

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM & OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: MAY 25, 2021

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: OTHERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS GERAGHTY
MERLINO
BRAYMER
WILD
HOGAN
BEATY
STROUGH

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

JOANNE CONLEY, DIRECTOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
KRISTEN HANIFIN, DEVELOPMENT/EVENT COORDINATOR

MICHAEL R. SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER
RACHEL E. SEEBER, CHAIRWOMAN OF THE BOARD
RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
ROBERT TERWILLIGER, ACTING COUNTY ATTORNEY
SARAH MCLLENITHAN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS DICKINSON

FRASIER
LEGGETT
SMITH

TAMMIE DELORENZO, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
DON LEHMAN, DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
LEXIE DELUREY, DIRECTOR OF REAL PROPERTY TAX SERVICES
ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
GINA MINTZER, LAKE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND CVB,
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
MOLLY GANOTES-GLEASON, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECILIST

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the May 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://warrencountyny.gov/mma>

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 were physically present aside from Supervisors Hogan and Strough who participated remotely.

Mr. Geraghty called the meeting of the Tourism & Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 10:45 a.m.

Messrs. Merlino and Beaty entered the meeting at 10:46 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Wild, seconded by Ms. Braymer 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 & Occupancy Tax Coordination agenda was 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.

Commencing the agenda review, Mr. Geraghty presented a request to authorize an agreement with BBG&G Advertising, Inc. to perform website re-design, hosting and production services for the Warren County Tourism Department in an amount not to exceed \$80,655 for a term commencing July 1, 2021 and terminating June 30, 2022, with the option to renew for up to three additional one-year terms.

Motion was made by Mr. Merlino, seconded by Mr. Wild and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 16th Board Meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Next, Mr. Geraghty introduced a request to amend the County Budget in the amount of \$300,000 to move funds from the Occupancy Tax Reserve to the 2021 Occupancy Tax Budget in reflection of savings from the 2020 Deficit Reduction Plan.

Motion was made by Mr. Wild, seconded by Ms. Braymer and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Geraghty then presented a request to amend the County Budget in the amount of \$40,744.02 to amend the Tourism Budget to record the difference between the revenue and expenditures from the 2021 Winterfest event.

Motion was made by Mr. Wild, seconded by Ms. Braymer and carried unanimously to approve the request as presented and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was presented to Michael Swan, *County Treasurer*, who reported the books had been closed for the year 2020, informing the County collected \$4.2 million in Occupancy Tax revenue. He noted the figures were down 14% compared to 2019 and noted he had compared the numbers from 2019 because there were no events in 2020. Mr. Wild inquired about the status of Air BnB and Mr. Swan replied he was trying to get an agreement but there were many problems, one of which was he had to have the exact occupancy revenue received from each town and Air BnB did not always know where the money originated from. He explained many of the resorts along Lake George booked through Air BnB so they were already collecting from them. Ms. Braymer informed the City of Glens Falls and the Town of Queensbury were looking into software that would collect rental data, and she suggested the possibility of a shared agreement within the County.

Continuing with Items for Discussion, Mr. Geraghty announced 2021 events that did not occur would not be funded.

Ms. Braymer spoke regarding the scoring system guidelines for occupancy tax funding, suggesting to add smaller increments. Discussion ensued regarding the Special Event Funding application. Mr. Beaty notified he did not want to accept applications that were not complete. Mr. Strough said they needed to consider this on a case by case basis because not all events had the information to complete the application.

Ms. Hogan exited the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

Mr. Geraghty informed he would like to get final approval today on the Occupancy Tax Funding requests that were approved on May 13th. Leisa Grant, *Principal Account Clerk*, advised that there was \$350,000 in funding available. Mr. Geraghty reviewed the applications in detail.

Motion was made by Ms. Braymer, seconded by Mr. Wild and carried unanimously to approve the applications as presented and the necessary resolution was authorized for the June 16th Board Meeting. *A list of applicants is on file with the minutes.*

Robert Blais, *Mayor of the Village of Lake George*, spoke regarding weekly fireworks, informing he had applied for Occupancy Tax funding in the amount of \$25,000 due to the current calendar year. He said fireworks were the largest expense for the Village, adding there were ten Thursdays throughout the summer and the Village was used to having only eight. He said he had a few sponsors and needed extra money to help their budget.

Ms. Smith informed she applied for \$19,325.60 for the Town of Horicon to host Food Truck Fridays on the Pond. After a brief discussion the Committee decided to provide \$12,000 to the Town of Horicon.

Motion was made by Ms. Braymer, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously to approve the agreement with the Village of Lake George for the Disbursement of 2021 Occupancy Tax Revenues in the amount of \$25,000 to provide funding for their weekly firework shows and to authorize an agreement with the Town of Horicon for the Disbursement of 2021 Occupancy Tax Revenues in the amount of \$12,000 to provide funds for their Food Truck Friday's on the Pond event during the months of July and August 2021 and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the June 16th Board Meeting.

Regarding the Committee meeting scheduled for June 3, 2021, Kristen Hanifin, *Development/Event Coordinator*, informed the purpose of the meeting was to review application criteria. She requested the Committee members to think about what was important to the Supervisors communities, apprising to try to maximize occupancy tax funds.

Joanne Conley, *Director, Tourism*, informed she received three responses to the RFP (*Request for Proposal*) for Market Data, advising she wanted them to present their proposals to the Committee. Mr. Geraghty stated the hospitality industry had asked for a conversation regarding how occupancy tax was spent.

Mr. Wild explained he was concerned about the relationship with the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and CVB, and he inquired if there was a strategy for the \$1.6 million in reserve.

Mr. Geraghty asked if there were any public comments and Don Lehman, *Director of Public Affairs*, replied affirmatively. He proceeded to read aloud a comment from Kelly Hatten.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism & Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Beaty, seconded by Mr. Merlino and carried unanimously, Mr. Geraghty adjourned the meeting at 12:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Ganotes-Gleason, Legislative Office Specialist