

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - February 5, 2025 - 3:00 pm
Acquilano Wine Cellars, Canandaigua, NY

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	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	Z		
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, Carolina Taylor, Theresa VanWormer, Chloe Davis. Via Zoom: Guest, Beatriz Murray and Josiah Brown.

Call to Order and Welcome. David Hutchings called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m. He introduced Jim from Acquilano Wine Cellars who took a moment to share his story of how he became a winemaker and what his plans are for his Main Street, Canandaigua facility. David welcomed everyone around the room. Carolina Taylor was collecting fiduciary responsibilities and conflict of interest forms.

Consent Agenda. David asked for a motion on the Consent Agenda. ***Subsequently, Russ Kenyon offered this motion which was seconded by Lenore Friend.*** A motion to accept the Consent Agenda items was carried with all present voting yes.

- a. Minutes of the Board of Directors Meeting - January 16, 2025
- b. Financial Reports - December 31, 2024

Meeting overview. Valerie provided a meeting overview including a re-introduction of Josiah Brown, the NY Sherpa and that we will use the end of this meeting as a kick-off of our invitation to the 2025 Visitor Economy Summit, to be held on 3/18/25.

p. 1 February 5, 2025

p. 17 FYE 2025

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.

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - February 5, 2025 - 3:00 pm
Acquilano Wine Cellars, Canandaigua, NY

Search Committee

Charles spoke on behalf of the committee to update the board on the Search for our President and CEO. He noted that the contract had been signed with Searchwide and that the process had begun. The group felt that this was the path that could be taken, and reinforced that this does not exclude local candidates, but rather that everyone will go through the same process – which is nationally recognized with SearchWide. He also noted that they can manage the process, will vet the candidates and also provide a one-year guarantee. Everyone on the board was going to be interviewed, and he encouraged that discussion quickly so that the timelines could be met. He said that Searchwide had indicated that it would probably be the end of May before the search was complete. He was slightly concerned about that because of the lack of overlap with Valerie, but he reminded people that Valerie had already agreed to an Advisory Role from July through January to get through key projects and help with any Public Authorities needs and training. He reminded the other board members that the committee members were Charles and Lisa as the leads; Mike Kauffman and Naved Amed from the board, and from the community were Maureen Ballatori and Nicole Mahoney. A very specific schedule has been put in place to account for resume review and interviews. Charles was asked if he had a sense of the candidates yet. He does not as they are weeding through the resumes. They also have their database that they can look through.

Additional comments were made about ensuring that this national company guided the board in appropriate compensation for the position, to be competitive and to retain a leader. They will ask this at the next committee meeting. Valerie also recommended that SearchWide address with the board leadership the concept of contracts vs. an at-will agreement for this position. Also, there was a brief discussion about the need for a relocation package. A brief discussion about the board's need to set goals and KPI's was also asked for and included for future information from SearchWide.

Governance Committee

In Mike Darling's absence Valerie reviewed the results of the Board of Directors Self-Evaluation. She indicated that the summary would be posted on the website for the local development corporation. In the review she noted that the board was pretty much in line with the past where the highest rated score is the ability to understand the role between the staff and the board. As in the past, the individual members rate their ability to move up in the organization a little lower than the other areas. This is an honest recognition of the many responsibilities that our board members have both for their own business and also to other boards. The board members commented that they enjoyed their board positions getting to know each other and working towards common goals was frequently mentioned. Jim Cecere made a motion to adopt the board self-evaluation as presented and all voted in favor of the motion, after a second was offered by Russ Kenyon.

Another mention was made of the fiduciary responsibilities and the conflict of interest forms which are due by February 15th.

p. 2 February 5, 2025

p. 18 FYE 2025

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.

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - February 5, 2025 - 3:00 pm
Acquilano Wine Cellars, Canandaigua, NY

Audit Finance Committee. Steve Fuller provided an overview of the upcoming maturing CD's and the recommendation to continue the ladder approach which had been by David DeCoursey of Merrill Lynch. There will be two CD's coming for maturity in February. Hearing no concerns or questions, *Charles offered this motion which was seconded by Mark. All members voted in favor.*

Next Steve discussed the desire to set up a separate bank account for the Scholarship. This would allow extra transparency and help to manage it. Once the initial accounting is completed, per the scholarship resolution, the management of the scholarship will be taken over by NYSTIA. *A motion was offered by Russ directing Valerie to open an account for this purpose. The second was made by Charles. All present voted in favor of the motion.*

Nominating Committee. (no report, no meeting)

Executive Committee Report. In Lisa's absence Tracey reported on the Board Leadership Symposium through Destinations International. She shared that she went as a Board member and Lisa attended all the Chair sessions. Valerie went to the CEO sessions. All agreed that it was beneficial, especially with the upcoming transition, she and Lisa were able to see the things that were in place for the board and the organization, and in fact our leadership in some areas. It also allows connections with the other organizations as the groupings were in the size bureau for basic operating budgets. Tracey shared that Mike Roeder met up with us and we had a board dinner that first night as well. Valerie indicated that she thinks that this will be a beneficial session for the new director to attend in another year.

Marketing and Sales Updates. Jessica gave a brief report on projects pending. The travel guide is up for refresh, she is working on landing pages for the special programs. We've been doing a winter, luxury photo shoot, and planning a Brave Women Promo with neighboring counties for March.

Valerie shared that our organization had helped with the Ontario County Parks Branding. This stemmed from their Parks Master Plan. It was rewarding to be recognized for our expertise in that area.

DI Accreditation was also mentioned as a project that needed to be completed in the next couple of months. Someone asked the length of that accreditation. Tracey responded that it is five years.

Board members were asked to put on their calendar the recognition for Valerie's retirement. This has been confirmed for Tuesday, April 22nd between 4:30 and 6:30 at the Canandaigua Country Club. This location was chosen for ease of access from Hotel Canandaigua since many guests are anticipated as part of the NYSTIA Conference which begins on the 23rd and runs through April 25th.

p. 3 February 5, 2025

p. 19 FYE 2025

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.

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - February 5, 2025 - 3:00 pm
Acquilano Wine Cellars, Canandaigua, NY

President's Report.

Valerie reminded the board that our Virtual Museum project had been selected for a demo at the International Cultural and Heritage Innovation Imaging Conference. This is quite an honor and undoubtedly stems from the uniqueness of the program and the relationship that has developed with the various students and schools at RIT. Two students who have worked on the project will be going - as well as Valerie. She indicated that there are a lot of details remaining to complete the program and we're going to run right up to the deadlines, especially with this poor weather. We must complete the program before the money is released. This is a project that Valerie will return to work on. She will make sure that what needs to be done in June can be somewhat on self-propelled progress by that time.

New Business. There was a lengthy discussion about the upcoming issues that would be facing the organization. These ranged from the uncertainty of the budget to a better understanding of short-term-rental laws and the new legislation that related to that and how that impacts Ontario County's occupancy tax law. Additionally, the concerns for the search and a new committee and turnover of elected officials were all raised. The board was eager to get a grasp on the issues. At the end of the discussion, it was determined that for our early March meeting we should use a workshop format to address these issues. This would be helpful in terms of the common ground for the March 18th meeting. Valerie will do a poll and see what date works. She will also see if she can get an expert on the new legislation. That is most likely to be Mark Dorr from the NYS Hospitality and Tourism Association.

Old Business.

It was noted that Josiah was on the phone and our kick-off celebration and planning was next on the agenda. Tracey reviewed the theme, "We Build Community Together." Josiah would remain on the call and talk to us about invitees and the process for the day. Tracey shared the "building blocks" and the Lego cup along with the invitation. These will all be given to the board for distribution to the culled list.

Adjournment. *Chris offered the motion to adjourn to our 2025 Tourism Visitor Economy Summit "pre-game". It was seconded by Russ and the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.*

Next Meeting: March 5 or 6. (depending on the survey)

2025 Visitor Economy Summit. 8:00 a.m. to 11:45 a.m. Community Roundtable, New York Kitchen, Canandaigua. RSVP required.

p. 4 February 5, 2025

p. 20 FYE 2025

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.