

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting – Wednesday March 11, 2020 – 8:00 a.m.
Fort Hill Performing Arts Center, Canandaigua NY

Board Member Attendance:	Present	Excused	Absent
Bob Bennett, Homewood Suites by Hilton Victor - Chair of the Board	x		
David Hutchings, Sonnenberg Gardens – Vice Chair of the Board	x		
Lenore Friend, Finger Lakes Community College - Board Secretary			
Steven Laros, Fairfield Inn & Suites Geneva - Board Treasurer		x	
Mike Kauffman, Eastview - Immediate Past Chair of the Board	x		
Mike Roeder, Ravenwood Golf			
Sheryl Mordini, 1795 Acorn Inn Bed and Breakfast	x		
Steve Fuller, Bristol Mountain	x		
Carl Carlson, Cheerful Valley Campgrounds	x		
Frank Riccio, Cobblestone Creek Country Club	x		
Meg Joseph, Ganondagan State Historic Site; Friends of Ganondagan	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 Lake House at Canandaigua	x		
Krista Johns, 41 Lakefront – a trademark collection by Wyndham		x	
Charles Parkhurst, Lyons National Bank	x		

In Attendance:

Staff: Valerie Knoblauch, Julie Maslyn, David Lee, Melissa Knoblauch, Tracey Burkey

Call to Order/Announcements – Bob Bennett called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. He called upon Tracey to give an update on her progress with the meetings and groups market. Tracey went over some of the memberships we now belong to that are helping us build up our leads, she also stressed the importance of knowing what the meeting needs are for organizations in your own circles. Tracey noted the Motocoach Seminar immediately following this meeting. There are nearly 50 attendees. Panelists include a motorcoach tour operator, a motorcoach driver, a TPA from Ithaca who specializes in groups, and a group sales person.

Melissa presented on the upcoming mini Makers Fair that will be held on March 18th at Ganondagan. Melissa encouraged those who are makers, either in products or experiences to come and be a part of this event. Hoteliers can find out about these products and experiences so they can promote them to their guests.

Official Business –

David Hutchings moved to approve the minutes of the January 29, 2019 Board of Directors meeting. Mike Kauffman seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

Russ Kenyon moved to accept the Financial Reports: January Budget vs. Actual; Balance Sheet as of 2/29/20. Mike Kauffman seconded the motion. All present voted in favor of the motion.

Valerie reported on the “Top Three Things” Presidents report. She noted the various projects and highlighted a few big ones, leading up to today and supporting our initiatives in the meetings market.

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President’s Report –

Valerie reviewed the branding initiative. This is scheduled to be developed over the next few months and fully integrated by the time of the website is launched.

Finance/Audit Committee –

In Steve Laros absence Valerie reported on the investments that were recently made at USNY Bank, the cd timeframes and interest rates. Valerie also mentioned her conversation with Charles Parkhurst and the ways that we could make some investments work with the money at Lyons National Bank. Because of upcoming capital purchases with the roof and the building and the website, it was decided to temporarily leave this as a cash asset and adjust the balances once these projects are complete.

Executive Committee –

Bob welcomed Steve Fuller to the Strategic Planning committee, making his appointment official.

Bob asked David Lee to report on his work to allow call-ins to a meeting. David reported that we have purchased a speaker phone that can support up to 15 people calling in. The board will need an internet connection and the use of “Zoom” meetings (or similar software) to further facilitate. Our next official Board meeting in May might be a good physical location to try this out.

Governance Committee –

Meg Joseph reported on the, Policy on Use of Communications Systems (2nd Reading, changes from first reading include recommendations to include role in training the employees). She noted the changes and that there is no further action that needs to be taken at this time. It will be on our next full agenda for final approval.

In a discussion that followed it was pointed out that online security and an employee’s role in it would be a good topic for a future FLVC- University.

Strategic Planning Committee –

Valerie reported that our current strategic plan runs through 2020. The concentration for the next plan will start in the summer

Nominating Committee –

Valerie noted that all Board positions are full. And she has finalized meeting with all the new board members and committee chairs to review responsibilities, the Board norms and roles documents, as well as the committee functions and charges. Additionally, every board member is up to date on paperwork (conflict of interest), trainings (ABO training), and information on what it means to be on the FLVC Board. Great work everyone!

Marketing/Partnership/Visitor Services Report -

Valerie reinforced the Branding initiative and the upcoming change in product offerings for tourism. She provided comparison and contrasts between our county and our partners/competitors. She showed the list of our assets that are unique to our county compared to the FLX region and beyond. She also discussed products and experiences that have gone through a transformation to upscale. This process is informing our marketing direction.

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Marketing/Partnership/Visitor Services, Cont.

Website makeover is a primary component of that program. David Lee overviewed the website makeover, noting that we are on a fast track for this, planning an October launch. He noted the KPIs that are attached to the website and our more comprehensive understanding of Google analytics and performance of the website. We expect a bit of a lag between the rebrand reveal and the new website reveal. However, the principal structure of the site in terms of customer interaction continues to be strong

Old Business –

Valerie reported that the occupancy tax legislation has gone through the county channels and Gary Baxter is taking it to Pam Helming for sponsorship.

Valerie also commented on Tourism Improvement Districts – Statewide Legislation as part of the legislative agenda. We had a presentation a while ago and then learned that this type of funding has lagged at the state level and is mired in a discussion over whether or not the direct parallel from BID legislation to TID legislation is possible. Valerie will keep abreast of this as we move along and bring back to our table as more information is revealed or the situation changes. Albany, Long Island, and Syracuse are still leaders in this endeavor, which is commonly used already in California, as an example.

New Business

As for new business, Valerie noted that a tour of Fort Hill Performing Arts Center was available immediately following this meeting. Fort Hill Performing Arts Center is also a recipient of our Visitor Experience Fund – 1st round. They used it for their handicapped facilities, both physical and hearing and lighting systems. Additionally, a unique feature is the handicapped access for the performers to the main stage.

Adjourn – Charles Parkhurst made a motion to adjourn the meeting, David Hutchings seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:47 a.m.

Upcoming Dates:

March 18th Board event – Mini-maker’s Fair and Elevated Experience Trade Show

April 2nd. Cultural Study presentation – Tentatively at NY Kitchen at 10:00 a.m.

April 22nd Board Event, Geneva Takeover and presentation on sustainability by Carla Jordan

May 6th 3:00 p.m. Literature Exchange at Star Cider.

Next Full Board meeting – May 6, 2020 National Tourism Week
12:30 p.m. Irish Mafia, Bloomfield NY

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Attachment #1

Finance Committee Report for the Board

Memo from Valerie to Finance Committee on March 3, 2020

I have moved the money around and closed two accounts. In moving money around, we end up with enough operating at Canandaigua National that no money had to be tapped in to from our reserve funds at this point.

We did a rolling investment schedule:
\$235,000 maturing 8/20/20 @ 1%
\$196,000 maturing 2/18/21 @ 1.51%
\$100,000 maturing 2/17/22 @ 1.77%

These are all through the services of USNY Bank.

As a separate note: Rob Sollene from USNY Bank wanted to let us know that the rates that we locked in above actually fell steadily over the last week. The new numbers on 3/3 were: 1% declined to .83%; 1.51% declined to .73%; and 1.75% declined to .71%. Luckily, we made our move relatively quickly after the 1/29 Board of Directors meeting.

I have left the capital reserve account intact at this point. I knew that we would have spending against that and after a discussion with the bank, felt it best to wait and see what is going to happen in May (mid-way between now and when our first 6 months comes up) and make a decision on how much we want to remain more liquid.

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Attachment #2

Top Three Things - President's Report
March 3, 2020

Team:

The team did a “familiarization tour” of Bristol Mountain, familiarizing ourselves with their offerings for upcoming meets that they have. We helped coordinate some prizes for the teams which are connected to our area. (Alpaca Socks) We are also falling under the VisitRochester sponsorship of Bristol Mountain for these events.

FLVC was recently honored with an Honorable Mention win from the North American Travel Journalists Association’s Annual Awards of Excellence in the category of “Visitors’ Guide (Printed or Digital)/Website.” Our guide, “Uncover the Finger Lakes” was up against some heavy competition including a state and a big-city metro submission. Gold went to the state of Arkansas for their visitor guide, Silver went to the Detroit Metro visitor’s bureau, while the Bronze prize went to “Explore the Northshore” by the Louisiana parish St. Tammany. Our Honorable Mention win is shared with the Chapel Hill/Orange County, NC Visitors Bureau. To see our guide for yourself, visit us online at VisitFingerLakes.com.

Tracey.

- Group Tour Seminar Planning, March 11th – secure location, 4 top notch panelists, invitations. Have begun the promotions.
- Meetings Market Program Planning, April 7th – secured national speaker, location, sponsorship
- **Sales activity:** January-March 3rd, 2020 11 leads sent/1 booking pending contract negotiation/829 room nights total
- SDR qualified potential leads – YTD - 12 qualified potential leads; 27 qualified future potential

David.

- The Ontario County Cultural Attractions Study has been completed along with the businesses who participated in the paid portion of the study. FLVC is has fulfilled our promise to the survey “takers” and providing a giveaway as promised. FLVC will be hosting an upcoming workshop for cultural attractions and is working closing with the businesses on next steps for putting the research to work. A workshop revealing the results and suggesting how they will be used is planned for April 2nd at about 10:00 a.m. at the NY Kitchen.
- Hosted the FLVCU: Digital Accessibility Seminar at the New York Kitchen on February 14. We had a total of 13 attendees. Additionally, as a result of our efforts, FLVC garnered media coverage in the Daily Messenger. Feedback from the event is currently being collected and reviewed.
<https://www.mpnnow.com/news/20200220/net-gains-finger-lakes-visitors-connection-promotes-greater-web-accessibility>
- Kicked off the 2020 Simpleview website project on March 2. This includes an on-going team effort to prepare branding, visual assets and more. The website project’s next milestone is March 5 to review the process and project timeline. Anticipated finish date is no later than October 31st.

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Top 3 things – President’s Report, March 3, 2020, continued

Valerie.

- Board Orientation for three new members.
- Attended the Governor’s Tourism Advisory Council meeting in NYC and worked with NYSTIA on strategic plan development
- Joined the executive committee of the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council; Valerie to be part of the state of the county presentation and also to participate in the FLCC Advisory Board for tourism and has requested a special focus on workforce development.

Julie.

- Ongoing oversight of the Visitor Experience Fund awardee information.
- Assisting all team members in FLVC-U and Board event locations and setup.

Melissa.

- Hosted two Chinese group tour operators on behalf of I Love NY at the Seneca Art & Culture Center at Ganondagan.
- Organized and oversaw a winter video shoot for Belhurst as part of the partnership program.
- Applied to and was accepted into the Destinations International Certified Destination Management Executive (CDME) program.

Christen.

- Executed Visitor Experience Fund event in Clifton Springs, as well as created media materials announcing winners and for grant recipients to use for their own promotion.
- Pulled various stakeholders together to determine next steps to prepare how to capitalize on visitor influx centered around the 2024 Solar Eclipse.
- Prepared and held annual meeting for ROC/FLX Craft Beverage Trail, as well as launched promotion for annual trail tasting event.

Kendall.

- Music Across the Finger Lakes – have met with the group and have positioned them to work independently with FLVC stepping in as a resource as needed.
- Town of Canandaigua Meeting – as “owner” of this territory, has attended local meetings and was recently named chair of the gateway signage committee.
- Gateway Project at the Finger Lakes Welcome Center in Geneva – has secured content for latest two-panel display series focusing on the history of women’s rights and another highlighting the unique things in the Finger Lakes. Will install within a few weeks.

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Upcoming – A highlight each!

Christen – finishing the marketing plan. National Tourism Week.

Julie – will be all about our building and grounds, as we head into spring. We have a porch needing repair in the corner, we have the planning for the gutter work which was started last summer, and finally we are renegotiating our landscaping, lawn care projects.

David – Website, website, website!

Kendall – Literature Exchange and gateway programs finished.

Melissa – Minimizer's Fair and Elevated Experience Show at Ganondagan on March 18th. Melissa to attend the Destinations International Marketing seminar with a special add-on session regarding branding. Melissa pursuing her CDME (Certified Destination Management Executive) through DI.

Tracey – continuing to congeal the sales directors across the county. Participation in Empire State Society of Association Executive Trade Show. Tracey also providing an educational forum for the meetings market, bringing in a nationally known guest speaker. Tracey to attend Destination International Annual meeting. Tracey will also be assisting Valerie in pursuing our certification through Destination International.

Valerie to refocus from branding and marketing to Destination International certification as outlined in our 2016 Strategic Plan. This has been on hold for a while and now will be moved to the front burner.