

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - Thursday, May 16, 2024 - 3:00pm
Ganondagan State Historic Site, Victor

Board Member Attendance:	Present	Excused	Absent
David Hutchings, Sonnenberg Gardens - Chair of the Board	X		
Steve Fuller, Bristol Mountain	X		
Charles Parkhurst, Lyons National Bank - Board Secretary	Z		
Lisa FitzGerald, Finger Lakes Winery Tours, Feathers and Tails Farm – Vice Chair of the Board		X	
Mike Kauffman, Eastview	Z		
Mike Roeder, Caledonia Country Club	X		
Sheryl Mordini, 1795 Acorn Inn Bed and Breakfast		X	
Lenore Friend, Finger Lakes Community College		X	
Russ Kenyon, Boylan Code		X	
Mark Gilbride, Lazy Acre Alpacas		X	
Chris Vastola, Ontario County Board of Supervisors, Town of Canadice	X		
Lori Proper, The Lake House at Canandaigua	X		
Sherry Brahm-French, Arbor Hill Grapery & Winery	X		
Mike Darling, Crafty Ales and Lagers	X		
Todd Plouffe, Indus Hospitality Group	X		

Staff: Valerie Knoblauch, Tracey Burkey, Jessica VanDeMar.

Call to Order and Welcome. David Hutchings called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. He welcomed everyone. Multiple people commented on the Ganondagan State Historic Site and the beautiful building and interpretive center. Valerie shared the book that Nicole Mahoney had produced, ***Stronger Together***. Each board member received a copy.

Consent Agenda. David Hutchings asked for a motion on the Consent Agenda. ***Subsequently, Mike Roeder offered this motion which was seconded by Sherry Brahm-French. A motion to accept the Consent Agenda items was carried with all present voting yes.***

- a. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - March 19, 2024
- b. Financial Reports
 - Company Report for BOD (Balance Sheet and P and L) as of 4/30/24
 - Budget vs. Actual YTD - October through 4/30/24

Audit Finance Committee. Steve Fuller reviewed the status of the different CD's and cash for operating. He noted that one CD for \$156,000 had matured on May 9th and that it was currently held at Merrill Lynch in the money market account. He indicated that he and Valerie had reviewed the different options with our investment broker, David DeCoursey at Merrill Lynch.

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Steve's review highlighted the potential need for cash flow to cover the grants as we waited for reimbursement from the County or the State. He noted that there was not a crunch, but rather, given the current return, this has a high yield of 5.18% and it is prudent to hold it there, rather than tie it up for a longer period. Hearing no concerns or questions, *Chris Vastola offered this motion which was seconded by Mike Darling. All members voted in favor. The motion was to retain the matured CD in the cash account money market and revisit it at the June meeting.*

Governance Committee

There was no committee report as there was no incomplete business before the committee.

Nominating Committee

Lori and Sherry shared information about the meeting of the nominating committee. Lori made a motion to nominate *Naved Amed from Geneva on the Lake to fill the expired term of Bob Bennett, with this appointment going through September 30, 2026; and a motion to fill the unexpired term through September 30, 2025, of Darren Holden with Jim Cecere from FLX Group.* All members present voted in favor of the motion, and the motion passed unanimously. Valerie reminded everyone that the next steps will be to take this through the PEQ committee at their next meeting.

Executive Committee Report. David discussed the philosophy of the committee regarding the search for a future director. There will be a meeting in August with Amanda who will guide the board through a typical timeline and process. All members will be notified of this date and can decide on whether to attend. David wanted the board to be prepared to do a national search.

Marketing and Sales Updates. Tracey, Valerie, and Jessica reported on the accomplishments and projects of the marketing team since the last meeting.

Valerie noted **Jessica's accomplishment** being named a **30 under 30 for Destinations International**. This entitles her to attend the annual conference and participate in special events through the year. The board responded with a round of applause. Valerie also noted that **Tracey** had sought and received a **scholarship for the annual meeting of Destinations International**. Tracey noted that this was through the Small Destinations Committee of DI which she is a member of.

Valerie shared that Theresa was not here because she was attending the **North American Travel Journalists Conference**. There she would be meeting with various media and pitching stories outlined on her sell sheet. Valerie showed the board the **Story Ideas** sheet and mentioned that this would also be made available to the incoming media fam tour attendees. We have a cooperative fam trip coming up with the Lakehouse and Finn and Co., and through the regional organization, FLRTC. Valerie also shared that a partnership has been developed with our counterparts in the region. Steuben County is the primary host for the International Food and Wine Writers Association (IFTWA). That had fostered a partnership with the NY Kitchen and their educational role and will also mean additional VIP fam tours here related to the September event as well as the pre-conference planning trips of the principles, Cori Soloman and Andy Harris.

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Jessica added information about other new collateral. She noted that we had printed the **Top 50 and have refreshed the Visitors Guide**. These would be delivered in the next week, and we'd be fully stocked for the summer and fall. We are again participating in the AAA program and through BCI for distribution of the guides. She noted that our literature exchange is slated for 6/18. Location is to be determined.

Valerie shared that we were represented in the **I Love NY booth at the IPW event**. That is the largest international sales conference held in the United States. We attended last year as well. This year, it was Claire Wysokowski who represented us and took the appointments. Follow-up will be key for effective return on this investment.

Tracey has been working on several **meetings and group tours**. She will be presenting her endeavors through a **SWOT analysis** at the upcoming PEQ meeting. Her presentation is timely in reminding everyone that we're in this together, and all should be thinking about groups that they are associated with that could bring their meetings here. We lamented the turnover in the industry and still the need for workforce development endeavors. We had not followed up on the last meeting, but this remains a high priority. Tracey also gave credit to our relationship with economic development - as Ryan Davis and Sue Vary had sent us several leads and contacts recently. Three specifically mentioned were the NYS Amateur Hockey Association board meeting, a developer who was looking for stats and feedback with regard to the potential building of a hotel in who visited our office today, and the workforce development initiatives.

Finally, we touched on the rescheduling of the **40th Anniversary and Legacy Awards Celebration**. That will be on Tuesday, September 17. We took a poll of the board and agreed on that day of the week. The time will remain the same and that is from 4:30pm - 6:30 p.m.

President's Report. Valerie focused on the budget and planning processes that would be taking place in the next year. She noted the many influences that would be affecting the budget and the need for the highest level of engagement by the board.

She said that she is currently engaging the staff in a process of visiting each line item and understanding the process, so that they can explain and justify and monitor down the road. Finally, she noted that the "end game" was that the budget needed to be in PARIS by the end of June and the early start was because of all these changes.

She noted the major influences both in cost and in terms of development were Valerie's impending retirement in May of 2025, the need for replacement of Valerie and overlap probability, changes in other personnel on the team, as well as the need for professional development as new people come in.

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Other changes included: Bower's role as new bookkeeper/accountant and CFO style work. New costs associated with that five-year commitment, along with the auditor's five year plan. Additionally, on the docket are the server replacement (end of life) and potential move to the cloud, and the discussion of strategic planning. We also have the integration of our capital project and the reserve accounts for future marketing and planning.

She noted that we are in a unique position that we know what the budget is for 2025 because of the arrangement that was made this year. We are at the current year level plus 5%. That will be very restricted and a bit regressive because of costs increases, inflation, etc. There was a brief discussion about inputting the tourism reserve. Members mentioned the desire to return to the concept of investment return for our efforts to expand the visitor economy. This discussion led to a more detailed discussion about enhanced roles moving forward. It was noted that because of Valerie's experience there were many tasks which were just naturally done - some of these tasks will need to be done by Board members and staff members as the organization onboards a new leader.

The discussion was summarized by the desire to have a board advocacy and community leadership retreat. The content for this can be a review/refresh/further development of a resident sentiment survey/community leader engagement. Tracey and Jessica mentioned Josiah Brown's presentation at Destinations International and training that he was doing to empower board members at a higher level. It was suggested that these two concepts could be combined. It was agreed that September might be a good time to activate this. It could lead to a common vision which could also frame the talents and background of the next President of the organization. Valerie indicated that she would explore these options and present dates for these activities.

Regarding a budget review, the board chose not to have a line-by-line review, and appreciated the background on this overview which is influencing the budget. The plan is to get a proposed budget in the next couple of weeks, and then we can adopt it at the June Board meeting. The importance of attendance at that June meeting for all these updates was reiterated. The meeting is at 8:30 a.m. at Hobart and William Smith Colleges. A specific locale within the college is yet to be named.

The office team will publish a calendar with all the upcoming dates on it.

No old or new business was brought before the board.

Adjournment. *David Hutchings asked for a motion to adjourn. Sherry Brahm-French cast the motion. It was seconded by Steve Fuller and the meeting was adjourned at 4:20 p.m.*

Next Meeting: 8:30am - Thursday, June 20 at Hobart William Smith

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