

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: PARK OPERATIONS & MANAGEMENT (O&M)

DATE: SEPTEMBER 9, 2015

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS: MONROE
MERLINO
KENNY
DICKINSON

OTHERS PRESENT:

VOTING MEMBER:
ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR OF THE VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
JEFFERY TENNYSON, SUPERINTENDENT OF THE DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC WORKS
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
KEVIN B. GERAGHTY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
DAVID HARRINGTON, SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC WORKS,
VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
MICHAEL CONSUELO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE LAKE
GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND CVB
FRANK DITTRICH, WARREN COUNTY LODGING ASSOCIATION
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
SUPERVISORS BROCK
CONOVER
TAYLOR
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
MOLLY GANOTES, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

Mr. Monroe called the meeting of the Park Operations & Management (O&M) to order at 10:40 a.m. He announced there was no formal agenda for the meeting.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Blais, Mayor of the Village of Lake George, who distributed copies of the Promoter's Meeting Synopsis to the Committee members; *a copy of the Meeting Synopsis is on file with the minutes.*

Mayor Blais announced he attended a meeting on August 8th 2015, with every individual that utilized the Festival Commons this year. He advised the discussion revolved around what was working and what required improvements. In regards to the Festival Commons he reported very few events were profitable. He said he felt the off season was a better time for generating revenue at the Festival Commons rather than June and July. He reported only 600 tickets were sold for the Arlo Guthrie concert, which sold tickets for \$50 each; however, he noted in order to break even they needed to sell at least 1,000 tickets. He noted even with a big act in July and August there were still problems. He stated the majority of the discussion centered on the stage. He said Elan Planning and Design, Landscape, Architecture, PLLC, and Charlie Hoffman, Architect, who were contracted by the County,

discussed what they felt was needed and what was not in regards to the design of the stage. He added the conceptual design would be presented to the Committee in the next month or two, following which a grant application would be submitted with the desire for funding to be awarded in the spring of next year so the stage was ready in 2017

Mayor Blais advised the greatest problem appeared to be parking. He said the off season offered plenty of parking, as there was parking for 1,000 cars within a five minute walk. He added Beach Road closed their parking lot during Save the Lake Festival because it was at full capacity. He indicated the Lake George Steam Boat parking lot was full by 11:00 a.m. leaving no parking. He said free parking was available at the old Off Track Betting (OTB) lot; however, he said, those who parked there had trouble crossing Route 9. He remarked there needed to be a solution for parking.

Next Mayor Blais indicated the LED highway signs were being designed and he discussed the need for a box office. He said people needed a place to walk up and buy advance tickets, not a table with a tent but rather a staffed structure.

Messrs. Brock and Taylor exited the meeting at 10:58 a.m.

Mayor Blais discussed fees for 2016; informing new contracts were ready to be sent out. He suggested offering a package price for renting the Festival Commons and the West Brook parking lot. Mr. Kenny asked the number of cars that could be parked at the West brook parking lot and Jeffery Tennyson, Superintendent of the Department of Public Works (DPW), responded after the expansion was completed 90 cars could park there. Mayor Blais commented with no stage, lights or sound it would be difficult to rent the Festival Commons next year. Mr. Dickinson added the parking lots were single access and could be staffed and controlled. David Harrington, Superintendent of Public Works, Village of Lake George, addressed fees and funding. He informed the promoters applied for and received occupancy tax for the space and the money was returned in fees. He suggested subsidizing occupancy tax at the Festival Commons with \$50,000 a year given directly to the Festival Commons; in turn the space would be rented for nothing. Mr. Monroe questioned whether promoters would still pay for parking and Mr. Harrington replied in the positive. Mayor Blais proposed renting the space for \$1,500 and the parking lot for \$1,500 or both for \$2,500, of which \$1,250 would be allocated to the County for the parking lot and \$1,250 would be allocated to the Festival Commons. Mr. Tennyson reported the revenue from the Beach Road parking lot was \$255,000 in 2014 which included hourly and event parking; he said the West Brook parking lot provided \$100,000 in revenue. He expressed there would be a real impact if the parking lots were

discounted during events. He advised grants were received to improve the West Brook parking lot later this year and the County bonded \$180,000 for parking meters and the work to date. He said in addition to that they allocated \$75,000 of County funds into the project for lighting and other elements not covered by the grant. He indicated the County would spend \$255,000 to complete the project. Mr. Kenny inquired if there was room to expand the West Brook parking lot and Mr. Tennyson answered the current project provided for the maximum expansion. Mayor Blais suggested renting the parking lot at a discounted rate during the off season, as parking was readily available during the off season when the Festival Commons should be rented. He added there were two groups interested in renting the Festival Commons in June and October. Mr. Monroe questioned if parking was the problem or did people have other plans at the same time and Mayor Blais responded it was a combination of many factors one of which the hot summer weather as the excessive temperatures were not conducive for the events. Mr. Harrington added the space would be suitable for craft fairs. Mayor Blais indicated the fee for the craft fair was \$50 per vendor and noting 2 craft fairs were recently cancelled because there was no foot traffic in front of the Festival Commons. He said the Festival Commons was hidden and vacationers in town for 3 or 4 days had their time planned with all the activities Lake George offered. Mr. Monroe expressed work was being done on the stage, parking and the highway signs. He stated focus needed to be on the fee structure and box office.

Mayor Blais suggested putting the box office on West Brook Road to make it easily accessible to get tickets and park. Mr. Tennyson suggested putting a ticket booth on Beach Road because that was where the people were.

Frank Dittrich, Warren County Lodging Association, indicated if occupancy tax was used to solve the fee problem and did nothing to get people there; the loss would shift from the promoter to the County. He said it was better for the County to draw people to the community when there was less to do, as this would bring new occupancy tax money, new sales tax money and businesses would stay open longer in turn keeping employment going in the County. He remarked the Festival Commons needed to be promoted. Mayor Blais agreed that more had to be done to help promote the Festival Commons.

Next Michael Consuelo, Executive Director of the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and CVB, reported the CVB was there to help promote the Festival Commons. He commented this was the time of year when he was out at trade shows and events where they promoted the Festival Commons, Civic Center, Lake George Forum and The Dome. He stated there was a lack of material to help promote the Festival Commons, adding there was a

website with lack of collateral to help promote it. He remarked that there was a definitive need for a sales and marketing plan.

Mr. Kenny expressed he was happy to go through the growing pains at the infancy of the Festival Commons project. He added as the problems were continually being solved they continued to grow they would eventually reach a tremendous magnitude. Mr. Monroe stated Mr. Kenny made an excellent point, as the Festival Commons had made great progress. Mr. Consuelo added the Village Center could sell tickets in the interim until a box office became available.

Mayor Blais expressed the need for fee adjustments. He said this year the fee was \$1,500 for the Festival Commons and \$1,500 for the parking lot. He noted he would like to offer a package fee. He suggested changing the fee structure or restructuring the occupancy tax to keep people interested in renting the space. Mr. Tennyson advised if the fee for the County parking lot was to change it would have to be referred to the Public Works Committee. Mr. Monroe remarked if the fee stayed the same for the parking lot and the occupancy tax or fee to rent the space was changed than there would be no change to the revenue for the County owned parking lot. He recommended the Public Works Committee keep the parking lot fee the same at \$1,500 for 2016 and have Mr. Tennyson work on plans for a box office. He suggested subsidizing the operation of the Festival Commons through occupancy tax. Mayor Blais indicated \$47,500 was received form occupancy tax. He asked if occupancy tax revenue could be used for a box office and Mr. Tennyson answered funds were available and he did not anticipate an extreme fee for a modified shed type structure. He added he would bring an estimate for a box office to the next Park O&M Committee meeting. He inquired if the Village Center would sell tickets this fall and Mayor Blais answered in the positive.

Mayor Blais informed the Shrine Circus was a one day event scheduled for September 19, 2015. He requested authorization to accept a \$500 deposit and move the circus from Battlefield Park to the Festival Commons. Mr. Tennyson asked if the fee was waived and Mayor Blais responded the circus was not paying a fee at Battlefield Park and they were not awarded occupancy tax since it was a one day event.

Motion was made by Mr. Tennyson and seconded by Mr. Kenny and carried unanimously to accept the \$500 deposit from the Shrine Circus and wave the \$1,500 fee for use of the Festival Commons and the necessary resolution was authorized for the September 18th Board Meeting.

Mr. Monroe recommended the fee for use of the West Brook parking lot remain at \$1,500 for 2016. And the Committee agreed to refer same to the Public Works Committee.

Mayor Blais advised he reached out to the New York Municipal Insurance Reciprocal (NYMIR), and received information regarding favorable risk transfer for inflatable rides. He said bounce house vendors were required to sign a Hold Harmless Agreement. Mr. Monroe inquired if the NYMIR would cover them for any residual risk and Mayor Blais answered in the positive.

Mr. Kenny asked if the State was petitioned for a stop light at West Brook Road and Route 9 to allow people to cross and Mayor Blais replied in the negative. Mr. Dickinson stated a temporary stop light could be used during events. Mr. Monroe added that would be an inexpensive answer to the parking problem.

As there was no further business to come before the Park O&M Committee, on motion made by Mr. Merlino and seconded by Mr. Dickinson, Mr. Monroe adjourned the meeting at 11:44 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Ganotes, Legislative Office Specialist