

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM & OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: JANUARY 25, 2021

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS: GERAGHTY
MERLINO
BRAYMER
WILD
HOGAN
BEATY
STROUGH

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

JOANNE CONLEY, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK

REPRESENTING WORKSHOP:

AMANDA BURGIO, ACCOUNT REPRESENTATIVE
TIMOTHY KELLEHER, OWNER/PRESIDENT
KRISTY MIHILL, DIRECTOR OF PAID MEDIA

RACHEL E. SEEBER, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE BOARD

RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD

RYAN DICKEY, SECOND ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY

FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS DRISCOLL

MAGOWAN

MCDEVITT

TAMMIE DELORENZO, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

DON LEHMAN, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

TOSHA BROWNELL, COMPUTER HELP DESK TECHNICIAN

LESLIE LOVELACE, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the January 25, 2021 meeting of the Tourism & Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee; the meeting in its entirety can be viewed on the Warren County website using the following link: <https://www.warrencountyny.gov/gov/comm/Archive/2020/tourism/>

Note: As per Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 202.1: "Article 7 of the Public Officers Law, to the extent necessary to permit any public body to meet and take such actions authorized by the law without permitting in public in-person access to meetings and authorizing such meetings to be held remotely by conference call or similar service, provided that the public has the ability to view or listen to such proceeding and that such meetings are recorded and later transcribed". All of the Committee members in attendance participated via video or teleconference except for Supervisors Merlino, Braymer and Wild who were physically present.

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Tourism & Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:00 a.m.

Motion was made by Ms. Hogan, seconded by Mr. Beaty and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Copies of the Tourism agenda were distributed to those in attendance and those participating virtually accessed the agenda via the Warren County website; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the meeting minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Joanne Conley, *Tourism Director*, who commenced the agenda review with the following requests:

- 1) To authorize an agreement with Benchmark Printing, Inc. in an amount not to exceed \$13,357 over the term March 15, 2021 and terminating April 15, 2021 for production of the 2021 All Seasons Travel Guide.

Motion was made by Mr. Strough, seconded by Mr. Beaty and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 19th Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

- 2) To authorize the continuation of the inter-municipal agreement with the Village of Lake George in an amount not to exceed \$25,000 for promotion space within The Lake George Visitor Center.

Motion was made by Ms. Hogan, seconded by Mr. Beaty and carried unanimously to approve the request and the necessary resolution was authorized for the February 19th Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Proceeding to the Items for Discussion portion of the agenda, Ms. Conley reviewed the following:

- a. 2020/2021 Outlook Powerpoint presentation - Ms. Conley noted the short term room rentals were up 33,416. Mr. Wild inquired why the 2019 figure for the Total Units Sold displayed on the screen read 92,900 and the slide printed with the agenda read 66,642 Total Units Sold for 2019. Ms. Conley replied the slides being shown on the screen were incorrect and the correct slides were attached to the agenda that was distributed. She apprised aside from the incorrect slides on the screen there had been a problem with the vendor changing their calculations during the Summer from 92,900 to 66,642 and she believed that to be the most correct information but she planned to use a new vendor and once the new figures were received from the new vendor she would report back with those. Mr. Wild asked if the figures from the new vendor would be at next month's meeting and she replied affirmatively. She stated the website analytic numbers were increasing each year with 2020 being 1,883,609, noting 50% less was spent on promotions. She added the top page visited last year was *What's Open* with over 300,000 visits to the page. She continued with a social media update for the Department, apprising there were 300,000 followers on Instagram, and 330,000 followers on Facebook which was the most engagement. Mr. Wild inquired how the number of followers on social media compared to other competing areas social media for example Hershey, Pennsylvania or the Finger Lakes region. Ms. Conley replied she would research that but did not have that information. Mr. Wild requested she obtain that data to use as a comparison to be able to use as a tool to measure past and future success. Ms. Conley apprised Occupancy Tax Collections for 2020 were \$4,119,370.34, noting collections would continue through March 31, 2021. She stated the objectives for Tourism were to keep the County safe and continue to responsibly attract visitors, highlighting attractions all throughout the County and to collaborate with all communities, as well as community partners. She apprised a new website had been launched for Visit Adirondacks. Mr. Wild stated he had previously made a request for \$3,500 for a study to be performed and he was informed a strategy was being developed by the Tourism Department. He requested an update on the strategy. Mr. Geraghty replied the Committee had received the reports over the last two weeks and the information needed to be reviewed and then discussed and the Committee could make a decision at that time. Mr. Geraghty informed a decision on the study would be made at the February Committee meeting.
- b. Presentation by Workshop entitled *Warren County Tourism, Broadcast and Digital Media Buying* - Ms. Conley introduced Timothy Kelleher, *Owner/President*, Kristy Mihill, *Director of Paid Media* and Amanda Burgio, *Account Representative*. Ms. Burgio explained Workshop had recently changed their name and were previously known as Adworkshop. She informed they were a full service ad agency that had been serving Warren County Tourism for over ten years. Ms. Mihill stated they had been buying broadcast media for over forty years and had long-term relationships with vendors who provided them with great rates. She added the team was trained on every platform to execute campaigns and continually educated themselves in the media industry. She said they were able to pass on cost savings by keeping buying strategies in-house, as not to incur

other fees. Ms. Burgio reviewed a list of tactics recommended for 2021 for Warren County which she stated was similar to the tactics that were used in 2020 and could be found along with the copy of the presentation. She reviewed the outlined Seasonal Campaigns that had been planned for Warren County for 2021, noting they could be changed or updated as needed for safety and health due to the pandemic. Mr. Wild inquired if it was possible to obtain comparisons of other Adirondack clients of Workshop to Warren County and Mr. Kelleher replied that information would need to be requested of their other clients, as it would be inappropriate for them to share that data. Mr. Wild asked if it was possible to obtain sales ad comparisons of other regions Warren County competed with and Ms. Burgio replied she would need to request the campaign success data from each region for sharing purposes, but most would not agree to share with other competing agencies.

Mr. Geraghty reviewed the following items:

- c. Advisory Panel - Mr. Geraghty apprised the Advisory Panel was on hold, as he needed more time to work with the Committee Members on creating the panel.
- d. Set due date for receipt for Occupancy Tax Applications -Mr. Geraghty informed the applications were a work in progress, noting Chairwoman Seeber had been working on the changes with Leisa Grant, *Principal Account Clerk*, and he asked if the Joplin, Missouri application had been sent to the Committee members over the weekend and Ms. Grant replied in the negative. Mr. Geraghty requested Ms. Grant distribute it to the Committee members as time was of the essence to complete the application changes due to upcoming events and he suggested a working group convene in the next two weeks in order to finalize the application update. Chairwoman Seeber suggested the example application that the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and Convention Visitors Bureau (CVB) had forwarded, as well as the draft of changes based on many past discussions, be distributed to Committee members for their input and then meet with the Economic Taskforce and CVB to focus on the application in the next few weeks. Mr. Geraghty inquired whether the goal was to complete the application for the County or create a universal application for both the County and towns to use as he had concern about creating it for the towns to use, and Chairwoman Seeber replied starting with the just the County first would be the goal. Ms. Seeber asked Mr. Merlino what his preference was on the application style and he replied he was in favor of the County draft that Ms. Grant had created, as it was a shorter, self-explanatory application which he would prefer to use in his town.

Ms. Braymer inquired as to whether there were specific plans to highlighting attractions throughout Warren County to achieve the 2021 objective. Chairwoman Seeber replied there were ideas and discussion with the priority being a regional tourism approach. Ms. Conley apprised ongoing dialogue with other communities around the County was necessary. She stated there was a monthly meeting for the council of chambers; however, she said, it was necessary to go above and beyond that. She expounded she had worked with North Creek & North Warren for outdoor recreation for the promotion of hiking/biking, as well as the assets of those regions and the City of Glens Falls was known as the downtown hub for dining and culture which she had worked with Amy Collins, *Tourism & Downtown Business Coordinator, City of Glens Falls*. She advised she also foresaw working with the Planning Department for GIS integration on a newer website to incorporate mapping applications for the Tourism website.

Mr. Geraghty called for any public comment and Don Lehman, *Director of Public Relations*, read aloud those submitted by Frank Dittrich, *Warren County Lodging Association*.

Mr. Geraghty requested Ms. Conley provide an update on the Lake George Winterfest. Ms. Conley apprised Christian Dutcher, *Americade Inc.*, had informed her there had been a total of 400 passes purchased so far and 225 had been purchased from households outside of the 12801 zip code. She stated Mr. Dutcher had more information he would be relaying to the Committee in the future.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Ms. Braymer, seconded by Ms. Hogan and carried unanimously, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 11:11 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Lovelace, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board