

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

BOARD WORKSHOP

DATE: JUNE 4, 2025

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

CHAIRMAN GERAGHTY
SUPERVISORS CONOVER
MADAY
DIAMOND
GILLIGAN
TURNER
BRUNO
DRISCOLL
PATCHETT
GERACI
CROCITTO
MERLINO
STROUGH
WILD
STRAINER
THOMAS
RUNYON

OTHERS PRESENT:

JOHN TAFLAN, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
LARRY ELMEN, COUNTY ATTORNEY
SARAH MCLENITHAN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD
HEATHER BAGSHAW, DIRECTOR, TOURISM
PAUL TACKETT, TOURISM COORDINATOR
LESLIE LOVELACE, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD
*SEE SIGN IN SHEET FOR ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS BEAN
MAGOWAN
ETU

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the meeting of the June 4, 2025 Board Workshop; the meeting in its entirety can be viewed using the following links:

Warren County website - <https://warrencountyny.gov/mma>

Warren County's YouTube Channel - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=byKq456jtXg>

Copies of the meeting Agenda were distributed to those in attendance, a copy of the agenda is on file with the meeting minutes.

Chairman Geraghty opened the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

Pledge to the Flag was led by Chairman Geraghty.

Commencing the agenda review, Chairman Geraghty announced the purpose of the Workshop meeting was to discuss the future of Tourism in Warren County.

Privilege of the floor/Public Comment was first extended to the following individuals:

Mr. Crocitto elaborated on the purpose of today's meeting, indicating the Board was providing the business community with the opportunity to provide their input regarding the tourism industry in Warren County.

Mr. Strough added the Board would like to hear from the business community what action they believed could be taken

to grow the tourism industry within the County, such as increasing marketing efforts to ensure they were attracting all generations to the region and fill in the gaps between the shoulder and off seasons to allow Warren County to become a year round destination.

John Lefner, *Chief Executive Officer, The Hyde Collection*, advised he believed the opportunity existed within Warren County to establish an interconnected collaborative promotional strategy for arts and culture, noting the significant density of arts and culture located in the County that could be capitalized upon from the tourism perspective. He suggested creating a County supported advertising and promotional strategy to promote worldwide to attract more tourists to the County.

Sasha Pardy, *Representing Adirondack Winery and Adirondack Wine & Food Festival*, spoke on behalf of events held at the Lake George Festival Commons at Charles R. Wood Park, indicating there were opportunities there to attract additional larger events such as improvements to parking and lowering the fee charged to rent the space due to the lack of services provided which required the event organizer to incur more costs. She also suggested constructing a covered pavilion or building event holders could use in the area where there were ground issues due to water collection and increasing marketing efforts for the events held there. With regard to foot traffic in the Lake George area, Ms. Pardy noted it had decreased over the past few years during the peak season, indicating she believed marketing efforts to the younger generations was required to attract them to the region during the summer season. She added once the foot traffic increased during the summer season they could shift their marketing efforts to attracting tourists during the winter season.

Supervisor Strough apprised he concurred with Ms. Pardy that erecting a covered structure would attract additional events and tourists to the Lake George Festival Commons at Charles R. Wood Park, as they would no longer be weather dependent.

John Carr, *Representing Adirondack Pub & Brewery*, stated a long-term plan to attract tourists was required, indicating a review of previous efforts with occupancy tax was necessary determine what was a success and what were failures. He questioned whether the Lake George Festival Commons at Charles R. Wood Park was being utilized to it capacity, apprising he believed streamlining the process to hold events there would attract more organizers to hold events on the grounds. Mr. Carr advised another suggestion was to shift focus from the number of “heads in beds” to an increase in promotion of the area and the events held here. He added it was necessary to reformat how occupancy tax was being used within the County on a long-term basis to determine the proper amounts to allocate to the Warren County Tourism Department, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce and CVB, all of the municipalities and use the remaining amount for other purposes.

Sam Luciano, *Representing Fort William Henry*, said he felt the path to a healthy tourism industry was through analyzing data, indicating events attracted different demographics of individuals such as Americade which mostly consisted of Caucasian attendees who were ages 55+ while this Memorial Day weekend attracted primarily those of Indian/Pakistani descent. He mentioned the data should provide them with the following information: who had disposable income; what were they looking for; how to reach them; and how to keep them, all of which was essential to grow the tourism industry.

Sue Catana, *Representing Hickory Ski Center*, reenforced the notion of long-term strategic planning, indicating they needed to broaden the scope for tourism in Warren County to areas other than Lake George. She suggested moving forward they consider more public/private partnerships where the County collaborated with smaller businesses that were struggling to create the infrastructure to enhance the assets that were not being leveraged to benefit everyone.

Sue Wilder, *Town of Hadley Resident who was highly involved with the neighboring Town of Lake Luzerne*, emphasized the importance of not forgetting the small towns which fed into the large events. She indicated the notion of a shared schedule would be beneficial to allow all the municipalities to be aware of what events each one had going on to allow them to feed off of one another.

Tyler Herrick, *Representing Spruce Hospitality Group*, apprised he believed Warren County was missing out on the key demographic of youth sports and youth sports tourism which was a major component of tourism nationwide. He suggested they look into a public/private partnership to invest a significant amount of funding to construct an indoor sports complex that could offer AAU (*Amateur Athletic Union*) Basketball, AAU Volleyball, dance, cheering, hockey, etc., as he believed this would bring people to the area with guaranteed stays for a few days while their kids competed in tournaments which were not weather dependent. He added not only would this attract families to this area for the tournaments, but it could entice people to relocate here.

Kathy Muncil, *Representing Fort William Henry*, indicated she hoped for a repository of the next “big idea” to increase tourism within Warren County, noting there was significant State grant funding available for this purpose.

Robert Harte, *Representing Revolution Rail Company*, suggested forming a working group to connect all of the businesses together to discuss events and marketing each others businesses to their customers.

Jim Siplon, *President, Economic Development Corporation (EDC) of Warren County*, advised if the County was interested in determining how to build upon the significant asset base within Warren County it was not only necessary to determine why the tourists who continuously return did so, but also what the needs/wants was of those who had just become aware or were unaware of the County. He stated the EDC of Warren County had completed a study and determined for as long as data had been collected there was never a time when less than \$1.00 out of \$4.00 in the community had not derived from outside of the region. He added often times many people who visit here end up falling in love with the region and relocated here.

Amy Collins, *Director of Tourism, City of Glens Falls*, stated the goal was to determine how to transform Warren County into a year-round destination. She added it was also imperative to work with the CDTA (*Capital District Transportation Authority*) to get them to implement the bus transportation services County-wide.

Tom Guay, *Representing The Sagamore Resort*, apprised it was necessary for marketing efforts to be implemented on a County-wide basis to benefit all businesses. He suggested they pull together all of their unique assets under one central theme to streamline the marketing process.

Alexander Lombard, *Representing Lake George Music Festival*, suggested the focus shift from short-term events to invest in long-term solutions. He mentioned without consistent programming or a clear purpose and totally exposed to the elements the Lake George Festival Commons at Charles R. Wood Park would remain underutilized. He pointed out the tourism industry with regard to families was shifting from low cost high volume attractions to activities that offered enrichment, authenticity and lasting value. He stated erecting a performance arts center on the site of the former Waterslide World property would be a transformative investment with indoor and outdoor seating designed for orchestras, jazz, ballet and other musical performances with indoor space for school programs, festivals and community events which would not be impacted by the weather.

Laura Kohls, *Representing Courtyard Marriott/Marine Village*, advised working collaboratively together would transform the community into a year-round destination that would be beneficial to everyone and she thanked everyone for attending the meeting today.

Gary Thornquist, *Representing Lake George RV Park*, voiced his support of continuing to hold meetings such as this where the County worked collaboratively with the business community to enhance tourism within the County.

Jose Filomeno, *Representing Lake George Beach Club and Village of Lake George Trustee*, apprised it was necessary to

bring all of the components within the region together to market all of them; however, he noted, the binding agent amongst all of the communities was their history. He distributed a flyer for an event he was organizing entitled “Celebration of the Nations a Festival of Tribes” which would be held September 28, 2026 to October 11, 2026 that would consist of hoop dancing, drum & dance, singing, canoe racing, native rodeo and lacrosse tournaments for all ages; a copy of the flyer is on file with the meeting minutes. He added he hoped to obtain funding and marketing assistance from the County for this event.

Chairman Geraghty called for comments from Board Members prior to adjourning the meeting and the following spoke:

Ms. Runyon stated she believed this meeting had been beneficial for the Board, indicating she had taken notes on all of the feedback received.

Mr. Crocitto thanked everyone for attending, noting the feedback had been very useful. He suggested another meeting be held in the future to continue the discussion.

Mr. Strough thanked everyone for attending, adding all of the feedback provided was useful.

Mr. Wild indicated he was pleased with all of the feedback provided; however, he noted, he was disappointed more attendees did not comment. He remarked he hoped another meeting would be scheduled in the future to continue on with the discussion.

Mr. Patchett spoke in favor of erecting a multi-use facility that could be a combination of performing arts and sports that would be beneficial for the entire region. He added revenue sources would have to be determined in order to take on such a large scale project.

There being no further business to discuss, Chairman Geraghty closed the meeting at 11:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Sarah McLenithan, Deputy Clerk of the Board