegates Meeting later that night at Dunham's Bay Resort in the Town of Lake George. She said she would attend the meeting but noted attendance at the meetings had been low recently. Mr. Merlino opined the majority of the meetings had been Delegates Meetings and he felt the Warren County Council of Chambers were leaving people out by holding delegates only meetings.

Mr. Merlino stated his report on local tourism in the Town of Lake Luzerne would be postponed until the next Committee meeting.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Strainer and seconded by Mr. Kenny, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 12:06 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist