

WARREN COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

COMMITTEE: OCCUPANCY TAX COORDINATION

DATE: APRIL 23, 2019

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

SUPERVISORS: DICKINSON
MERLINO
SIMPSON
STROUGH
BEATY
LEGGETT
GERAGHTY
DRISCOLL

OTHERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTING THE LAKE GEORGE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND CVB:
KRISTEN HANIFAN, SPECIAL EVENTS & CONVENTION SALES
GARY THORNQUEST, TREASURER, BOARD OF DIRECTORS
JEFF MEAD, GENERAL MANAGER, COOL INSURING ARENA
REPRESENTING THE TOURISM DEPARTMENT:
LEISA GRANT, PRINCIPAL ACCOUNT CLERK
PAUL TACKETT, ASSISTANT TOURISM COORDINATOR
ROBERT BLAIS, MAYOR, VILLAGE OF LAKE GEORGE
SARA FRANKENFELD, GIS COORDINATOR, PLANNING & COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
RONALD F. CONOVER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD
RYAN MOORE, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
AMANDA ALLEN, CLERK OF THE BOARD
RYAN DICKEY, 2ND ASSISTANT COUNTY ATTORNEY
FRANK E. THOMAS, BUDGET OFFICER
SUPERVISORS BRAYMER
HOGAN
MAGOWAN
WILD
MICHAEL SWAN, COUNTY TREASURER
TAMMIE DELORENZO, ASSISTANT TO THE COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR
FRED AUSTIN, FORT WILLIAM HENRY
JOEL BEAUDIN, NORTH CREEK BUSINESS ALLIANCE
FRANK DITTRICH, WARREN COUNTY LODGING ASSOCIATION
TRAVIS WHITEHEAD, TOWN OF QUEENSBURY RESIDENT
TONY HALL, *LAKE GEORGE MIRROR*
DON LEHMAN, *THE POST STAR*
MOLLY GANOTES-GLEASON, LEGISLATIVE OFFICE SPECIALIST

COMMITTEE MEMBER ABSENT:

SUPERVISOR: FRASIER

Please note, the following contains a summarization of the April 23, 2019 meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee; the meeting in its entirety can be viewed on the Warren County website using the following link: <https://www.warrencountyny.gov/gov/comm/Archive/2019/occupancy/>

Mr. Dickinson called the meeting of the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee to order at 11:37 a.m.

Motion was made by Mr. Beaty, seconded by Mr. Simpson 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 Mike Swan, *County Treasurer*, who distributed copies of the Occupancy Tax Report, a copy of which is on file with the minutes. Mr. Swan proceeded with a review of his Report, which reflected a 9.29% increase (\$275,796) over the same time period last year. Mr. Dickinson inquired if Occupancy Tax had been collected from Air B&B and Mr. Swan replied in the negative. Mr. Dickinson questioned when the County would start collecting occupancy tax from them and Mr. Swan answered after the County Attorneys Office completed the

agreement with Air B&B. Mr. Merlino asked why occupancy tax was up and Mr. Swan replied he believed the cold winter attributed to the increase.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Robert Blais, *Mayor, Village of Lake George*, who indicated he was in attendance to speak regarding the Wastewater Treatment Plant planned for Lake George. He apprised he needed to utilize funds to support a community infrastructure problem in the Village and Town of Lake George. He indicated bids were opened for the wastewater plant that was required to be in operation by 2021. He reported bids were \$2 million more than anticipated, adding they had yet to receive plumbing bids. He informed Lake George was in the negative by \$17 million and he was looking for funding to help with the overage, mentioning in six years the cost had increased from \$16 million to \$24 million. He advised the bids had to be awarded within 90 days and he noted he planned to meet with NYSDEC (*New York State Department of Conservation*) to discuss the financial problems with the sewer district. He explained the wastewater plant was a regional facility, servicing the entire southern end of the Lake, including the Town of Caldwell sewer district, Hearthstone Park and Battle Ground Campsites, along with Million Dollar Beach; he added they had asked the State to be a partner with them on the program. He explained the Village had installed a sewage line to service the Hearthstone Park Campsite when they had issues, and Village employees volunteered over three-hundred and sixty hours to determine where the pollutants originated from at a beach that was not located in the Village. He apprised the Town and Village of Lake George were good stewards of the Lake. He indicated in the past fifteen years the Village of Lake George had spent \$4.4 million on improving their sewage treatment plant. He commented that in the past inaccurate figures were reported and the waste treatment plant was not doing as well as he thought. He remarked around the time they considered a new plant the Village was put under a building moratorium since September 21, 2015, adding since that time the Village had spent \$2.2 million sliplining every pipe that was close to the water. He voiced if debt services were added to taxes in the Village they would be at \$624,000 which would be increased by 40%, advising Caldwell would be increased by 66%. He informed they had to bond \$17 million. He voiced he was hopeful to receive Government funding over the next ninety days. He notified \$6-7 million was needed to fund the plant, apprising he had received a no interest loan for \$15 million and possibly a second \$2 million loan at 4%. He commented a \$24 million treatment plant was necessary to handle the tourism during the summer. Mr. Dickinson asked how much funding he needed and Mayor Blais replied \$200,000 a year for a total of \$24 million. Mr. Magowan inquired if wastewater was being metered and Mayer Blais replied affirmatively, indicating homes in the Village were not metered, the cost was included in their taxes. He notified the State set aside \$500 million in grant money for clean water, but he said, an economic development component was required to be able to apply for a grant, which did not exist in this circumstance. Ms. Braymer advised that occupancy tax was for events to promote the County, indicating if the law was going to be changed a discussion was required. Mr. Dickinson added there was a lot of precedence set for use of occupancy tax. A brief conversation ensued.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to authorize the Chairman of the Board to send a letter to State representatives in support of State funding for the Village of Lake George Sewer Treatment Plant and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2019 Board Meeting.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Jeff Mead, *General Manager, Cool Insuring Arena*, who reported on first quarter events indicating they held hockey events, motor cycle racing, Best of the Best Basketball, wrestling and a circus. He notified the gun show held last October brought in 850 customers and this was the last year they would be hosting the Federation Basketball Tournament. He added Adirondack Thunder had twenty-two home games with an increase in attendance. He apprised there was a gun show this weekend and scheduled events for graduations, a spring show, a bike ride to support the foundation, concerts and a hockey camp put on by the Adirondack Thunder, a comedian, gun show, a concert for the rock band "Ghost", a rodeo, volleyball, and six other planned concerts. Mr. Dickinson apprised the Intercounty Legislative Committee of the Adirondacks recently toured the arena and had found it to be very impressive.

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Mr. Beaty exited the meeting at 12:07 a.m.

Mr. Wild inquired at what rate the arena was gaining occupancy tax and Mr. Mead replied they were in the process of bringing in more shows that the demographic could support. Mr. Dickinson remarked they did not receive any capital funding. Chairman Conover inquired what the economic impact of the arena was and Mr. Mead answered \$13+ million. Mr. Wild opined there was no reasonable measure for their money. Travis Whitehead, *Town of Queensbury resident*, remarked the impact on the economy was greater than the arenas revenue. Mr. Mead indicated they had lost the State Basketball Tournament to Binghamton, indicating in 2015 the arena was in poor shape; so he said he offered them a zero dollar bid to win them back. Mr. Strough reported they were supplementing operation cost, informing soon they would have capital costs. A brief conversation ensued.

Privilege of the floor was extended to Kristen Hanifan, *Special Events & Convention Sales Director, Lake George Chamber of Commerce and CVB* who distributed the January-March CVB Report 2019 to the Committee members which she reviewed in detail, *a copy of the report is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Sara Frankenfeld, *GIS Coordinator, Planning & Community Development*, who presented a request to continue the intermunicipal agreement with the Village of Lake George in the amount of \$25,000 for promotional space within the Lake George Visitors Center.

Motion was made by Mr. Strough, seconded by Mr. Geraghty and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2019 Board Meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Next, Ms. Frankenfeld indicated the Planning & Community Development Department received Smart Growth funding which had four components involved, one of which involved updating the panels in the Lake George Visitor Center. She apprised they would be replaced with panels based on historic events. She presented a request for \$6,851 in occupancy tax funding to support this work.

Motion was made by Mr. Simpson, seconded by Mr. Driscoll and carried unanimously to approve the request as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2019 Board Meeting. *A copy of the resolution request form is on file with the minutes.*

Privilege of the floor was extended to Joel Beaudin, *North Creek Business Alliance*, who advised he was the Vice President of the Alliance which was founded in 2009. He apprised there were no membership fees or dues, adding fifteen to twenty-five individuals attended their meetings. He informed he was in attendance to ask for assistance purchasing two fourteen passenger shuttle buses that would cost \$90,000. He notified the idea of the Alliance was to promote tourism, stating when North Creek became a destination ski town in 2013 he purchased two buses that had 100,000 miles on them, but these buses had become unreliable. He advised he shuttled an average of 1,500 individuals in a season who stayed an average of 7.6 days, adding in the summer months he would help the rafting companies by shuttling rafters. He apprised he had twenty letters of support, informing his shuttles provided advertising opportunities as well. He reported he had received funding from the advertising on the buses, donations and the Town of Johnsbury. He pointed out new buses would meet their needs for ten years. Mr. Dickinson inquired how much the Town of Johnsbury provided the North Creek Business Alliance and Ms. Hogan replied \$2,100. Mr. Beaudin explained he had applied for a grant from the Glens Falls Foundation, along with having fund-raising events and raffles. Mr. Geraghty asked if the Town of Johnsbury could buy the buses under a State contract and Ms. Hogan replied she would look into an agreement for purchasing power. Mr. Wild inquired what had been spent last year on maintenance and Mr. Beaudin replied \$3,000. Mr. Dickinson asked Mr. Beaudin to return to Committee with an accurate amount needed to purchase the buses. Chairman Conover thanked Mr. Beaudin for what he did at a fraction

of what a public bus service would cost and asked him for an exact cost and time line. Mr. Leggett made a motion to fund the purchase in the amount of \$40,000, but no one seconded the motion.

Mr. Strough exited the meeting at 1:15 p.m.

Upon further discussion it was consensus of the Committee to discuss further ways to assist the North Creek Business Alliance at a future meeting once more detailed information was provided relative to the cost of the new buses.

Continuing the agenda review, Mr. Dickinson explained the following events applied for Occupancy Tax Funding:

- 1) Adirondack Race Management, to host the Lake George Triathlon Festival - \$9,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Driscoll, seconded by Mr. Geraghty and carried unanimously to approve the request for additional funding as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2019 Board Meeting.

- 2) Americade Inc., to host a block party to benefit the Ronald McDonald House - \$5,000.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried unanimously to approve the request for additional funding as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17, 2019 Board Meeting.

- 3) Northeastern District Barbershop Harmony Society, annual event - \$9,000.

Mr. Geraghty commented that based on the information provided, it appeared this event spent more than they earned in revenue. Mr. Leggett inquired how long they had performed in Lake George and Mr. Dickinson replied four to five years. Mr. Leggett asked where the request back-up information was and Mr. Geraghty answered this had previously been provided. Leisa Grant, *Principal Account Clerk*, informed the applications went to the town and the back-up information was not provided. Mr. Dickinson said he would ask them for a detailed report.

Motion was made by Mr. Geraghty, seconded by Mr. Simpson and carried by majority vote, with Supervisor Leggett voting in opposition, to approve the request for additional funding as outlined above and the necessary resolution was authorized for the May 17th Board Meeting.

Gary Thornquist, *Lake George Chamber of Commerce, Board of Directors*, inquired what amount remained in the Surplus Occupancy Tax account and Ms. Grant replied \$2,497,000. Mr. Thornquist asked what the goal amount was and Ms. Grant answered \$5 million.

As there was no further business to come before the Occupancy Tax Coordination Committee, on motion made by Mr. Simpson and seconded by Mr. Driscoll, Mr. Dickinson adjourned the meeting at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Molly Ganotes-Gleason, Legislative Office Specialist