

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY**  
**Board of Directors Meeting - Thursday, June 20, 2024 - 8:00 a.m.**  
**Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Geneva**

<b>Board Member Attendance:</b>	Present	Excused	Absent
David Hutchings, Sonnenberg Gardens - Chair of the Board	X		
Steve Fuller, Bristol Mountain	X		
Charles Parkhurst, Lyons National Bank - Board Secretary	X		
Lisa FitzGerald, Finger Lakes Winery Tours, Feathers and Tails Farm – Vice Chair of the Board	X		
Mike Kauffman, Eastview		X	
Mike Roeder, Caledonia Country Club	Z		
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	
Jim Cecere, The Speakeasy at VINIFERA, FLX Group	X		
Naved Amed, Geneva on The Lake	X		

Staff: Valerie Knoblauch, Tracey Burkey, Jessica VanDeMar, Sarah Braddon

Guests: Beatriz Murray, Bowers; Josiah Brown; NY Sherpa via Zoom.

**Call to Order and Welcome.** Lisa Fitzgerald, Vice Chair called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. She welcomed everyone, and made special mention of new members, Naved and Jim joining the board. Jim shared his variety of retail experiences, his background as a native of Geneva and graduate of HWS. Valerie noted that Jim was just recognized with the Wine Enthusiast award for 40 under 40. Naved similarly shared his background at Geneva on the Lake and in other investments related to tourism outside of the region that can be applied to the Finger Lakes Region for potential growth. After this, each board member introduced themselves and their business. David Hutchings entered the meeting at this point.

**Consent Agenda.** David Hutchings asked for a motion on the Consent Agenda. *Russ Kenyon offered a motion to approve the consent agenda, which was seconded by Lisa FitzGerald. All present voted for approval. The consent agenda included: Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting – 3/19/2024; Financial Reports - Company Report for BOD (Balance Sheet and P and L) as of 6/20/2024 and Budget vs. Actual YTD – October 2024 through May 2024*

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Mission:

To curate, distinguish, and develop Ontario County’s destination brand to inspire travel that creates economic vitality for our stakeholders and communities, and provides quality of life benefits for our residents.

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**Audit Finance Committee.** Steve Fuller, Treasurer commented about the ease of Bowers process and bill.com. He indicated that it is working very well. He knows that we will continue to learn more and develop the systems to make this smooth transition. Beatriz Murray asked the Board members for feedback on the types of reports that she was producing. Some questions ensued and clarifications made. There will be changes and refinements to the grant reporting process. The board members asked for a condensed version (less accounts) of the Budget vs. Actual Reports, and if they could see more relationship between revenues and expenses on particular accounts. Bea and Valerie indicated that this was a goal that Valerie had outlined and that the next set of financials will be provided in this way.

**Governance Committee**

There was no committee report, there had been no meetings.

**Nominating Committee**

Charles spoke on behalf of the committee and mentioned that the onboarding of the new members would begin. He noted that they had to fulfill the PARIS training. Valerie shared that she would be meeting with the new members separately to answer questions which might result from this meeting.

**Executive Committee Report.**

David Hutchings indicated that the focus ahead will be transition and related HR tasks. We will need to define our talent needs and align with strategy. More specifically, we needed to also follow-up on the last meeting where Valerie was tasked with bringing to the table a proposal for outlining this common strategy and vision beyond our current strategic plan. This led to our guest, Josiah Brown sharing an approach that the board could consider that he has executed in other destinations.

Valerie had suggested to the board leadership that given all our committee tasks over the summer - and given the preplanned date of the next board meeting being so close to Labor Day, that the board consider canceling the September meeting, rely on committee work, and then move the business to the October 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. Those present liked this idea and *Russ Kenyon made the motion to cancel the September 5, 2024 Board of Directors meeting; it was seconded by Lisa and all present voted in favor.*

**Marketing and Sales Updates.** Tracey updated the board on a number of recent activities. In particular, she focused on meetings and services. This generated a discussion about the quality of our hotel and meeting space product and services. There was agreement that improvements could be made based on feedback from hotel guests and planners. An idea was suggested about an evaluation ranking system. Valerie indicated that when we are the recipient of information about needs for improvement, we are very direct in sharing that in the spirit of constant improvement. FLVC team will monitor this feedback and if a remediation program needs to be put in place, then make a recommendation in the next year.

Jessica shared that the recent group visit from the American Amateur Railcar Association was a success. She noted that a member had commented to her that of all the trips that he'd been on that this was one of the top experiences. Tracey thanked Chris Vastola and Mike Roeder (and Sharon) for being there to help promote with us.

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Tracey passed around the room, the recently produced Meetings and Retreat sales sheet.

**President's Report.** Valerie reviewed the Visitor Experience Fund and its status. This will be completed by September per schedule. This has been a successful program. She noted the benefit of our focus on accessibility. New York State is asking for further content and attention to the accessibility of our travel industry and FLVC is aiming to be a leader in this space.

**Presentation.** Josiah Brown, the NYS Sherpa - New York's Best Experiences joined by zoom at this time. He shared his destination advocacy program, giving examples of some of his work across New York and the United States. He focused on the importance of a common vision for our evolving industry. He talked about tourism as the second lane of economic development. He indicated the importance of getting an advocate in every room for the discussion. This would help in the understanding of the role. He noted that this industry has become very competitive. If you want to compete you must "play the game" on a national level. He noted the success of Dutchess County, as an example.

He recommended a three-step process to 1. Strike the vision 2. Train advocates 3. Activate your strategies.

David Hutchings asked if Josiah could send a proposal to us and what the timing would look like. Josiah said, "yes" confirming that he would be able to start in the late summer, fall for a completion date in the early spring. Josiah indicated that a process would probably include a community roundtable, a public presentation or two, and unique activations for communicating the value and benefit destination management (more than marketing).

Valerie finished her report with a Budget Presentation of the 2024-2025 Budget. She indicated that more information was needed for certain categories, and she would like to work with Bowers to condense the budget accounts, improve the classification system as previously discussed, and apply those improvements with any amendments by the time the budget was needed for PARIS and the County. There were several questions about the budget line items, which Valerie clarified. After review, David Hutchings ask for a motion to approve the budget for PARIS posting, recognizing the category changes that still needed to happen. *A motion was made by Jim Cecere to approve budget for PARIS and seconded by Lisa Fitzgerald.* There was no further discussion on the budget. *The motion was carried with all present voting yes.*

Katie Flowers from Hobart William Smith Office of Community Engagement and Brandi Ferrara from HWS Career Services joined us briefly to welcome us to the colleges and to share different programs at the college that relate closely to our businesses. They noted the number of interns that could be available through the colleges and the programs which are jointly beneficial. They expressed appreciation for the potential partnerships with our tourism industry.

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**New Business.** There was no more new business before the board.

**Old Business.** There is no old business to report.

**Adjournment.** *David Hutchings asked for a motion to adjourn. Charles cast the motion. It was seconded by Mark and the meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m.*

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**Next Meeting:**

8:30am - Thursday, October 10. This is the annual meeting.

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