

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting – Wednesday, June 19, 2019 – Noon**  
**Ontario County Municipal Building, Canandaigua, NY**

<b>Board Member Attendance:</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Excused</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Mike Kauffman, Eastview - Chair of the Board	x		
Bob Bennett, Homewood Suites by Hilton Victor - Vice Chair of the Board	x		
David Hutchings, Sonnenberg Gardens - Board Secretary	x		
Frank Riccio, Cobblestone Creek Country Club - Board Treasurer		x	
Mike Roeder, Ravenwood Golf Immediate Past Chair of the Board	x		
Sheryl Mordini, 1795 Acorn Inn Bed and Breakfast		x	
Suzanne Farley, Artizann's		x	
Carl Carlson, Cheerful Valley Campgrounds	x		
Steven Laros, Fairfield Inn & Suites Geneva	x		
Lenore Friend, Finger Lakes Community College	x		
Meg Joseph, Ganondagan State Historic Site	x		
Russ Kenyon, Kenyon & Kenyon	x		
Mark Gilbride, Lazy Acre Alpacas		x	
Dan Marshall, Ontario County Board of Supervisors, Town of South Bristol	x		
Lori Proper, The Inn on the Lake	x		

**Others in Attendance:**

Guests: Tiffany Gallagher, Civitas Advisors (by phone 12:30 to 1:00 p.m.)

Staff: Valerie Knoblauch, Christen Smith, David Lee, Kendall Knaak, Melissa Knoblauch, Julie Maslyn.

**Welcome and Call to Order** – Chairperson Mike Kauffman called the meeting to order at 12:14 p.m. Valerie recognized Julie Maslyn who is assisting on a part-time basis.

**Official Business** – Mike Kauffman requested a motion on the minutes. *Dan Marshall made a motion to approve the minutes of the March 20, 2019 meeting, Meg Joseph seconded.* All present voted in favor.

Mike Kauffman requested a motion on the official business. *Carl Carlson made a motion to accept the February, March, April and May Budget vs. Actual Reports and the May 31, 2019 Balance Sheet. Bob Bennett seconded the motion.* All present voted in favor of the motion.

**Finance/Audit Committee** – Valerie reviewed the credit card recommendations. Subsequently, these two motions were made.

*Mike Roeder made a motion to close the Citibank Advantage card no later than September 30, 2019. Bob Bennett seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

*Russ Kenyon made a motion to open a Capital One Rewards credit card account with a credit limit of \$20,000 dollars, which does provide a cashback for purchases, and allows international transactions without fees. Bob Bennett seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.*

Valerie reviewed her development philosophy and timeline for this budget. She referred to her pre-board worksheet which indicated that the revenues could change, but were being predicted as less than prior years. Similarly, she had reduced expenses. In the end, she is predicting that we will reach into our operating revenues. She reminded the board that they will see another version of the budget when the actual numbers come in at the end of September or early October. There was no further discussion. Mike Kauffman requested a motion. *Carl Carlson made a motion to accept the Budget 2020 as presented. Russ Kenyon seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.*

### **Tourism Improvement District (TID) Presentation – Tiffany Gallagher, Civitas Advisors –**

Valerie introduced Tiffany Gallagher of Civitas Advisors. Tiffany has given a number of presentations to Ontario County constituents over the past few months, providing information on forming a TID. Civitas has this as a specialty area. Valerie had requested her input since this is a possible way to garner enough revenue to enter the conference/meetings market, as recommended by Steve Powell’s Conference/Meeting Facility Feasibility Study.

Tiffany gave an overview of a TID for 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of questions from the group. She explained that a TID is a stable source of funding for marketing efforts designed to increase occupancy at participating hotels. Funds raised through a small assessment on lodging stays are used to provide services desired by and directly benefitting the businesses in the district.

Russ K asked if Tiffany had run into any opposition in other communities. She answered generally no, usually the hotels and municipalities have broad acceptance whose approval threshold is 51% by the self-electing properties. Valerie asked why a TID doesn’t need to be approved by the state. Tiffany explained that there is a clause in the NYS constitution which gives certain authorities to counties on “issues of local matters”. This would fall under that clause. Lenore Friend asked if we are the first county in New York to attempt this. Tiffany said Albany County is in the process of enacting a TID and is almost ready to begin. The entire process takes about 10-12 months. Mike K. inquired about Civitas’ success rates with TIDs formation – Tiffany answered that they have approximately an 85% rate. She said they typically won’t embark on a project without the hoteliers’ backing. Russ Kenyon asked if the TID money was supplemental to occupancy tax, or meant to replace it – Tiffany said it is supplemental, not a replacement. This is part of the negotiated agreement. He also asked how do we handle Air B&Bs, VRBO, etc.? She said we can design the TID to include those entities who meet certain criteria.

At the conclusion of the TID presentation, Valerie asked the group to ruminate over the TID concept. A few questions/concerns raised included: can we use the money for something else if we don’t want to fund the meetings proposal but want to do something else. . Can we talk with another organization that has done this to garner more insight? Yes. Valerie shared she had reservations about the \$70,000 cost to hire Civitas. Can we just use leisure marketing money to fund the meeting project? Valerie defended our current spending as producing results and success. To cut that back is not what is being recommended. (i.e. one market at the expense of another.) The hoteliers commented on their views of the TID for their properties. There was not a single mind. One comment is that this could be essential for the shoulder season. Russ Kenyon inquired about next steps; Valerie agreed to come up with develop this with a timeline of actions.

## **Governance Committee –**

Mike Kauffman requested a motion to accept the Policies and Procedures presented by the Governance Committee. This was the second reading of these policies which had older dates in policy manual.

### Policy Updates and Renewals

- #101 Sharing of Tourism Information and Research & #501 Procedures
- #114 Investments and Deposits Policy
- #303 Staff Involvement in Outside Committees
- #104 Maintaining Program Integrity in Visitor Information and Interactions
- #106 Second Signature on checks over \$5,000
- #115 Financial Transactions

*Russ Kenyon made a motion to accept the Policies and Procedures presented by the Governance Committee. Mike Roeder seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.*

Valerie updated the board on two position papers that did not require a motion, but were informational at this point. They will be on the next agenda.

### Paper: Windmills, Towers and Other Obstructions (2<sup>nd</sup> reading)

The Governance Committee wanted to update this policy to reflect a broader stance on preserving our scenic vistas, no matter the “obstruction.” These edits have been made. Additionally, the action was changed to be more proactive by staff, who must reach out to the local municipality if an issue is raised.

### Paper: Accessibility

Valerie filled the group in on the efforts FLVC has made towards becoming more accessibility. We are focused specifically on our website. In reviewing this, she realized a broader statement should be made so FLVC can lead the industry into a better understanding of accessibility standards – both digitally and physically. She was looking for feedback as to whether or not the Board wanted her to continue to make strides in this area. Russ Kenyon cautioned about setting standards – vs. advising on steps which enhance accessibility. Lenore Friend inquired about whether there was a group that could “certify” an organization once it become compliant. Kendall Knaak said there is an agency that performs that function. Valerie will share that with the board. Russ Kenyon also suggested FLVC contact its insurance agent to ensure that if we get sued, we will be covered. Valerie agreed and will follow up.

**President’s Report – Scenic Overlook.** Valerie recently spoke at the South Bristol town meeting to request the placement of a “viewfinder” at the County Road #12 Overlook (Carolobarb Park) in honor of John Brahm. Dan Marshall said the request was warmly received, noting the applause for the idea. Meg Joseph mentioned the Overlook may be a great place to install a Naples Gateway sign. Valerie will address with Mike Joseph of the Naples Merchants Association who is working on these signs as part of our gateway program.

**Nominating Report –** Valerie said there was no report from the Nominating committee, but that she had a lead on a possible candidate from Geneva to fill one of the two vacancies – one for David Linger and one for John Brahm. The committee will need to meet in the next two months.

Bob Bennett left the meeting at this time.

## **Old Business –**

Visitor Experience Fund. David H. and Valerie had received information in a meeting with Rochester Area Community Foundation that this type of fund management was not within their mission. Therefore, the directive outlined in the February 6<sup>th</sup> meeting could not be achieved. To move forward it is necessary to withdraw that directive and provide new direction. Valerie suggested a motion to rescind is the cleanest way to do this. *Carl Carlson made a motion to rescind the motion of the February 6, 2019 meeting to “engage in a relationship with the Rochester Area Community Foundation to establish a Visitor Experience fund for Fiscal Year ending 2019.” A second was offered by David Hutchings. Russ Kenyon abstained. The motion to rescind passed with one abstention and more than the required 2/3 majority.*

Valerie had provided a background notes on this. We are committed to this fund by past actions; the concept of getting an outside evaluator is not panning out. She spoke with board members about this and Russ’ guidance was to separate the decision on where we hold the money from how we get proposals and evaluate and reward those. In dealing with a reaffirmation of the financial resources first, the following motion was made by David Hutchings and seconded by Carl Carlson. *A motion to empower the Finance/Audit Committee invest and reserve the \$25,000 from the 2019 budget; and \$25,000 from 2020 budget to facilitate the Visitor Experience Fund program.” All present voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed.*

Next discussion ensued on the process of evaluating proposals and making awards. The board discussed the fact that this is not the outcome they had been hoping for – the board did not desire to manage the proposals (solicitation, evaluation) for the Visitor Experience Fund. Valerie agreed. Valerie’s advance paper had suggested that we move the project forward with a committee made up of FLVC representatives and non-FLVC representatives. Russ suggested that the development of the ad hoc group and delineation of its mission is important and that this is what the second motion should address. The committee would: Follow the guidelines that the board of directors has worked on to date; to seek proposals, set deadlines in conjunction with staff. The actions of the committee and the development of the committee are critical to the success of this program.

Russ Kenyon suggested FLVC board appoint the Visitor Experience Fund members as this make up and the fulfillment of their mission is critical to the success of this fund and the integrity of its purpose as outlined by the FLVC board. After further discussion, *Russ Kenyon made a motion that Mike Kauffman establish an ad hoc committee to make recommendations for the nature and selection of the Visitor Experience Fund evaluation and awarding process and that it report back to this board for final approvals. That motion was seconded by Mike Roeder. All present voted in favor of the motion and it passed unanimously.* It was requested that Russ Kenyon, Lori Proper, Bob Bennett, Steve Laros be part of this committee. Lenore Friend’s experience could be drawn upon as well.

**New Business** – No new business was brought before the board.

**Adjourn** – Mike Kaufmann requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. *David Hutchings made a motion that was seconded by Russ Kenyon to adjourn the meeting.* All present voted in favor of the motion and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:43 p.m.

Minutes submitted by Christen Smith

## ATTACHMENT

### Marketing Report Provided by Christen Smith.

It has been a productive year so far at Finger Lakes Visitors Connection! Our team has been hard at work carrying out multiple marketing endeavors; creating new publications; holding several market research studies to better serve you, our industry friends; and creating an a la carte partner program to enhance your marketing efforts.

Here's what has been going on at Finger Lakes Visitors Connection:

- Earlier this year, we **launched a partnership program** to help our industry friends achieve their marketing goals. With its a la carte selection style, they can find the aspects of marketing in which they need assistance.
- In May we celebrated the start of our 35<sup>th</sup> year as the official tourism promotion agency for Ontario County. We presented our **Legacy Awards** during the program at the New York Beer Project in Victor, as well as celebrated our Ontario County history.
- We conducted and reported on a groups meeting study that showed we have a real opportunity in the area for the **meetings market**, in addition to our strong leisure market.
- We assisted the **Naples Valley Merchants Association with two gateway signs** to enhance the visitor experience and learn more about what's in the area.
- If you have been to Eastview Mall in Victor recently, you may have noticed a couple more panels have gone up in the hallway by the entrance. This is part of our **gateway project**.
- Since Jan. 1, we have received **15 national media hits**, including "The Best Weekend Road Trips to Take This Summer" in *Travel + Leisure* and "10 Inspiring Trips To Celebrate International Women's Day" in *Forbes*.
- We won a prestigious **American Marketing Association Pinnacle Award for Most Improved Tactic for our Reimagined Content Strategy using data on the VisitFingerLakes.com website**.
- Our annual **literature exchange was held in early May** at the Greater Canandaigua Civic Center, complete with breakfast courtesy of Kettle Ridge Farm.
- In April, Valerie, Christen and David attended the annual **NYSTIA Conference** in Buffalo, followed by Christen attending the **North American Travel Journalists Association media conference** in Syracuse.
- In May, we developed and hosted a **Board of Supervisors Retreat Day** focused on sustainability and reinforcing the diversity of OC assets.
- For the second year, FLVC has helped market **Music Across the Finger Lakes**, a diverse collection of musical performances across the Finger Lakes.
- We continue submitting updates to the **Ontario County Wellness Magazine** as well as being a guest on **Finger Lakes Radio Group's Tourism Talk**.
- We guided the **Canandaigua Lake Wine Trail** as sponsors of the year's Plein Air Festival, as well as their membership drive efforts. The **ROC/FLX Craft Beverage Trail** is on tap to hold another tasting event this year, as well as develop a passport and printed trail map.
- Christen recently completed Ontario County's 6-week **Citizen's Academy**. For tourism night, Melissa presented a Taste of Ontario dinner, and the pair presented an overview of OC tourism.
- This spring, as part of our regional **public relations efforts**, we toured LGBT social media influencer "Mr. Benfield" and his partner throughout the county, as well as the representative from our regional PR firm. On the state level, we hosted 8 I Love NY brand ambassadors in May.
- **We hosted a Porch Party** in early June so our industry friends could sip on some wine and stock up on FLVC travel guides, maps, etc.
- We recently put together a mailing for our nearly 600 industry friends where we shared some of our most recent printed pieces including our brand-new **Visitor Guide**, our **Wedding and Special Events** guide, a brand-new **Wellness Guide** and our **Ontario County Map** tablet map.
- **Tourism Tuesdays** have commenced – these casual industry get-togethers will take place each month around the county. And for the millennial crowd, a monthly millennial meet-up (we're talking ages 23 to 38) will also be happening – avocado toast, optional. PS – if you don't get that reference, you're not a millennial...