

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: **OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION**

DATE: DECEMBER 13, 2006

Committee Members Present:

Supervisors Caimano
Tessier
Gabriels
Kenny
Wm. Thomas
Haskell

Others Present:

Catherine Johnson, Tourism Coordinator
Vonda Beattie, Sr. Account Clerk, Tourism Dept.
Paul Dusek, County Attorney
Joan Sady, Clerk of the Board
Supervisor F. Thomas
Supervisor Belden
Supervisor Stec
Robert M. Blais, Mayor, Village of Lake George
Jason Sherry, Lake George Forum
Sheryl Bailey, Swim Lake George
David J. King, Adirondack Theatre Festival
Charles Vandrei, Battle of Lake George
Committee/NYS French & Indian War
Commission
Marisa Muratori, 250th Anniversary of the Siege
of Fort William Henry
Teresa Hoffman, Antique Classic Boat Society
(ACBS)
Madeline Farbman, *The Post-Star*
Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist

Committee Members Absent:

Supervisor Merlino

Mr. Caimano called the meeting to order at 11:05 a.m.

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

Catherine Johnson, Tourism Coordinator, distributed copies of the agenda, a copy of which is on file with the minutes.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Caimano, Chairman of the Committee, who commented the Tourism Department desperately needed additional office space and suggested utilizing the Board of Election Offices upon their relocation or to remodel a portion of the Conference Room 6-103/Tourism Department. In discussions with Buildings & Grounds, Mr. Tessier stated significant wiring would be required for the remodeling; however, the Board of Elections Department would be vacant by March 2007.

Mr. Dusek entered the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

Continuing on with Item 7 of the agenda, Mr. Caimano stated there was a request for a transfer of funds from Travel/Mileage (A.6417444) to Equipment (A.6417220) for the purchase of a color printer in the amount of \$1,399.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously approving the request to transfer funds as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee for consideration. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Continuing on with Item 9 of the agenda, Mr. Caimano stated the Tourism Department requested a transfer of funds from Postage (A.6417424) to Equipment (A.6417220) in the amount of \$5,161 to purchase a computer for the Creative Director.

Motion was made by Mr. Tessier, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously approving the request as outlined above and refer same to the Finance Committee for consideration. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Referring to Item 1 of the agenda, Mr. Caimano stated no report would be given by the County Treasurer relative to Occupancy Tax Revenue. With respect to the negotiations with the New York State Association of Fire Chiefs, Mr. Dusek indicated he forwarded a copy of the proposed contracts to the attorney for the Fire Chiefs Association but had not received a response.

Mr. Dusek left the meeting at 11:12 a.m.

Relative to Item 2 of the agenda, Ms. Beattie reported the City of Glens Falls had been a recipient of 2006 Occupancy Tax funding in the amount of approximately \$5,000 for parking. She said the City of Glens Falls had advised her those funds were not needed and, therefore, she asked that Resolution No. 150 of 2006 be amended to reflect this change. In addition, Ms. Beattie requested to delete the 2006 funding request of the New York State High School Basketball Championship and transfer it to 2007. (Note: Subsequent to the meeting, the County Attorney advised it was not necessary to amend Resolution No. 200 of 2006.)

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously approving the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December Board Meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Mr. Caimano stated an application from the Adirondack Northstars for their January 12-14, 2007 Girls' Hockey Tournament in the amount of \$7,107.15 had been presented to the Occupancy Tax Committee for funding consideration. While Mr. Caimano acknowledged receipt of many Occupancy Tax applications, he said, it was not the intent of this Committee to review all applications until the January meeting. Furthermore, he said he requested this meeting due to the timing of this event.

Currently, Mr. Kenny reported, there was approximately \$400,000 in application requests but only 80% (\$240,000) of those funds could be distributed pursuant to the Occupancy Tax guidelines. Therefore, until all applications were evaluated, he said, he was unsure how the Committee would determine which event was eligible/ineligible and the amount of funding to be distributed.

Mr. W. Thomas entered the meeting at 11:15 a.m.

Relative to this January event, Mr. Kenny stated the applicant (Adirondack Northstars) met the guidelines but the Committee could not make any determination until there was a final tally of all funds. Based upon a quick perusal of the applications, Mr. Tessier noted many applicants who received prior funding assistance had actually increased their request for subsequent years. Mr. Haskell asked if someone had the current 2006 fund balance and Ms. Beattie replied she did not have that information available. Mr. Caimano suggested meeting the first week of January 2007 to review all applications that met the necessary criteria.

Mr. Gabriels entered the meeting at 11:20 a.m.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sheryl Bailey, Swim Lake George Association, who reported her husband, Graham Bailey, was inspired to pursue this journey based upon an article he read about a marathon that took place eighty years ago. She apprised Mr. Bailey had received assistance from USA (United States of America) Swimming as well as support from Robert Blais, Mayor, Village of Lake George; Walt Vendor, Lake George Association, and many other members of the community. She added the marathon and amateur events were currently being sanctioned. Mrs. Bailey asked the Committee to consider the full funding request (\$35,000) for this event as the budgeted amount was approximately \$98,000.

In an attempt to make this event a popular attraction, Mrs. Bailey indicated a fundraiser had been hired to approach local businesses; applications had been submitted to NYS Tourism, Assemblywoman Teresa Sayward, and NYS Senator Betty Little, as well as researching other grant opportunities. She said she estimated approximately twenty international swimmers commencing the race in Lake George Village and finishing the race in the Town of Hague. For the past eighteen years, she apprised her and her husband had observed a marathon that had taken place in Canada that resulted in a photo finish. While this was the first year hosting this event, she stated a conservative estimate of swimming participants would be between 200 and 300 swimmers throughout the northeast but as the reputation of this event grew, they could foresee 2,500 amateur swimmers. In an effort to attract international swimmers, Mrs. Bailey indicated the event had to be scheduled in coordination with other swimming events around the country.

Mrs. Bailey commented since the filing of the application, her husband had hired a local event planner and established a website enabling potential competitors to download

the applications. She added there had been newspaper articles in *The Chronicle*, *The Mirror* and recently received an interview request from *The Post Star*. She asked the Committee to consider the number of volunteers and hours involved, which they estimated to be approximately 1,000 hours. After consulting with local resorts, Mrs. Bailey said she learned it was the lifestyles of the visitors (swimmers, bikers, boaters, hikers) who repeatedly pursued this region.

Mr. Gabriels added there were numerous Bolton Landing residents that were actively engaged in this event. After perusing the application submitted by Mrs. Bailey, Mr. Haskell questioned whether the Occupancy Tax Committee could fund the expense items that had been listed. Mr. Caimano informed Mrs. Bailey the Occupancy Tax Committee only distributed funds for promotional items. Mr. Belden commented this event should be given serious consideration as many of the towns had already paid their share leaving the amount requested for the County portion. Furthermore, Mrs. Bailey stated they had been advised to hire a sports photographer for future event promotion.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Jason Sherry, Lake George Forum, who acknowledged that no one had attended this meeting on behalf of the Adirondack Northstars; however, he stated, this tournament took place at the Forum, Glens Falls Civic Center and the Queensbury Recreation Center. He stated all three rinks were utilized during the three day tournament, bringing 32 hockey teams from across the northeast that had a phenomenal impact on all local hotels.

Mr. Sherry stated they submitted an application for the Northeast Women's Retreat and Expo. Based upon earlier recommendations, he said this event had been scheduled during the mid-week, off-season, focusing more on activities such as golfing and horseback riding and less on exposition.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Teresa Hoffman who submitted an application for the Antique Classic Boat Society. She stated there were over 12,000 members and 53 chapters across the Country and Canada. She reported this show had taken place in California, Michigan and San Diego, averaging 540 registrants and 100 antique boats. With respect to the Lake George show scheduled for late September, early October 2007, she said they had currently booked the entire Fort William Henry with 600 to 800 registrants and 100 boaters.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Marisa Muratori, representing the 250th Anniversary of the Siege of the Fort William Henry. While she acknowledged they did not meet the necessary criteria for Occupancy Tax funding, she stated this event had become a good size re-enactment that was marketed State and County-wide and, therefore, would like to give it some respectability. In summation, Ms. Muratori commented this was a one-time major event that set the stage for other County initiatives for the future, such as the Last of the Mohicans and outdoor theater.

With respect to the Smith Travel Research, Mr. Caimano asked the Committee to decide whether they would like to extend the existing contract or consider other alternatives. Mr. Haskell responded the information received from Smith Travel was extremely valuable to the County and, therefore, he recommended extending their contract.

Ms. Johnson suggested researching the events that revealed an increase in occupancy and utilizing that information to determine the appropriate funding for particular applications. Mr. Kenny queried whether a compilation had been prepared of the various events hosted in Warren County and the funding that had been distributed from the Occupancy Tax Committee and if not, he suggested asking the Information Technology Department for assistance in preparing that document.

Motion was made by Mr. Haskell, seconded by Mr. Gabriels and carried unanimously approving the request to extend the contract with Smith Travel Research Data, and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December Board Meeting. A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.

Discussion ensued.

The general consensus of the committee was to schedule a workshop to determine the qualifications of the applicants after the Special Board Meeting, which was tentatively scheduled for Friday, December 22, 2006 at 11:30 a.m.

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 11:43 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra L. Schreiber, Legislative Office Specialist