

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY
Board of Directors Meeting - May 15, 2025 @ 3:00pm
Hotel Canandaigua

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 & Tails Farm – Vice Chair of the Board	X		
Mike Kauffman, Eastview		X	
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	
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

Call to Order and Welcome. Vice-Chair Lisa FitzGerald called the meeting to order at 3:13 p.m. and welcomed everyone. Lisa suggested starting Valerie's presentation on the strategic plan as we don't currently have a quorum. The board had asked Valerie to provide a bridge plan, to take the board through 2026, as it reviewed options for updating the Strategic Plan under the new leadership and with consideration towards the work that had been done in Community and with the 2025 Visitor Economy Summit. Valerie provided a document which outlined her thoughts on priorities and ideas that may benefit us in future decisions. She highlighted the restart of a partnership program, considerations for the current political and economic situation – especially with a focus on the Canadian market, and finally the impacts of short-term rentals and changes in the overnight visitors related to all those factors.

Charles Parkhurst and Mark Gilbride arrived at 3:18pm; Quorum was declared by Lisa. David Hutchings arrived at 3.22pm; David called the meeting to order. He returned to the regular agenda.

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Finance/Audit Committee. Mike Roeder made a motion to approve the financials and company management report as received from Bowers for March and April. This motion was second by Sherry Brahm French, and all present voted in favor of the motion.

A motion was made by Russ to add Alicia Quinn, President and CEO as a signer on all accounts and official paperwork, subject to successful start of employment. A second was offered by Steve Fuller, and all present voted in favor of the motion.

Executive Committee. David brought up the hiring of new President, Alicia Quinn and shared her hiring agreement with board members. Various members commented on the process as very positive. SearchWide and their handling of the search process was praised for their professionalism, the integrity and transparency of the process from preliminary screening, to setting up interviews, and all travel arrangements for finalists, background checks and references. The total cost was, as reported by Valerie, approximately \$37,500. As a reminder, this was taken from reserve funds and was under the \$40,000 budget that had been established.

The press release announcing Alicia Quinn as the new president was shared with the board. It will be sent out on Monday, May 19 to the media, key industry partnerships and local officials. Tracey and Jessica will also make note of this at the PEQ committee of Ontario County. Alicia's first day is May 29, and that will start with her attendance at the NYS DMO meeting.

Committees of the board will meet in May/early June to discuss cope of work for the upcoming months/year. Tracey will reach out to set these up.

President's Report. Valerie provided updates on the Virtual Museum and her conference and presentation in Turkey; she noted the program is a bit behind. They are waiting on brackets and approvals for the signs. July is the anticipated install date; public promotion of the program to follow, including an app to download from both Google play and the Apple store.

Valerie also reported on the Conference/Managing Tourism Across Continents. Val thanked the Board for the opportunity to accompany RIT to Turkey. She thinks this is the start of a partnership and it opened doors for future coop programs with the college. This, in turn, raises the profile of the organization and our staff.

Russ Kenyon left the meeting at this time.

Marketing Team/Destination Development Update. Jessica and Tracey reported that the NYSTIA Tourism Conference was a huge success. Attendees enjoyed the Fam Tour, Hotel Canandaigua and Immersion Tours. There were many partners including Geneva and Canandaigua BIDS who helped out. The conference will be part of the presentation to the PEQ Committee on May 19. The group asked about the economic impact of the conference; Tracey will follow up.

Old Business

Scholarship Fund. Valerie and Jessica reported over \$10,000 raised for the Valerie Knoblauch "Yearning to Learn" scholarship fund. Russ to lead this committee; a specific number and plan will come from this.

Presentation of Budget Proposal 25-26. Jessica and Tracey reviewed the process for creating the next budget, noting that it is based on the base 2025, with a 5% increase, per the contract in January 2026. This is the third and final year of this budget agreement. She reviewed a few of the line items. Valerie reminded the board that the end goal is that the budget would be adopted in June at the meeting, so as you pondered the proposal, please provide feedback to Tracey or Alicia. Valerie thinks that Jessica and Tracey did a great job looking at future costs and programs, past experience - in terms of dollars and cents - and what we've spent year to date. Additional unique factors are the personnel costs this year related to the search, overlap, and voids that we have had in staffing. This budget reflects on filling those. This budget (both revenues and expenses) is also impacted by inflationary pressures and the unpredictability of the economy. The remainder of the grants are being treated separately. It was agreed that board members would provide feedback as they reviewed this more and that the budget would be presented for approval at the June meeting. Tracey will review it with Alicia in advance of that.

Presentation Strategic Plan - Bridge Plan. Valerie reflected on the development of the vision plan and master plan. She noted that she wants to provide the best tools for the team. Our current strategic plan remains on target and is a great guideline. She noted that the marketing plan is in place, and most importantly, the notes from the 2025 Visitor Economy Summit are validation that the board and the team are in the right strategic direction for alignment with the strategic plan. New factors needed to be added to the list. The board asked Valerie if she could prioritize items. She mentioned that she felt that there will be those vying for occupancy tax dollars, especially those in the reserve fund, and those that might come if there is a change in the law. The board noted the importance of both the strategic plan, the marketing plan and the need to do a better job of communicating the initiatives, the ROI, and the expertise and past success of the organization when resources are prioritized as reinvestments. The board asked Valerie to finish this work for their further review and for continuity of strategic focus and vision.

New Business. Valerie took to the floor to thank the board and credit "Team FLVC" for the wonderful retirement party in April. The details were so thoughtful, well done, and a heart-warming reflection on her career. She noted that she was humbled by the attendance and many conversations from that night, as well as the phone calls and notes she'd received. The board has been guides, mentors and partners. They have become friends as well, she concluded.

Tracey invited board members to meet downstairs in the hotel to toast Valerie's retirement as this is her last board meeting.

Adjournment. *David asked for a motion to adjourn. Charles cast the motion. It was seconded by Mark Gilbride, and the meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 4:22 p.m.*

Next Meeting. June 26, 2025, 8:30 am at Finger Lakes Welcome Center, Geneva.