

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors, Wednesday, April 29, 2015 8:00 am
Ontario County Municipal Building, Canandaigua, New York**

PRESENT

Mike Roeder
Bob Bennett
David Hutchings
Suzanne Farley
John Brahm
Russ Kenyon
Dan Fuller
John Cowley
Lisa Fitzgerald
Alexa Gifford
Carl Carlson
Audrey Carrier
Frank Riccio
David Linger

EXCUSED

Mike Kauffman
Dick Maltman
Jessica Bacher

STAFF

Valerie Knoblauch
Sue Schmidt
Carol Hicks
David Lee
Karen Miltner

EX-OFFICIO

Mitch Donovan, Victor
Chamber

WELCOME – Mike Roeder called the meeting to order at 8:07 am.

INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL STRUCTURE –

Valerie introduced Karen Miltner, with everyone introducing themselves around the room.

Valerie presented the Midwest Travel Writers Association (MTWA) conference agenda to the Board. She reviewed the agenda to highlight the main events of the conference. She reinforced that the board members are welcomed and encouraged to participate in many of the events. She presented an example of the welcome bags that we are giving to the writers. The visit will take place from May 5 – 10 and we currently have 61 people registered for the event.

CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK – Carol reported on the Correspondence Notebook which contained a thank you card from the Women Artists of the Finger Lakes. We hosted a group of judges for a fundraising event that they are having later this year. Carol also passed around loose newspaper articles for review.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS – Mike Roeder asked for a motion to **approve the minutes of the April 1, 2015 Board of Directors meeting**. Carl Carlson **made the motion to approve the amended minutes; Alexa Gifford seconded; the motion passed unanimously.**

Financial Reports for March and YTD. Valerie reviewed the March Budget vs. Actual, the YTD financial reports, and the Balance Sheet, noting we are under budget but we will catch up with the spending in April and May with MTWA expenditures. The New York State grant was higher than budgeted, so this is positive news on the Revenue side. Private sector income is higher from the MTWA registrations, showing as income but we give back \$10.00 to MTWA for each registrant. We are spending approximately \$65,000 on MTWA with approximately \$10,000 income from registrations. Discussion ensued regarding ROI from the writers with members recognizing the value of public relations that could result from this. Valerie noted that a few writers were already on assignment, including one for USA Today.com. Frank Riccio **moved to accept the March Budget vs. Actual, the Year to Date Financials and the Balance sheet through March 31. Suzanne Farley seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

CHAIR'S REPORT – Mike Roeder led the discussion on the update on status of Board goals and evaluation. He reminded to the Board to become involved in other areas of the county, outside of their current communities and to be involved in a local or county or state event. He stated that the MTWA Conference would be a perfect opportunity for the Board members to be involved outside their home communities.

COMMITTEES OF THE BOARD –

Governance Committee. Bob Bennett presented on the Governance Committee meeting. Bob stated the primary focus of the Governance Committee is to look at and review Human Resources policies and to review all policies. Valerie asked the committee to review the waiting period for a match of funds for retirement contributions. After reviewing this, the committee agreed to a policy change to reduce the waiting period for matching contributions from three years to one year.

The Committee is also reviewing the policy and process for the CEO's annual evaluation and compensation. The Committee will be reviewing the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) study. This is a survey of Destination Marketing Organizations for and industry standard of compensation and benefits as a reference. The policy requires a benchmark tool and the committee will be deciding if this is the tool that best represents the standard for comparison. If it is adopted as the benchmark for the President, then the standard could be applied to the rest of the staff.

The committee had asked Valerie to provide a list of policies for them to address this year. She reviewed a chart which showed that some policies had not been updated since 2007. It was agreed that these policies should be addressed from oldest to newest – unless there were specific new policies that were needed. One new policy that the committee will be suggesting is a social media policy. If anyone has a model of this policy it would be helpful as a start for the committee and the staff.

At the conclusion of Bob's report, David Hutchings **moved to accept the committee's recommendation to have the waiting period for the SEP match on the retirement account (403B) be one year for matching eligibility. Carl Carlson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Nominating Committee. Suzanne Farley indicated that the nominating committee would be meeting sometime in late May or early June. Audrey Carrier has just joined the Committee. The nominating committee's role will be to activate the ex-officio members and build up that membership within our board. Additionally, the committee will be reviewing potential turnover in membership and plan for vacancy and to propose a slate of officers before the October meeting. This committee will also help activate the honorary board committee and suggest any new potential members. Valerie has requested to get the Honorary Board more involved with the Board of Directors.

Audit and Finance Committee. Frank Riccio reported on the Audit Committee and talked about new ways that the Committee is looking at approaching the audit process and financial record keeping process. After reviewing the audit and listening to staff requests, the committee is proposing that FLVC hire a bookkeeper to enter checks and classify them in QuickBooks. Carol Hicks would continue to process the mail, prepare and make deposits. Liz Herpich is the bookkeeper that the Valerie proposes to hire as a part-time employee of Finger Lakes Visitors Connection. The Committee is proposing a quarterly book audit with a CPA. Frank reviewed the meeting that he and staff attended with Linda Wiener, CPA, of Francis M. Celona, CPA, PC. Linda Wiener has extensive experience in not-for-profit accounting. Discussion ensued. The bookkeeper is coming in as an employee and thus does not require Board action. The Board agreed to hire a CPA at a 'not to exceed' amount of \$3,200.00 (8 hours a day for 4 days at \$100.00 per hour). This would be the initial review and recommendation phase by the CPA. Valerie answered several questions about the reallocation of resources to this endeavor and indicated that it was within the current budget. She further indicated that she could present a better picture of how this would work after a bit of the initial work is done and a more routine scope of work is in place. **Frank Riccio moved to proceed with a contract with Linda Wiener of Francis M. Celona, with compensation not to exceed \$3,200, until June 17, at which time, the board would review the status and progress and hear Valerie's recommendation to extend the contract or pursue another path to obtain the technical financial work needed. John Brahm seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Strategic Planning and Research Committee. Mike Kauffman is the chair of this committee but in his absence, Dan Fuller presented on the committee meeting. Dan stated the major topic of discussion was the Young Strategy study starting on May 18, 2015. The Committee wants to further our tourism efforts and maximize the valuable research information from this study. He reminded everyone that Berkeley Young did our last research report and will update this one. There is a committee meeting that any board member can attend and provide input on the study. Valerie indicated that all of these tasks were converging nicely together and that our strategic plan work would provide direction to the Simpleview Team and conversely, we would gain information from them, given their stake hold on the market for destination website development.

EX-OFFICIO/AGENCY REPORTS

Chamber Reports – Mitch Donovan spoke on behalf of the Victor Chamber. Victor is releasing an app for visitors to connect to the Chamber for events, lodging, restaurants, shopping. The Blue Toad Cidery will be opening in Victor. A bridal shop, a bait store and also War Hammer Gaming will be opening in Victor.

PRESIDENT and CEO REPORT – A resolution for National Tourism Week (May 2 through May 10) will be on the County's next meeting agenda. Our celebration will be the Midwest Travel Writers Association visit and activities.

Board member, Russ Kenyon, left the meeting at 9:16 am.

Valerie asked that the board revisit the Propane Storage Issue (on Seneca Lake). She indicated that board members had asked for more information on the project. She used an article from the Rochester Business Journal to share the pros and cons of propane storage. Discussion ensued centering around whether tourism has a role to play or a need for a voice in this issue. John Cowley spoke and stated that he doesn't feel that the propane storage is an inappropriate issue for tourism, since our mission is to protect our brand – and something like this might not enhance our brand development. He would like the board to address this issue as it may have precedence for similar situations. David Linger spoke and suggested that the Board take a stand from a tourism standpoint, and stay away from commenting if the technical or geological aspects of propane storage are good or bad. He noted that there are other experts to address that. Our expertise and commentary should be focused on the tourism impacts of this kind of development. After considering different comments, Valerie proposed that a draft White Paper to be prepared for the next meeting which could outline tourism impacts or potential impacts. Others agreed that this would be a good way to address the issue. She will generate a first draft of the White Paper.

MARKETING, SALES and VISITOR SERVICES REPORTS –

Educational Session - Marketing Dashboard Review

Valerie presented the 11 metrics that Finger Lakes Visitors Connection staff uses to format our decisions for market direction and activity. She showed these in total and led the staff presentation with her metrics, which are the STR metrics - occupancy percentage and average daily rate – and gave a breakdown on the numbers.

Karen Miltner asked for feedback on her area – Public Relations and Communications impact. Karen is reviewing a model that will combine and streamline the metrics to simplify the measurement process of PR wins success. This could be a combination of PR Wins (many from leads that we receive internally) as well as Finn, HARO, Quinn, Dixon Schwabl, travel shows, etc. She could combine this with pitches and media touches and the value of FLVC generated content. She will be following up on this subject to gain more knowledge. Karen spoke of the new brochure with the Top 50 Things To Do in Ontario County.

David Lee discussed electronic media metrics, with the first being social engagement. Twitter was the top platform for FLVC. 4.6% of web traffic is from Social Media and 40% of web traffic is from mobile. He indicated that FLVC must continue to create engaging content to come to the top of these stats. The second metric is driving traffic from Social Media; he is confident that our new website will provide greater opportunity for this cross promotion of media. The third metric is unique visitors, as presented by Google Analytics. The new website is a responsive website and will be mobile-friendly.

Sue Schmidt was prepared to present her data to the board as well, but in the spirit of the board norms and keeping to the two hour time limit for meetings, there was no more time. She will be presenting at the next meeting.

OLD BUSINESS –

Valerie and David provided a quick update on the status of the web contract and the upcoming Simpleview team visit. We welcome any board members to participate and help us grow this website to be efficient and effective. The team will be here around the 23rd of June for three days.

NEW BUSINESS –

No new business was brought before the board.

ADJOURN – John Brahm **made the motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Carl Carlson. All voted in favor of adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 10:02 am.

Minutes submitted by Carol Hicks.

Next Meeting:

June 17, 2015, Ontario County Municipal Office Building, 2nd floor Conference Room, Canandaigua, NY 8:00 a.m.