

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: FEBRUARY 27, 2018

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS: MERLINO
DICKINSON
WILD
GERAGHTY
DIAMOND
DRISCOLL

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
JOANNE CONLEY, DIRECTOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER
RONALD F. CONOVER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
MARY ELIZABETH KISSANE, COUNTY ATTORNEY
SARAH MCLENITHAN, DEPUTY CLERK OF THE BOARD

SUPERVISORS LEGGETT
LOEB
MAGOWAN
SIMPSON
SOKOL

MICHAEL SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER
REPRESENTING THE LAKE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE
AND CVB
GINA MINTZER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
KRISTEN HANIFAN, SPECIAL EVENTS & CONVENTION SALES
DIRECTOR
FRANK DITTRICH, WARREN COUNTY LODGING ASSOCIATION
DAVID KENNY, MARRIOT COURTYARD
TOM GUAY, REPRESENTING THE SAGAMORE
KATHY FLACKE MUNCIL, REPRESENTING FORT WILLIAM HENRY
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
MOLLY GANOTES-GLEASON, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST
*SEE SIGN IN SHEET OF OTHER MEETING ATTENDEES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS: STROUGH
FRASIER
HOGAN

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the February 27, 2018 Meeting of the Tourism Committee; the meeting in its entirety can be viewed on the Warren County website using the following link:
<http://www.warrencountyny.gov/gov/comm/Archive/2018/tourism/>

Mr. Merlino called the meeting of the Tourism Committee to order at 1:17 p.m.

Prior to commencing the meeting, Mr. Merlino notified he would speak to the Clerk of the Board of Supervisors to inquire if the Tourism and Occupancy Tax Committee meetings could be held on a day of their own to prevent rushing through the agenda and not discussing all the necessary business.

Motion was made by Mr. Dickinson, seconded by Mr. Driscoll and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Committee meeting, subject to correction by the Clerk of the Board.

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

Commencing her agenda review, Ms. Conley presented a request to fill the vacant position of Assistant Tourism Coordinator, Annual Base Salary \$44,082, due to resignation. She indicated the individual decided not to return after maternity leave and she notified the funds for the position were available in the budget. She expressed filling the position was imperative for the department, as there were tasks not being completed because there was not enough time to do all the work.

Mr. Dickinson made a motion to table the request, but the motion failed due to the lack of obtaining a second. He said he had questions regarding the job description, salary and benefits.

Mr. Diamond inquired if the individual in that position could travel to area towns and villages and promote local events and Ms. Conley responded in the positive, adding the Department was focusing on promoting events that were taking place during each month.

Mr. Geraghty apprised if the position was approved it could be used to share services with other towns and the City of Glens Falls.

Mr. Driscoll asked if this was a Civil Service position and Ms. Conley answered in the affirmative, noting the position was provisional and when an exam was available they would take the test and would have to have a passing score to maintain employment.

Mr. Wild spoke regarding the future goals of the Tourism Department and how they were impacted by not having an Assistant Tourism Coordinator and Ms. Conley responded it was impacting their presence on social media because they did not renew the \$40,000 contract with Trampoline Design LLC for social media services. She continued, since the previous assistant was very proficient with social media and community outreach she decided to keep the position within the department. She advised she required help with research and statics, along with social media, but she currently did not have the resources available. Mr. Wild asked what tangible results would be seen with the assistant being on-staff and Ms. Conley replied they would be able to track progress for social media and research with ROI (Return on Investment); she added she was looking to track print advertising as well, so she could provide the Committee with the ROI.

Mr. Dickinson remarked a considerable amount of money was given to the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and the CVB (Convention and Visitors Bureau) to perform certain services and work with the Tourism Department, which he noted was going very well. He informed the Lake George Chamber of Commerce and the CVB were in need of manpower to ensure the success of the collaboration. He remarked filling the position was premature and he suggested the individual should work for the CVB and perform responsibilities of the Assistant Tourism Coordinator, as well. Mr. Merlino indicated he had received correspondence that led him to believe the desire of the business community wanted to do away with the Tourism Department. Mr. Wild suggested postponing hiring for the position and work on a master plan and Mr. Dickinson concurred. Mr. Merlino added they did not know if the position could be shared with the CVB in the future and he recommended filling the position and tailoring it to their needs. Mr. Geraghty advised he could support the position if the main focus was events. A discussion ensued.

Frank Dittrich, *Warren County Lodging Association*, indicated the business community was looking at a different way to think about tourism. He mentioned occupancy tax funded the positions in the Tourism Department and he said the business community's question was with the opportunity that was present with the collaboration with the CVB, why they could not move forward with the CVB and backfill the support needed and solve the issues of marketing and execution. He indicated there were Chamber of Commerce locations with multiple CVB's compared to having only one here. He apprised the goal was to drive the tourism economy and produce more sales tax revenue. A brief discussion ensued.

A motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Wild and carried by majority vote, with Mr. Dickinson voting in opposition, to approve the request and to forward same to the Personnel & Higher Education Committee for reporting purposes. *A copy of the Notice of Intent to Fill Vacant Position form is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, *Group Tour Promoter*, who apprised she was pleased to meet with the current Committee members. She indicated the Travel Trade Marketing Plan included in the agenda outlined her plans throughout 2018. She mentioned the first page of the plan provided an introduction to motorcoach, details outlining her job, facts, figures, a travel forecast and statistics for national and international tours. She remarked one of her goals for 2018 was to improve tracking. She noted the CVB purchased Simple View software which provided her with more efficient way of knowing what motorcoaches were entering our communities. She encouraged anyone with questions regarding the Travel Trade Marketing Plan to contact her. She indicated the Travel Guide was designed by herself and Peter Girard, *Creative Director*, and she said it was distributed when they were at shows or following up on leads. Ms. Conley added the Travel Guide translated to the website to aid individuals through their vacation planning along with Ms. Brand's contact information for assistance.

David Kenny, *Marriot Courtyard*, spoke regarding the condition of the retail market noting he expended \$600,000-\$700,000 on an annual basis for advertising. He indicated the County set a precedence working with the Great Escape on advertising. He mentioned he was planning to renovate the retail outlets he owned in hopes of attracting more businesses. He added he charged his tenants 2% for advertising. He indicated he was looking for his advertising dollars to go further. Mr. Merlino inquired how much money he was interested in and Mr. Kenny replied he was interested in a combined advertising effort with the County. Ms. Conley recognized the retail outlets were a year-round destination regardless of the weather. She notified the County had done digital and social media advertising that included the retail outlets. Mr. Merlino informed the conversation would continue at the Occupancy Tax Committee meeting and he would inquire if there were funds available to create an advertisement that incorporated the outlets; however, he said, Mr. Kenny would have to be involved.

Mr. Geraghty exited the meeting at 1:52 p.m.

Tom Guay, *Representing the Sagamore*, spoke regarding his disappointment that the request for an Assistant Tourism Coordinator was not discussed with the business community. Kevin Markham, *Warren County Resident*, apprised the Tourism Department was doing a great job. He informed his concern involved the question regarding the positions job description which were not addressed, before it was approved.

Kathy Flacke Muncil, *Representing Fort William Henry*, indicated the Tourism Department was doing an exceptional job and she thanked them for their leadership. She mentioned there was more to tourism than marketing and informed there had to be a strategy in place. She added the business community looked forward to providing input to aid in tourism. She suggested reviewing the BBG&G report from 2016 to aid in developing a strategy.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Diamond, and seconded by Mr. Driscoll, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 2:09 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Ganotes-Gleason, Legislative Office Specialist