

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: TOURISM

DATE: APRIL 30, 2018

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS MERLINO
DICKINSON
STROUGH
WILD
GERAGHTY
HOGAN

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

JOANNE CONLEY, DIRECTOR
PETER GIRARD, CREATIVE DIRECTOR
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
MARY ELIZABETH KISSANE, COUNTY ATTORNEY
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

SUPERVISORS FRASIER
DIAMOND
DRISCOLL

SUPERVISORS BEATY
LEGGETT
LOEB
SIMPSON
SOKOL

MIKE SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER

KIRSTY MIHILL, ADWORKSHOP

MATTHEW ROBERT, ADWORKSHOP

REPRESENTING THE LAKE GEORGE REGIONAL CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB:

GINA MINTZER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

KRISTEN HANIFAN, SPECIAL EVENTS & CONVENTION SALES DIRECTOR

JAMES GRIFFITH, AVIATION MALL

DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*

LESLIE LOVELACE, SECRETARY TO THE CLERK OF THE BOARD

*SEE SIGN IN SHEET FOR OTHER MEETING ATTENDEES

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the April 30, 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 10:30 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Strough, seconded by Ms. Hogan and carried unanimously to approve the minutes of the previous Tourism 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 advised the only items included on the agenda for discussion pertained to updates and a presentation. She said she had sent a newsletter to the Committee members which included an update on the Smith Trend Report (STR), which indicated the demand for room rentals was up and off to a good start for 2018. She advised she and Tanya Brand, *Group Tour Promoter*, had attended the Empire State Tourism Conference last week, which Gina Mintzer, *Executive Director, Lake George Regional Chamber of Commerce & CVB*, had also attended in an effort to network with their peers and stay up to date on topics. She added she had met with Ms. Mintzer & Kristen Hanifan, *Special Events & Convention Sales Director, CVB*, for a monthly update and sharing of services.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Peter Girard, *Creative Director*, who mentioned there was a break out session held for the "Travel Guide of the Future" at the Empire State Tourism Conference during which the Lake George Guide had been used as an example of what magazines should begin their

transition to. He then reviewed a power point presentation regarding the Tourism Department's activities during the first quarter of 2018; *a copy of which is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Merlino requested that Mike Swan, *County Treasurer*, provide an update on Occupancy Tax revenues collected. Mr. Swan reported as of April 26th, Occupancy Tax revenues had increased by 1.31% with a total of \$291,452 collected, equating to an increase of \$3,800. Discussion ensued regarding rooms occupied.

Mr. Wild queried what the correlation was between Occupancy Tax and the demand for rooms, requesting that this information be prepared for the meeting next month. Mr. Merlino advised the Tourism Department had the information Mr. Wild was requesting, but on a month to month basis, and he extended an invitation to the Committee members to visit the department to view it. Mr. Wild concluded the information did not correlate. Mr. Merlino retorted that this was in the process of being formulated, apprising the best way to determine the success of Occupancy Tax was at the end of the year. He added he would obtain the current figures.

Mr. Merlino commented he hoped Warren County would get involved with Airbnb and pass a local law allowing the County to collect occupancy tax from the service. Mr. Beaty remarked he thought the County already had gotten involved. Mr. Dickinson interjected the process was stalled for collecting occupancy tax on home rentals, informing the issue was with the inability to implement this charge. He notified a public hearing on short-term rentals (anything less than a month) was coming up which involved the Towns of Warrensburg, Lake George and Chestertown. He proceeded by explaining the intent was to ensure the short-term rentals were issued a business license which would have requirements such as smoke alarms, ingress and egress from the basement, places to park cars, notifying how many bedrooms and how many guests could be expected there along with an emergency contact in Warren County that could be reached 24/7. Mr. Dickinson further explained home rentals were not currently required to pay occupancy tax if services were not provided which most often meant linens.

Mr. Swan interjected the County was trying to coordinate so that they would be able to start collecting occupancy tax. He advised there was not an issue collecting occupancy tax as per the language included in the current law concerning occupancy tax which was why coordinating the collection needed to be established. Mr. Dickinson apprised his previous discussion with Airbnb indicated Airbnb would collect the money required for tax from the rentals that were registered through them and would send a check to the County, but would not provide a list of all those who were registered. He indicated this information was something which was still obtainable even though it would not be provided.

Mr. Girard explained Adworkshop had the contract for media buy to merge digital buy with television buy. He explained the decision was made to shift Winter spending from a television campaign to a digital campaign, but there was television advertising in the Summer. He added that Adworkshop managed the media buy and advertising placements.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kristy Mihill, *Senior Media Planner/Buyer, Adworkshop*, who reviewed a power point presentation outlining the Warren County Tourism January - February 2018 Media Campaign Report. *A copy of the report is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Wild inquired what was considered a successful campaign percentage above average and Ms. Mihill replied they had been 100% above, informing successful was considered 15-20% above average. She added, they were normally 100% above average. Mr. Wild queried if the bookings and visits were being tracked and she replied in the negative, advising that they did not have that ability. Mr. Wild requested dollars to cents per click for their next presentation and she responded she would provide those.

Mr. Beaty inquired if Ms. Mihill had any statistics on whether the drop in the exchange rate had impacted travel and Ms. Mihill replied in the affirmative, she stated the data indicated Canadians were still visiting Lake George to shop because the tax and travel was lower than the taxes in Canada.

Mr. Merlino thanked Adworkshop for the presentation.

Mr. Girard apprised a trial run test was completed to promote Adirondack Thunder Hockey; he noted he had met with Jeff Mead, *Cool Insuring Agency General Manager*, to implement the promotion across the Thunder season, specifically for mid-week games in an effort to increase attendance for next year.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Dickinson and seconded by Mr. Strough, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:21 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Leslie Lovelace, Secretary to the Clerk of the Board