

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION**

DATE: MAY 31, 2006

**Committee Members Present:**

Caimano  
Tessier  
Gabriels  
Kenny  
Merlino  
Wm. Thomas  
Haskell

**Others Present:**

Joan Parsons, Commissioner of Administrative &  
Fiscal Services  
Joan Sady, Clerk  
Kate Johnson, Tourism Coordinator  
Vonda Beattie, Sr. Account Clerk, Tourism Dept.  
Francis O'Keefe, County Treasurer  
Supervisor O'Connor  
Supervisor F. Thomas  
Supervisor Stec  
Paul Kaza, of Paul Kaza Associates, Inc.  
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office  
Specialist

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Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 9:34 a.m.

Vonda Beattie, Senior Account Clerk with the Tourism Department, distributed an Agenda packet to each of the Committee members and a copy is on file with the minutes.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Tessier, and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk.

Mr. Caimano began his Agenda review with Item 1a, Occupancy Tax Revenue. The County Treasurer, Frank O'Keefe, distributed an Occupancy Tax Report to each of the Committee members and a copy is on file with the minutes.

Mr. O'Keefe explained the report illustrated the Occupancy Tax revenue collected through May 31, 2006. He noted the 2005 collections totaled \$2,792,447 as compared to 2004 which totaled \$2,597,871 for a 7.4% increase in revenue. In 2006, he reported the revenue collected, to-date, totaled \$257,554, in comparison to \$180,540 collected during the same period in 2005. He pointed out the 2006 revenue was currently 41.9% higher than the previous year.

In addition, Mr. O'Keefe remarked that Six Flags had collected approximately \$113,000, or 44% of the 2006 revenue, thus far.

Mr. Caimano thanked the Treasurer for his report.

Mr. Wm. Thomas entered the meeting at 9:35 a.m.

Returning to Agenda review at Item 1b, Apparel for volunteers working the Fire Chief's

Convention, Ms. Johnson reported the shirts had been ordered. She said she expected them to arrive within a week or two. Ms. Sady reported that 8 Supervisors had agreed to volunteer their time during the event.

Mr. Gabriels entered the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

At Agenda Item 1c), Proposed letters of approval/denial of Occupancy Tax funding, Mr. Caimano directed attention to the draft letters included with the Agenda packet. He explained that he had assumed the responsibility of sending the various letters to the applicants, although the Committee had never formally discussed how the applicants would be informed of the Committee's funding determination.

Mr. Caimano acknowledged that the Chairman of the Board of Supervisors routinely handled formal correspondence. Since it was the Committee that decided the level of funding, he said he felt, it made sense for the Committee Chairman to send the correspondence. He invited the Committee members to share their comments.

Motion was made by Mr. Gabriels, seconded by Mr. Kenny, and carried unanimously to approve the format of the proposed letters, and authorized the Committee Chairman to handle the correspondence. Copies of the draft letters are on file with the minutes.

Mr. Caimano resumed Agenda review at Item 2, regarding transportation during the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs' Convention. He explained the Executive Host Committee had reviewed the bus routes and times of service and determined the hours for bus service should be extended. Specifically, he said, to run the buses until 11:30 p.m. for both Thursday and Friday evenings it would be an added cost of \$6,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier and seconded by Mr. Gabriels to authorize an amendment to the contract with the City of Glens Falls (for bus transportation services during the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs' Convention) to increase the hours of service on Thursday and Friday evening (June 15 and 16, 2006) for an increased cost of \$6,000.

Mr. Kenny said he was concerned with the distance the additional buses were traveling, as compared to the number of guests to be served along the routes.

Mr. Caimano reminded the Committee this was the County's first time through the process. He noted the parties involved (with both the transportation and running the convention) had offered this recommendation, as their best educated guess.

Responding to Mr. Tessier's questions, Mr. Caimano clarified the additional \$6,000 was solely to extend the hours of service by 2 hours on Thursday and 4 hours on Friday. He noted he agreed with a statement made by Pam Morin, of the Tourism Department, when she declared "if Warren County wanted to develop into a convention area, the County needed to be the best host possible."

Mr. Caimano acknowledged the County may, in-fact, waste some money the first time through on too many busses. However, he stated, the County also ran the risk of not providing enough bus service.

Mr. VanNess commented that when Lake Placid hosted the 1980 Olympics, the transportation problems they encountered were tremendous. He cautioned the County against making the same mistake.

Mr. Caimano called the vote and motion was carried unanimously to authorize an amendment to the contract with the City of Glens Falls (for bus transportation services during the NYS Association of Fire Chiefs' Convention) to increase the hours of service on Thursday and Friday evening (June 15 and 16, 2006) for an increased cost of \$6,000. (See Resolution No. 365 of 2006.) The Committee authorized a resolution be prepared for the June 16, 2006 Board meeting.

Mr. Caimano said he wanted to hold Agenda Item 3 until last. He turned to Agenda Item 4, Occupancy Tax Funding request from the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, Inc. (of Bolton Landing) for a "Schumann Festival," in the amount of \$2,000.

Mr. Gabriels, Supervisor for the Town of Bolton, reported the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association had noticed that other cultural events had been successful in obtaining Occupancy Tax funding. Consequently, he said representatives from the Association had contacted him to obtain an application for the 2006 season.

Mr. Gabriels pointed out the "Schumann Festival" would run for five days (July 25-30) with seven events. He said the application was for \$2,000 to help with the publicity costs, and the event brought a number of people to the area.

Mr. Kenny reported that he quickly reviewed the application and determined the event fell within the parameters and would qualify for funding, with the minimum number of points in each category. He cautioned, however, that in the second year, the same event would not qualify, since it would not receive the first year's points.

Motion was made by Mr. Kenny, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously to approve the Occupancy Tax Funding request from the Marcella Sembrich Memorial Association, Inc. for a "Schumann Festival," in the amount of \$2,000; and authorized a resolution be prepared for the June 16<sup>th</sup> Board meeting. A copy of the application is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Mason asked Mr. Kenny to explain his comment regarding the minimum number of points. Mr. Kenny pointed out the scoring system guidelines evaluated each event, based upon the number of bed-nights, its economic impact, length of the event, and whether it was the event's 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, or 4<sup>th</sup> year (or beyond).

Returning to Agenda review at Item 5, Smith Travel Research Reports, Mr. Caimano directed attention to the reports included with the Agenda packet. He said the numbers would appear to indicate the Six Flags Great Escape Lodge was included in the report. Mr. Austin reminded the Committee of the rainy weather during the 2005 Memorial Day weekend. He said he felt, the 2006 numbers looked so good due to the warm and sunny weather we were blessed with this year.

Mr. Caimano asked Mr. Austin to verify whether or not the Six Flags Great Escape Lodge was reflected in the Smith Travel Research Reports.

Mr. Caimano turned to Agenda Item 6a, Occupancy Tax Expense Information and Paul Kaza Associates.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Kaza, who explained the Tourism Committee had decided they would like video footage of the June Events in Lake George Village this year. He said his firm proposed a video template could be developed which could be used to support the meetings and convention business, in a more modern fashion, than what Ms. Morin works with currently. Such a video, he stated, would utilize much of the video his firm had been filming over the past year, to produce a video to be used over the long term to recruit convention business. Such filming, he said, would also involve interviews with key participants from each event.

Mr. Kaza distributed a memo regarding the Meetings and Convention Video to each of the Committee members and a copy is on file with the minutes. He explained the memo had been revised (since the Tourism meeting on May 22nd) to include an updated figure for photography expenses. He said they use a still photographer right alongside the videographer to be as efficient as possible. The new arrangement, he noted, would provide the County with every single photograph taken, as opposed to picking and choosing a limited number of shots.

Mr. Kaza remarked this work assignment for the 2006 June Events was far too large a project to be absorbed into the existing contract with the County. Therefore, he said, he felt the existing contract would need to be amended to cover the estimated expenses. At the same time, he suggested the County may want to consider adjusting the length of the contract, so the dates would coincide with the calendar year.

Mr. Caimano pointed out the Tourism Committee had originally agreed to amend the Kaza Associates contract to increase the out-of-pocket expenses by \$32,000 and not the \$37,000. A second issue, he noted, had to do with Mr. Kaza's comment that this project was too large to be considered part of the regular contract with the County. (See the minutes of the May 22, 2006 Tourism Committee meeting for further details.)

Mr. Caimano said it was his understanding that Paul Kaza Associates had completed what they intended to do for the County in 2005. He said he felt a lot of the footage had already been shot and would not need to be duplicated this year. Therefore, he said he felt at least a portion of the 2006 June Events would be a part of the current

contract for video productions.

Mr. VanNess left the meeting at 9:50 a.m.

Mr. Kaza acknowledged the question was a valid question, yet the answer was "No." He explained the current contract for video production did not provide for 3 days of filming or the necessary writing, scripting, interviewing and editing. He said the final piece would be all new, although much of the footage already compiled.

Mr. Kaza pointed out the proposal memo, dated May 24, 2006, was to cover the costs for the photographer and the videographer. He noted the proposal broke down each of the costs by line item, and he reviewed each in detail.

Mr. Stec left the meeting at 9:52 a.m.

Responding to Mr. Caimano's questions, Mr. Kaza explained the contract for 2005 came to a total of \$65,000. He said an allocation had been added in (November of 2005) at the start of the second year's contract (Nov. 05 -Oct. 06), to cover out-of-pocket expenses (related to production) for the first year of the contract (Nov. 04-Oct.05). He noted such allocation had not been included in the second-year's contract.

Mrs. Parsons said it was her recollection that when the first year's contract ended (in October, 2005) Paul Kaza Associates had an out-of-pocket expense related to the first year that had not been submitted in time for the billing date. She said she remembered the figure was either \$49,000 or \$50,000 and the Committee authorized the out-of-pocket be increased in the second year's contract. Therefore, she noted, the arrangement allowed Paul Kaza Associates to recoup the money spent in the first year, although the billing was submitted past the deadline.

Mr. Kaza agreed with Mrs. Parsons history of events. However, he noted, the second year's contract amount did not increase, it was more a matter of when the bill was processed.

Mr. Caimano queried what the amount would be for 2006. Mrs. Parsons and Mr. Kaza agreed that figure was currently \$45,000.

Mr. Caimano clarified that he did not want to pay more, outside of the contract, if there was room inside the contract, to cover at least some of the expenses.

Mr. Kaza explained the "late billing" Mrs. Parsons spoke of was, in-fact, a bill that had been processed after January 1<sup>st</sup> and the first year's contract had already expired. However, he pointed out "late bill" related to filming of the Fall Foliage, which came very late in 2004, and delayed filming, and subsequently delayed the billing.

Continuing, Mr. Kaza explained, the internal planning did not provide for additional footage to be garnered in the same comprehensive fashion used during the first year.

In other words, during the first year they shot 3 days in the summer, 2 days in the fall, etc. He mentioned the second year's contract allowed for just one day of filming, in each of the 4 seasons. He acknowledged the County could opt to use that one day of summer filming and apply it to this meetings/convention production, although he advised against it. He explained that none of the June Events filming would be useful in PR (public relations) or the commercial TV (television) work. In his opinion, he said, it was a good idea to shoot 1 day of new footage for each season, to keep the commercials and PR fresh.

He expressed his concern that the weather would play an important part in the filming, yet they had no control over the conditions.

Mr. Kaza noted that the \$11,200 remaining in the account for 2006 had all been budgeted as described above. He said he felt it was important to point out that last year, in 2005, his firm produced one television commercial in the summer and one in the winter. In 2006, he noted his firm had produced 4 for the winter and 4 for the summer, as well as the re-edit of 4 of them to include a special contest.

Messrs. VanNess and Ste re-entered the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Following an extensive discussion, motion was made by Mr. Wm. Thomas, seconded by Mr. Tessier, and carried unanimously to authorize the contract with Paul Kaza Associates, Inc. be amended to increase the out-of-pocket expenses by \$37,300 to cover the expenses of the "Meetings and Convention" Video; and authorized a resolution be prepared for the June 16, 2006 Board meeting. A copy of the itemized memo is on file with the minutes. (Original contract authorized by Resolution No. 631 of 2004 and amended by Resolution No. 50 of 2006, with out-of-pocket expenses of \$56,000.)

Mr. Kaza said he considered it an incredible privilege to work with Warren County since October of 2004. He pointed out the 2-year contract expired at the end of October and he was concerned the RFP process would need to be initiated rather soon. He said it was not uncommon for contracts to be amended and he offered the County the option to amend the contract for a two year renewal, rather than re-enter the competitive RFP process.

Mr. Caimano acknowledged the process had, in-fact, been initiated and he would keep Mr. Kaza apprized of the progress. He extended his appreciation to Mr. Kaza for the professional services his firm had provided, thus far.

Mr. Tessier apprized the Committee members the State Department of Transportation had planned to close Exit 21 of the Northway for the next 3 weeks. Originally, he said, they planned to have it closed during Americade. He said, they agreed to push the date back by only one week, which meant it would be closed during the Fire Chief's convention.

General discussion ensued.

Mr. Kaza left the meeting at 10:09 a.m.

Mr. Caimano reported that he had recently met with representatives from WAMC Radio, and Supervisor Kenny. He said Warren County had been invited to be part of a regular program that had a broadcast area from south of Albany, into Vermont, and up to the Canadian border. He said the program aired daily and would offer the Tourism Department a forum at an annual cost of \$9,800.

Mr. Caimano explained the County would be mentioned on the daily Round Table program, in a discussion format, rather than a commercial. He said the program was broadcast to 400,000 people in our immediate area, with an ever-changing message, provided by Warren County.

Motion was made by Mr. Caimano, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve a contract with WAMC Radio, in an amount not to exceed \$9,800 for Warren County to be part of a daily radio broadcast, effective June 1, 2006 through May 31, 2007; and authorized a resolution be prepared for the next Board meeting.

Mrs. Parsons reported that a special Board meeting had been scheduled for June 6, 2006 in response to an urgent request from the NYS DOT. She said the DOT required a Board resolution regarding the construction at the intersection of Route 9 and Route 254.

Discussion returned to the closing of Exit 21 and motion was made by Mr. VanNess and seconded by Mr. Caimano to authorize Mr. Wm. Thomas to send a displeasure letter to the DOT, to express the County's dissatisfaction with the closing of Exit 21 at the very beginning of its busiest season, since Warren County depended heavily on the tourism industry.

There being no further business to come before the Committee, on motion by Mr. Kenny and seconded by Mr. Gabriels, Mr. Caimano adjourned the meeting at 10:16 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Carlene A. Ramsey, Sr. Legislative Office Specialist