

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: DECEMBER 3, 2010

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
 KENNY
 BELDEN
 STRAINER
 GOODSPEED
 MCCOY
 CONOVER

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
 KATE JOHNSON, DIRECTOR
 PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
 TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
 PAUL DUSEK, COUNTY ATTORNEY/ADMINISTRATOR
 JOAN SADY, CLERK OF THE BOARD
 KEVIN GERAGHTY, BUDGET OFFICER
 SUPERVISOR TAYLOR
 SUPERVISOR STEC
 LUISA CRAIGE-SHERMAN, WARREN COUNTY COUNCIL OF CHAMBERS
 MICHAEL CONSUELO, SPECIAL EVENTS COORDINATOR
 FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY RESORT
 DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
 THOM RANDALL, *ADIRONDACK JOURNAL*
 JOANNE COLLINS, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 10:34 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the September 30, 2010 Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kate Johnson, Director of the Tourism Department, who distributed copies of the agenda to the Committee members; *a copy of the agenda is on file with the minutes.*

Commencing the agenda review, Ms. Johnson presented a request to transfer funds in the amount of \$15,600 to cover the budget shortfalls for Retirement and Dental Insurance; and a request to transfer funds in the amount of \$730 for the purchase of a digital camera.

Motion was made by Mr. Strainer, seconded by Mr. McCoy and carried unanimously to approve both requests for transfer of funds as outlined above and to refer same to the Finance Committee. *Copies of the requests for Transfer of Funds are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson presented eight resolution requests for 2011 as follows:

- ▶ To authorize attendance at 2011 in-State and out-of-State consumer shows and conferences by the Tourism Department personnel and County Supervisors, as itemized in Schedule "A";
- ▶ To authorize attendance at 2011 in-State and out-of-State Canadian Motorcoach trade shows, sales blitzes, marketplaces, and conferences by the Tourism Department personnel and County Supervisors, as itemized in Schedule "A";
- ▶ To authorize contracts for 2011 brochure distribution with the Lake Placid Chamber of Commerce (\$400); Henry Hudson Tours, Inc., d/b/a Travel Plaza Information Centers

(\$5,495); and HA-PE-DE, Inc. (\$2,570), for a total amount not to exceed \$8,465;

- ▶ To authorize the Director of Tourism to utilize models for Warren County/Adirondack Photography and video in 2011, not to exceed six models at a \$50 stipend each, for a total amount not to exceed \$300;
- ▶ To extend the contract with Smith Travel Research, Inc., to provide hotel occupancy and rate data to Warren County, for a total amount not to exceed \$1,750;
- ▶ To extend the contract with the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, Inc., for regional marketing services, for a total amount not to exceed \$128,000;
- ▶ To authorize a contract with Production Equipment, Inc., for videography services for 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$12,000; and
- ▶ To authorize a contract with Working Pictures, Inc., for post-production and online editing services, for a total amount not to exceed \$7,500.

Motion was made by Mr. Belden, seconded by Mr. Strainer and carried unanimously to approve all eight requests as outlined above and the necessary resolutions were authorized for the December 17, 2010 Board meeting. *Copies of the resolution request forms are on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson stated that a Request for Proposal (RFP) was released for sound and audio production services, and further review was required prior to awarding the bid. She presented a request for Committee authorization to award the bid to the low bidder for sound and audio production services, for the period commencing January 1, 2011 and terminating December 31, 2011, for a total amount not to exceed \$5,000.

Motion was made by Mr. McCoy, seconded by Mr. Belden and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the December 17, 2010 Board meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Ms. Johnson recognized the Tourism Department staff for their work on the travel guide and winter brochure, which included extensive listings. She cited Peter Girard, Creative Director, who completed the design and layout. Mr. Girard showed overhead samples of the various publications to the Committee members.

Ms. Johnson reported that the whitewater rafting brochure was currently in production and the winter print ads and online ads were producing results. She noted that a winter campaign ad would run on cable and network stations beginning December 6, 2010. She apprised that the Tourism Department had produced a winter mid-week special campaign for the second consecutive year, which offered cost free opportunities for lodging facilities to advertise up to three special packages. She noted there were seven participants.

Regarding the summer conversion survey, Ms. Johnson noted that the survey compared figures from 2007 and could be accessed via a link included in the newsletter. She reported the overall response rates for 2010 were excellent and included information, such as alternate destination

interests, visitor statistics and daily spending habits. Ms. Johnson pointed out that the Travel Guide also included pertinent demographic information provided by businesses.

Ms. Johnson informed of a New York State matching funds grant opportunity for approximately \$80,000 for which she would keep the Committee apprised.

According to Ms. Johnson, a public relations success story resulted from travelroads.com, coordinated by Joanne Conley, Assistant Tourism Coordinator, who handled press inquiries for the Department. She stated that an extensive story had been done on the area which included images and links throughout the County.

Ms. Johnson informed of the new Tourism slogan entitled "Four Great Seasons, One Outstanding Destination". She thanked the Information Technology (IT) Department for their work to update the Tourism database, thereby increasing efficiency.

Mr. Goodspeed stated that the Winter brochure was well done, professional, and included excellent photographic pieces. He suggested that the logo depicting Gore Mountain, Hickory Hill and West Mountain, which appeared on the back of the brochure be relocated to the front cover and Ms. Johnson and Mr. Girard concurred. He noted that North Creek recorded 7,000 to 8,000 skiers per day, and the logo representing the area's ski mountains provided a visual reminder of the area's skiing opportunities.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, Group Tour Promoter, who referred to the first color version of the 2011 group travel planner and the first printed publication utilizing the QR (quick response) code for smart phones.

For group tours, Ms. Brand stated that she was preparing for the largest annual show, the American Bus Association (ABA) show, to be held from January 8 through 12th. She expressed the importance of the tour operator binder she had completed which would be used as a resource tool by tour operators. Ms. Brand reviewed the list of local company sponsors and she noted a 10 foot booth would be set up at the show.

Also pertaining to group tours, Ms. Brand referenced the Ohio Hikers group, comprised of 45 adults, who stayed at the Quality Inn for five nights to tour the region. Ms. Brand noted that the group sent a thank you video which showed the group enjoying various sites throughout the area and she displayed the video for the Committee.

Addressing local outreach and promotions, Ms. Brand reported that she was working with the coordinator of the Troy Shirt Factory in Glens Falls and invited local tour operators to their open house event. Ms. Johnson noted the site had some accessibility issues; however, she asserted, it held great potential and interest for visitors.

Ms. Brand apprised of the Splash and Ski package created for Great Escape Lodge, Gore Mountain and West Mountain. She noted that Mike Barbone, owner of West Mountain Ski Resort, had purchased a shuttle to be used in a package which included a one-night stay, admission and lift tickets.

Moving on to confirmed events, Ms. Brand noted information received from Michael Consuelo, Special Events Coordinator, regarding the two-day West Mountain Warrior Run to take place

in June. The event, she said, would include a 5K challenge course on the mountain to include eleven obstacles comprising mud, ropes, bridges and fire. She said the event would include bands, a barbeque and helicopter rides. Additionally, she said, the event presented fund-raising opportunities for not-for-profit agencies.

According to Ms. Brand, Dean Reinke, founder of the United States Running Association's (USRA) Half Marathon Series, had expressed interested in the area for an April or October event date which would include a three year contract.

Ms. Brand summarized the shows attended, leads forwarded to Mr. Consuelo, and the 2011 schedule which were included in the agenda packets. She referred to a picture of a cross country tour group from Honolulu, Hawaii who had visited the region.

Mr. Consuelo noted that he collaborated with Ms. Brand regularly to avoid duplication of efforts and they met on a bi-monthly basis to share information and achieve optimum marketing outreach outcomes. Mr. Kenny affirmed the efficiency of the current arrangement.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Mr. Girard, who reviewed the current internet promotions. He informed that 4 x 5 foot commuter rail station posters which displayed the new slogan, "Four Great Seasons, One Great Destination" included the ski mountain logos with QR information accessibility via smart phones. He apprised that the New York State (NYS) kiosk information center video on demand (VOD) would run every 24 minutes on a continuous 24 hour/7 day basis.

Mr. McCoy acknowledged the advent of cutting edge QR technology and he stressed the importance of remaining cognizant of the varying levels of technological savvy of the public, and recommended that the County remain vigilant of opportunities to educate in this regard. Mr. Girard expressed that uses of such technologies were expected to grow and develop, to eventually reach larger portions of the population. A discussion ensued.

Mr. Girard reviewed the email blast distribution and 3 day response rates for year round activities for couples including scenic foliage excursions, vacation packages, and the winter give-away. Ms. Johnson noted the significant growth in the email distribution list from 103,000 in January to the current 120,000 recipients. Mr. Girard noted that updates made to the list occurred immediately.

Referencing the quarterly news bulletin, Mr. Girard stated it included travel trends, research, productions, QR codes, upcoming opportunities, social media information and file sharing sites for up-loadable video clips. He showed the winter commercial to the Committee members and noted the ability to effectively track responses. The lakegeorgeny.com site, he said, allowed for specific TV tracking.

Continuing, Mr. Girard stated that the travel guide was accessible online by three access methods which included email, down loads or viewing online. He noted that utilization of the links bolstered search engine results for both parties. Mr. Conover underscored the significance of tracking information for business use which could ultimately strengthen sales.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Luisa Craige-Sherman, Warren County Council of Chambers, who stated that the Fall Fund Raiser was held aboard Shoreline Cruises' Adirondac

and acknowledged representation from Stony Creek, North Creek, Warrensburg and Lake George. She said the December dinner meeting held at the Georgian Resort was hosted by the Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce (LGRCC) and the Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) and she thanked Messrs. Merlino, Belden and Kenny for their support. She noted that Pam Morin, First Wilderness Heritage Corridor Event Facilitator, had provided a well anticipated update. The January meeting, she said, was planned as a business only meeting which would not include dinner.

In October, Ms. Craige-Sherman apprised, the Council of Chambers had voted to approve letters of support for the LGRCC's response to the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the special events sales & services convention, and to urge Supervisors to make a timely decision regarding the Upper Hudson River Railroad contract.

Ms. Craige-Sherman referenced information received from the New York State Department of Labor (NYS DOL) regarding the Hospitality Wage Act, proposing mandatory minimum wage for employees receiving tips. The proposal, she said, was under consideration in Albany and minimal feedback had been received, as well as an unanticipated lack of responses from hoteliers and other businesses who could be significantly impacted by the legislation.

Regarding the Centurion Cycling event, Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that the Council of Chambers would be the ideal liaison for the municipalities.

Mr. Belden and Mr. Strainer expressed their support of Mr. Girard attending a Council of Chamber meeting in 2011, to share information, show video work, and answer questions.

Referencing the Travel Guide, Mr. Goodspeed pointed out an artist's rendering of the Gore Mountain Interconnect on page 64, which was a poster currently in distribution. He said the straight yellow line indicated the path of the new chair lift, the Hudson Chair (triple chair), for which funding had been secured by Senator Little, and was near completion. It was noteworthy, he said, that the new chair was located on the site of the first cable t-bar in the United States which was installed in 1946. The chair, he said, would make it possible to ski from any point on Gore Mountain to the ski facility located on the edge of the business district. He declared this to be the largest boon to economic development in the Town of Johnsbury since the mountain was first established as a ski facility. He also referenced the picture of former Chairman William Thomas, as train engineer, on the same page. He stated that the mountain was expected to open in late December and once the interconnect lift was operable, he said, Gore Mountain would be the sixth largest ski facility east of the Mississippi River.

Fred Austin of the Fort William Henry Resort, asserted the importance and pertinence of the information reported by Smith Travel Research, Inc., to the tourism industry at large. He apprised that he had forwarded information to various hoteliers, as well as Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, and noted the need for improved distribution of the reports. He expounded that the Smith Travel Report compiled for the County reflected a comparison of the region to other northeast tourist areas, and the report produced for franchise businesses reflected comparisons within a competitive business set.

Ms. Craige-Sherman said the Council of Chambers and the LGRCC had utilized the Smith Travel Reports to view differences among regions. She cited an inquiry from a potential developer for occupancy tax rates and other information for comparative purposes, which she said, could

have significant outcomes.

Ms. Craige-Sherman asked if a Smith Travel executive summary based on several years of data had been completed. A discussion ensued with regard to shared information relative to proprietary information and the Smith Travel Research reports, and Mr. Dusek stated that an assessment of needs would be necessary with input from Ms. Craige-Sherman and Mr. Austin, in order to work out a plan with a Smith Travel representative. Mr. Austin noted the beneficial nature of the graphs included in the reports. Ms. Craige-Sherman stated that it was cost prohibitive for both the Council of Chambers and the private sector to subscribe to the reports or to produce publications and noted that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYS DEC) no longer published maps or guides for public perusal. She expressed appreciation for publications produced by the Tourism Department and she underscored the demand for the quality material made possible through occupancy tax dollars.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Belden and seconded by Mr. Strainer, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joanne Collins, Legislative Office Specialist