

**WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

**COMMITTEE: TOURISM**

**DATE: AUGUST 21, 2018**

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**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

SUPERVISORS: MERLINO  
DICKINSON  
FRASIER  
WILD  
GERAGHTY  
HOGAN  
DRISCOLL

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:**

SUPERVISORS: STROUGH  
DIAMOND

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:

JOANNE CONLEY, DIRECTOR  
TANYA BRAND, GROUP TOUR PROMOTER  
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK  
RONALD F. CONOVER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD  
RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR  
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD  
AMY LAVINE, FIRST ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY  
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER

SUPERVISORS: BEATY

BRAYMER  
LOEB  
MAGOWAN  
SIMPSON  
SOKOL

MICHAEL SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER

REPRESENTING THE LAKE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & CVB:

GINA MINTZER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
KRISTEN HANIFAN, SPECIAL EVENTS & CONVENTION SALES DIRECTOR  
AMY COLLINS, CITY OF GLENS FALLS TOURISM & DOWNTOWN BUSINESS  
COORDINATOR  
ELIANA TAYLOR, WARREN COUNTY RESIDENT  
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY  
MOLLY GANOTES-GLEASON, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

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*Please note, the following contains a summarization of the August 21, 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 10:37 a.m.

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

Mr. Wild introduced his Granddaughter Eliana Taylor, *Warren Count Resident*, who he had brought to the meeting to foster her interest in Government affairs; he thanked the Committee for allowing Miss Taylor to attend and sit at the Committee table with him. Mr. Merlino encouraged Miss Taylor to raise her hand if she had any questions.

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.*

Ms. Conley provided a Power Point presentation entitled "*Tourism Committee Meeting, August 21, 2018*" which she reviewed in detail. *A copy of the Power Point Presentation is on file with the minutes.*

Mr. Dickinson entered the meeting at 10:45 a.m.

Ms. Conley played a You Tube commercial and a video on demand along with a tv commercial that would be played on Albany broadcasting channels. She also displayed Instagram photos.

Ms. Conley apprised they had a new campaign where they asked individuals to share their images to #mylakegeorgearea, which could be used for social media and in the Travel Guide. She advised they received a great response and overnight they had forty new followers on Instagram. Regarding Facebook promotions, she informed they promoted their events that were occasionally organic, which meant they did not use revenue and still had the reach of 277,000 followers. She indicated there were times they used revenue to promote large events. She advised Instagram was about scenic beauty and she displayed photos that had been submitted to #mylakegeorgearea.

Regarding the Fall Campaign, Ms. Conley indicated the television campaign would start at the end of August with the primary market area being the New York City DMO (*Destination Management Organization*), Syracuse, Utica, Montreal and Albany. She informed digital media would have banner and static advertisements which would be on-line along with a 15 and 30 second digital videos to click and watch. She discussed that they were advertising on a WABC radio show in New York City entitled " *The Travel Show with Pauline Frommer*", adding her show was targeted to decision making women in a demographic that was similar to Warren County. She mentioned there was an audio commercial and a short video she would play for the Committee; she added the audio and video would be put on their website and on social media to direct people to visitlakegeorge.com. She noted the only print advertising they did in the Fall was in the AAA markets which generated reader service which led to distribution of the Travel Guide. She played the YouTube video and both the 15 and 30 second videos.

Ms. Conley informed last Wednesday they attended Adirondack Day at the Saratoga Race Course. She remarked the event was held in the Saratoga pavilion at the top of the stretch and it was coordinated by the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council, adding there were attractions from around the Adirondacks.

Regarding the Lake George Land Conservancy Hike-a-Thon, Ms. Conley informed Paul Tackett, *Assistant Tourism Coordinator*, hiked with the group and displayed the Lake George Area banner at the summit.

Ms. Conley discussed the Adirondack Challenge, informing there were Supervisors in attendance. She mentioned there were activities in Hamilton County with a Taste New York reception at Gore Mountain, which the Lieutenant Governor and 350 State and local legislators had attended.

While displaying images, Ms. Conley mentioned the new Adirondack Welcome Center, apprising the Tourism Department was asked to provide the areas top attractions for the map that would be printed on the floor along with Adirondack images and artifacts. She informed the center would open in September.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Tanya Brand, *Group Tour Promoter*, who discussed the importance of social media and growing their Instagram account. She apprised she met Instagram Influencer "Trusted Travel Girl", who concentrated on solo woman's safe travel and had 141,000 Instagram followers. She mentioned Trusted Travel Girl was invited to Lake George for a day of adventure on Tuesday; she added that although Trusted Travel Girl did a lot of out of international travel, she was familiar with the area because she was from Saratoga. She noted Trusted Travel Girl had provided a discount of 65% on her regular rate because the Tourism Department had worked with her mother in the past. She reported Trusted Travel Girl would provide one blog post, an Instagram story and two posts on Instagram, covering the Lake George area as a great destination for families and solo travelers.

Ms. Conley advised they were moving away from traditional media and into the arena of social media, and she informed they were regularly contracted by social media Influencers offering their services. She noted they had recently worked with an Influencer named Penny Darling who was from the area and had 40,000 Instagram followers; she said they had obtained Penny Darling's services for \$200.00.

Ms. Brand mentioned she would be attending the TBEX Conference, in Corning, New York, on September 11-13, 2018, informing she would be promoting Go North and she had already booked forty-five appointments. She indicated she would provide an update at the next Committee meeting.

Mr. Merlino apprised he was thrilled with the great job the Tourism Department was doing and the relationship with the Lake George Chamber of Commerce & CVB's Executive Director, Gina Mintzer, and Special Events & Convention Sales Director, Kristen Hanifan.

Mike Swan, *County Treasurer*, provided an update on occupancy tax revenue collections, indicating they were up 24%, which equated to \$351,188.31. Mr. Merlino interjected the increase was likely due to improved social media presence and technology, as well as having employed individuals who could assume the work that was once contracted out. Mr. Swan mentioned he had asked his staff to independently review the occupancy tax figures to verify their accuracy because the increase had never been so drastic. Ms. Mintzer inquired how much of the increase was due to branded hotel rooms that entered the market over the past two years and Mr. Swan replied they were still working to determine the cause of the increase and he would provide the answer once an analysis was completed. Mr. Wild asked if the analysis could include a review of changes in room rates vs. occupancy tax and Mr. Swan replied this would be difficult because his Office did not receive room rate information. Ms. Mintzer suggested it may be possible to obtain this information by cross analyzing the information provided in the Star Report and Mr. Swan said he would take this into consideration; he explained that the information they were provided did not include room rates, but rather what the hotels collected over a certain period of time and what they paid in occupancy and sales tax. Mr. Swan notified over the last two years his Office had been requesting information from properties to perform audits, but had not had the staff available to complete them. He mentioned he recently received authorization to hire a individual to complete the audits, which would be a benefit. He said his Office had recently become more proactive in occupancy tax collections, threatening properties with liens if they did not come forward with the amounts they owed, and the combination of these efforts, along with the great summer weather, had contributed to the increased collections. A brief conversation ensued, during which Ms. Conley demonstrated that an Google internet search for "Lake George" resulted in the visitlakegeorge.com being the top result.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Ms. Hanifan, who distributed the July Board of Directors CVB Report 2018 to the Committee members which she reviewed in detail, *a copy of the Report is also on file with the meeting minutes.*

Ms. Mintzer spoke regarding the Adirondack Welcome Center indicating it was scheduled to open between September 15<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>; she mentioned she had reached out to local farmers for products to fill the vending machines at the Welcome Center, as well as for customer service staffing. She expressed there needed to be staff that could provide information regarding the area, attractions and items in the vending machines. She advised the out reach began with the farming communities in Washington, Essex and Clinton Counties. She informed they found products such as teas, jellies and meats which were purchased and re-sold in the vending machines. She said that disappointingly Oscars Smoke House had declined the offer to participate, but they were still included as a featured destination. She stated there would be a ribbon cutting for the Adirondack Welcome Center which either the Governor or the Lieutenant Governor planned to attend.

Mr. Wild spoke regarding the Smith Trend Report and inquired what the percentage of unsold rooms was and Ms. Conley replied she would include that information in her next report.

Mr. Conover asked the Lake George Chamber of Commerce, who had worked with the Planning Department on developing the Warren County Recreation Mapper, to include a link to the feature on their website so individuals did not have to search for it.

Ms. Mintzer indicated there was an individual from Saranac Lake who had created waterproof maps of hiking trails, and fishing, boating, and canoeing locations in Lake Placid that would be available in the vending machine at the Adirondack Welcome Center. A brief conversation ensued.

As there was no further business to come before the Tourism Committee, on motion made by Mr. Wild and seconded by Mrs. Frasier, Mr. Merlino adjourned the meeting at 11:32 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Molly Ganotes-Gleason, Legislative Office Specialist