

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: JANUARY 30, 2014

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
DICKINSON
CONOVER
WOOD
VANSELOW
FRASIER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER

PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AMANDA ALLEN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
SUPERVISORS BROCK

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR KENNY

MCDEVITT

SEEBER

TAYLOR

WESTCOTT

TOM CONNORS, AD WORKSHOP, INC.

SUE WILDER, SARATOGA-NORTH CREEK RAILROAD

CHRISTINA CURLEY, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR, LAKE GEORGE
REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

DAVE KENNY, LAKE GEORGE BUSINESS OWNER

GARY THORNQUIST, LAKE GEORGE RV PARK

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 11:41 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, 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.*

Mr. Merlino and Ms. Johnson welcomed Mrs. Frasier as the newest member of the Tourism Committee and welcomed back the veteran Committee members for the new year.

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Johnson requested a contract with Kenyon Press, Inc. to print 110,000 copies of the 2014 Rates & Dates & Events Brochure in an amount not to exceed \$11,639, for a term commencing February 28, 2014 and terminating March 31, 2014. She commented that Kenyon Press, Inc. had been the lowest bidder of the five vendors solicited. Mr. Dickinson questioned the number of copies and Ms. Johnson replied they were ordering 5,000 copies more than last year because they had run out.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to authorize the contract with Kenyon Press, 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 February 21, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson requested a contract with Stephen Jermanok, Travel Writer, to provide a social media package on the Lake George Area for a term commencing August 2, 2014 and terminating August

8, 2014 in an amount not to exceed \$2,000 plus reimbursement for gas and tolls, with lodging, meals and attractions to be provided on a complimentary basis by local businesses. She explained that Mr. Jermanok would visit the area for a week and while he was here, he would write about his experiences on his travel blog. She informed that several years prior, Mr. Jermanok had written an article about the area which had been featured in the *Boston Globe*. Following his trip, she added, Mr. Jermanok would write another article for the *Boston Globe* about why he visited this area on a yearly basis.

Motion was made by Mrs. Frasier, seconded by Mr. Dickinson and carried unanimously to authorize a contract with Stephen Jermanok as outlined above. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 21, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson requested to extend the existing contract with the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC), Inc. for regional marketing services in an amount not to exceed \$128,000 for a term commencing January 1, 2014 and terminating December 31, 2014. She explained this contract was part of the New York State Matching Funds Grant.

Motion was made by Mrs. Wood, seconded by Mr. Vanselow and carried unanimously to extend the existing contract with the ARTC, 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 February 21, 2014 Board Meeting.*

Ms. Johnson displayed samples of various winter print ads which had been featured in several publications. She stated when print ads were purchased, there was always a "value added" package, such as, an ad on the publication's website; a link to the Warren County website; bonus reader service cards; or inclusion in a newsletter or email blast, etc. She explained each print ad included a different phone extension number in order to track which publications were viewed by the individual calling the Office. She noted when a visitor to the website filled out the form to request information, they were asked "how did you hear about us". Ms. Johnson displayed examples of "out of home" print ads which were located at three northbound New York State Thruway Information Centers: Sloatsburg; Plattekill; and New Baltimore. She said the locations contained various brochures, a static advertisement and the 60 second video which played approximately 60 times per day. Ms. Johnson displayed photos of the double sided posters which were placed at 20 New Jersey Transit rail stations inbound towards Manhattan. She displayed photos of winter online and electronic ads. She commented that New Jersey and Metro New York were specifically targeted for advertisement.

Ms. Johnson pointed out that Public Relations Reports for December 2013 and January 2014 were included in the agenda packet. She explained the Reports contained information on press releases which had been written; requests for information received; ad placements, etc. She informed that the Tourism Department conducted in-house theme email blasts and the winter theme blasts had been distributed in November, December and January and in February they would sponsor the Regional email blast which would contain information on maple sugaring season and activities. Ms. Johnson commented the consumer show circuit had begun and staff members had attended two different shows in Edison, New Jersey. She advised of upcoming consumer shows in Suffern, New Jersey; Hartford, Connecticut; and Long Island, New York. As a member of the New York State Travel and Vacation Association (NYSTVA), she continued, the Tourism Department could participate in their show roster for brochure distribution. She reminded the Committee members that Warren County was one of the "Epicenters of Experience" in the "New York's Best Experiences" campaign which included a wrapped campaign truck, on which the Warren County Tourism Logo was included.

She said the campaign had begun and she would discuss it further at the next Committee meeting. Ms. Johnson stated the ARTC had commenced their snowmobile campaign and she circulated a copy of the 2013-2014 Snowmobile Trail Map; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes*. She noted that the Tourism Department advertised within the Snowmobile Trail Map and therefore received a supply for distribution. She informed of the ARTC Snowmobile television campaign in December in the Hudson Valley, New Jersey, Eastern Pennsylvania, Albany, Central New York and Buffalo. She added over 2,300 inquiries were received by the Warren County Tourism Department in December as a result of the ARTC Snowmobile television campaign. In response to the inquiries, she continued, an information sheet containing snowmobile packages offered by local properties and the Winter Brochure were mailed.

Ms. Johnson informed that digital advertising would be increased this year and samples of print ads for the spring and summer seasons were displayed. She listed the various publications where advertisements were placed for the Committee members. She stated a mosaic depicting a whitewater rafting scene from the Hamlet of North Creek was featured in *National Geographic Traveler Magazine* as an advertisement for the Lake George Area; *a copy of a photograph of the mosaic is on file with the minutes*. She noted the fulfillment for the *National Geographic Traveler* ad would be the 2014 Travel Guide and the Whitewater Rafting brochure.

Ms. Johnson announced the New York State Matching Funds Grant had just been awarded and Warren County Tourism had received \$79,394 for County and Regional campaigns. She noted the amount reflected a 5.5% decrease from the amount awarded last year. She said the results of the 2013 Summer Conversion Survey were now available and she reviewed the Survey with the Committee members; *a copy of the 2013 Summer Conversion Survey results is on file with the minutes*. She commented that visitors who submitted their email addresses for various campaigns were sent the survey. For the question "What type of lodging did you choose?", she continued, the percentages for hotel, motel and resort were about equal as the top three responses. She added that most visitors had stayed in Lake George/Diamond Point, with Bolton Landing second and Queensbury third. She advised the survey reflected that the women were making the vacation decisions and the average age of the women was 48.7 years. She noted 61% of visitors booked their hotel rooms by calling the property and 39% were booking online. She commented the top activities were dining, amusements and mall/outlet shopping. She stated 57% of visitors rated their overall stay as excellent; 35% rated it as very good; and 100% said they would recommend the area to others. She mentioned the majority of visitors were from within New York State, followed by New Jersey and Connecticut. She advised a new question had been added, asking visitors what they would like to see changed or added. She said the largest negative responses had been parking and traffic; although the most of the responses had requested no changes. Ms. Johnson commented that data had been collected for the past two years on spending per person for day trippers and overnight visitors. She advised the average day tripper spent \$75.59 and the average overnight visitor spent \$118.01 per person/per day.

Ms. Johnson stated the 2013 Year in Review Binder would be presented at the next Committee meeting. She reported 7,277 visitors to the Tourism Department Satellite Office in the Adirondack Outlet Mall in 2013. She noted the number of visitors was tracked based on any visitor who engaged in conversation with the employees. She announced she had been elected Vice President of the ARTC and continued to serve on the Board of Directors of the NYSVTA.

Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, distributed copies of her December 2013/January 2014 Group Tour Update to the Committee members; *a copy of same is on file with the minutes*. She commented the 2014 Group Travel Planner had been printed and was in the process of being distributed. She advised of four new pages: an Information Center and Chambers of Commerce

page; a Communities of Warren County page; an Agri-Tourism Activities page; and a modernized itinerary section for easy itinerary building. Images of the four new pages of the 2014 Group Travel Planner were displayed for the Committee members. She advised the Destinations of New York State Travel Show event would be held in Saratoga Springs on September 8-10, 2014. She added Warren County would participate in the exhibitor portion of the Show. She noted all operators and group leaders would be housed in Warren County hotels and would participate in FAM Tours throughout the County.

Ms. Brand advised an Adirondack Regional Itinerary Brochure had been created to promote the Lake George Area and the surrounding Counties to international and domestic markets. She said the purpose of the brochure was to capitalize on the Adirondack brand which was easily recognizable by International and Canadian Tour Operators, as well as New York City based Receptive Operators with overseas clients. She explained the brochure encouraged groups to base themselves in the Lake George Area and plan day trips to attractions in Washington and Saratoga Counties.

Ms. Brand informed in her participation in a United Kingdom Ski Writers FAM Tour organized by "I ♥ NY" for February 25-27, 2014. She said the goal was to promote New York State skiing and the close proximity of New York City to the New York State Mountains. For the Warren County portion of the FAM Tour, she continued, the group would spend the day skiing at Gore Mountain with a lunch presentation; participate in a dinner hosted by the Copperfield Inn; stay overnight at the Alpine Lodge; and participate in a breakfast offered by Café Sarah.

Ms. Brand reported on her recent attendance at the American Bus Association Marketplace in Nashville, Tennessee. She advised that Warren County partners in attendance included The Lake George Steamboat Company; Clarion Inn; Surfside on the Lake; The Georgian Resort; Country Inn & Suites; and The Queensbury Hotel. She said over 300 Tour Operator leads had been obtained through Warren County, Regional and State appointments. She advised she had mainly discussed what was new in the area and promoted the Destinations of New York State Travel Show. She stated two new pull up displays had been created for consumer shows: one on Agri-Tourism and one for the Adirondack Regional; both of which were on display for the Committee members.

Ms. Brand informed of a successful lead obtained through the ARTC. She said The Manhattan Guardsmen was a 600 person social club from the Manhattan/New Jersey area and they would visit the area in the Spring of 2018 and stay at The Sagamore Resort. She said the group had held their annual outings all over the world and assistance with their event would be ongoing.

Peter Girard, Creative Director, displayed images of four recent email blasts to the Committee members. He said the email blast entitled "Time to Get Away" was released on October 10, 2013 to approximately 159,000 subscribers and about 7,500 people opened it in the three day tracking period. The Winter Getaway Giveaway email blast, he continued, was released on November 13, 2013 to approximately 162,000 subscribers and was opened by about 15,000 people in the three day tracking period. He advised the Information Technology (IT) Department had assisted with an email address purge to remove any dead or redundant email addresses from the list, resulting in a decrease of approximately 28,000 email subscribers. Following which the email blast entitled "Inside or Outside, You Decide", he continued, was released on December 4, 2013 to approximately 134,000 subscribers and was opened by about 11,000 people in the three day tracking period. He mentioned the email blast entitled "Chill Out, The Best in Winter Recreation" was released on January 8, 2014 to approximately 131,000 subscribers and was opened by about 10,000 people during the three day tracking period. Mr. Girard displayed the email blast schedule for 2014 and noted that up to three area properties were given the opportunity to purchase ad space with a link to their website on each email blast.

Mr. Girard displayed examples of banner ads which were used at consumer shows. Mr. Dickinson asked where the photos were obtained from and Mr. Girard replied that images were pulled from video footage, provided by businesses, taken by professional photographers or taken by Department staff members. He stated the video and photography budgets were consolidated due to new technology that allowed still photos to be taken from video footage. Mr. Girard displayed a copy of the Newsletter pointing out the various attributes and noted it was sent via email blast to businesses. A brief discussion ensued pertaining to Newsletters.

Mr. Girard displayed the Whitewater Rafting brochure to the Committee members and noted they had met with about 50 whitewater rafting outfitters to determine the content that they would like to see in the brochure. He displayed the Warren County Tourism website and noted a new landing page for shopping which displayed various shopping related photographs. He commented the Shopping Landing Page contained a 60 second shopping video which was also available on YouTube and he played the video for the Committee members. He commented the photos on the Shopping Landing Page had been pulled from the shopping video. Mr. Girard informed that efforts had been undertaken last year to improve the load time for the Events Landing Pages and this year they would work on improving the speed for all other sections of the website. He informed of an upcoming Interactive Poster email blast in which the consumers would vote on which poster would be printed. Lastly, Mr. Girard played the 60 second Winter Video for the Committee members and noted almost all of the video contained high definition footage.

Tom Connors, of Ad Workshop, Inc., informed the 60 second Winter Video had aired in Montreal, New Jersey, Connecticut and New York. In order to supplement the videos, he continued, certain segments would be aired on YouTube. He said the shopping video had aired in Montreal in early December and had targeted females who lived within 35 miles of Montreal between the ages of 18 and 64 with interests in shopping; beauty and fitness; home and garden; savvy parents; books and literature; beauty mavens; cooking enthusiasts; do-it-yourselfers; foodies; and fashionistas (interest categories as listed by YouTube). Mr. Connors advised they had the ability to Geo-target (based on geographic location) and demo-target (based on demographics) when placing ads on YouTube. He commented the airing of the shopping video had garnered 26,000 views since December and 2,100 clicks on the link to the Shopping Landing Page of the Warren County Tourism website. He advised a Facebook campaign with the same target audience had been conducted in Montreal and 11,317 clicks to the Shopping Landing Page had been garnered since the summer.

Mr. Connors informed of the changing trends in the use of desktop computers, tablets and mobile devices for viewing the Warren County Tourism website. He noted the percentages for each for 2012 versus 2013, as follows:

Devices used to access website	2012	2013
Desktop Computer	73%	36%
Tablet	16%	35%
Mobile Phone	11%	29%

Mr. Connors commented the changing trend in one year was unbelievable and justified the use of an adaptive website. He noted the response level for the Winter Campaign had increased approximately 20% compared to last year. He said the email and mailing addresses of about 5,500 people had been gathered. He displayed various banner ads which were used to drive consumers to the Warren County Tourism website. He said full page one day takeovers were utilized, as well and he displayed an example. He explained the log in page for Time Warner Cable and Comcast Cable would be "taken over" for one day in order to market the Lake George Area. He stated the

conversion rate of well over 20% for the takeovers was the highest of all other marketing strategies currently being used.

Christina Curley, Special Events Coordinator for the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), distributed copies of her December 2013 Monthly Report and the newly created Festival Space Brochure to the Committee members; *copies of the Report and Brochure are on file with the minutes*. She said she continued work on two leads from her recent trip to Daytona Beach for the Rejuvenate Conference. The first lead was from the Philadelphia Church of God, she continued, for a Feast of the Tabernacles to be held on September 27, 2015 through October 6, 2015 and October 16-25, 2016. She said the group would be comprised of more than 250 attendees and would require more than 150 hotel rooms, meeting space for eight days, a few breakout rooms, food and beverages. She advised a representative would come to the area to view two properties as potential locations. She advised of another lead, the Living Church of God for a Feast of the Tabernacles on September 27, 2015 through October 6, 2015 (the same dates as the Philadelphia Church of God event) however, she added, it had been discovered that the group's needs were too large for the available hotels during those dates. Ms. Curley reported of a lead with a higher end couples retreat group that were looking at The Sagamore Resort for an upcoming retreat weekend and would conduct a site tour soon.

Ms. Curley informed of the National Ataxia Foundation's Investigators Meeting & Annual Membership Meeting to be held in March of 2018. She said the group would require meeting space for up to 600 people with 14 breakout rooms of varying sizes and a total of 1,350 room nights. She advised that unfortunately we were not able to accommodate this group's needs at this time. She informed of her attendance at the New York State Destination Marketing Organization's 4th Quarter Meeting. She explained this organization was comprised of the CVB's of New York State. Pertaining to the Festival Space Brochure, Ms. Curley opined that it came out nice and she noted she had already begun distributing the brochure during her appointments with meeting planners and event organizers.

Pertaining to the Council of Chambers Report, Ms. Brand said the December meeting had been a Delegates Meeting which was held at the Holiday Inn in Lake George. She commented the January Meeting had been held at the Olde Post Grille and Edward Bartholomew, President of the Economic Development Corporation, had been the guest speaker. Mr. Merlino stated that Tanya Thomas was the newly elected President of the Council of Chambers and he felt she had aggressive strategies.

Susan Wilder, of the Saratoga & North Creek Railway (SNCR), distributed a handout to the Committee members; *a copy of the handout is on file with the minutes*. She stated the Snow Train operated between January and March and went directly to the Gore Mountain Ski Resort Area. She added food and alcohol were available on the Snow Train. She advised she and Luisa Craige-Sherman worked on the marketing for SNCR. She mentioned she attended the trade shows and Ms. Craige-Sherman completed the press releases and media outreach.

Ms. Wilder said marketing efforts included continuing advertisements; social media contests; and talk shows. She advised that January advertising included 99.5 The River radio show and a full page ad in the *Adirondack Journal*. She reported 15,000 rack cards had been distributed to locations, such as the New York Thruway, gateways to the Region, area hotels and Chambers of Commerce. She informed they had hosted four FAM Tours in 2013 and four additional FAM Tours were planned for 2014.

Ms. Wilder stated she had attended trade shows in Pennsylvania, New York, New York City, Massachusetts and New Jersey, as well as advertised via brochures at trade shows attended by the Warren County Tourism Department. She informed of daily updates to the SNCR Facebook page and

email blasts released to their email subscribers. She commented that press releases were completed at least once per month. She noted they had hosted professional Mommy Travel Bloggers from New York City in December and continued to maintain contact with them. Ms. Wilder informed of a partnership with the First Wilderness Heritage Corridor (FWHC) to advertise on WCKM radio and in the *PennySaver*, *The Chronicle* and *The Post Star*. She said they had worked with tour operators to arrange package deals and had recently attended Train Hobbyists Shows with over 21,000 attendees. Ms. Wilder said for 2014 they were concentrating efforts on reaching out to the Towns on the FWHC about holding special events and increasing the number of people boarding the train in Towns other than Saratoga and North Creek.

Mr. Merlino stated the SNCR was doing a great job and the Warren County Board of Supervisors supported their efforts. Referring to a brochure he had seen on the Snow Train, he said it looked great; however, he voiced his disappointment that the package deals offered on the brochure were for hotel properties located in Saratoga and North Creek only. He stated Warren County was not mentioned on the brochure and he felt both North Creek and Warren County should be emphasized. He suggested there would be several Warren County hotels with an interest in offering package deals for the Train. Ms. Wilder stated the SNCR had a hotel packaging partner program that was operated through the corporate offices in Chicago and locally through Ms. Craige-Sherman. She provided a form that could be filled out by any hotel interested in offering a package deal. A brief discussion ensued.

Mr. Merlino asked David Kenny, Lake George Business Owner, the anticipated date of opening for the new outlet mall. Mr. Kenny replied an August opening date was being promoted; however, he stated, there were a lot of negotiations and some businesses had committed to an agreement but no leases had been signed. He stated some businesses would not agree to lease space unless 80% of the outlet mall was full. He informed the outlet mall business had changed over the years and today was the largest industry in shopping in the Country. He named two corporations which represented the majority of outlet malls in this Country. He said tenants wanted the Town and County to participate in the advertisement of the outlet malls because they felt they brought a lot of tourists to the area to shop. He advised of plans to develop a marketing strategy. He commented that traffic in front of the outlet malls was a major issue which would need to be dealt with eventually. Mr. Kenny mentioned the many comments he received from people who would not shop at the outlet malls due to the traffic issues.

Mrs. Frasier exited the meeting at 12:52 p.m.

Mr. Kenny stated Warren County was an ideal place for destination weddings and this fact should be advertised. He said the Erlowest Inn had booked 67 weddings for 2014 and every one of those wedding parties had booked rooms in the Lake George Area for their guests. Ms. Curley commented that area hotels had reported an increase in wedding business this year. Mr. Kenny stated the Erlowest Inn booked \$25,000 to \$30,000 weddings but the potential was there for weddings in excess of \$50,000. He suggested marketing Warren County for destination weddings, but he reiterated that it would be necessary to take care of the traffic issues. He stated that focusing on the needs of the customer made for a successful business. He further suggested a small wedding chapel on the top of Prospect Mountain would make a beautiful location for weddings.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Dickinson and seconded by Mr. Conover, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 12:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlene DiResta, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist