



Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, NY

Board of Directors Meeting - July 24, 2025  
8:30 - 10:00 a.m. | LNB Bank, Farmington

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		
Todd Plouffe, Indus Hospitality Group			X
Jim Cecere, The Speakeasy at VINIFERA, FLX Group		X	
Naved Amed, Geneva on The Lake			X

Staff: Alicia Richie Quinn; Tracey Burkey

**Call to Order and Welcome.** David Hutchings called the meeting to order at 8:33 a.m.

**Consent Agenda.**

**Minutes** David asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the June 26, 2025, meeting. Russ made a motion to approve the June meeting minutes with a second from Mike R.

**Financial Reports** From the report that Bowers sent it looks like we are up about \$13,000 to-date. Charles made a motion to accept the June Financial Report with a second coming from Mark.

*Committees of the Board*

**Executive Committee.** David moved this report to the end of the meeting.

**Governance Committee.** Tracey will set up a meeting for this committee.

### **Finance/Audit Committee.**

Steve made a motion to reimburse the checking (operations) account from the reserve account for the remaining costs associated with the leadership transition. The second was made by Charles.

Steve asked Alicia for an update on Key Bank, which is used for NYS Matching Funds. There is about \$2,500 in it with no immediate plan to spend it down. Steve explained the desire to close the Key Bank account as it is logistically difficult for signers on the account. In the meantime, we will look to open another account somewhere convenient for the staff and signers to replace Key Bank. Charles suggested opening a new account first before closing out Key Bank. Five Star is also waiting for authorized signers to go in person and complete required paperwork to add Alicia; signers were notified 6/23/25 to go and complete paperwork.

The recommendation from Alicia is to provide a \$50 cellphone stipend per full-time staff, totaling \$200/monthly. The Verizon bill is estimated to go down to \$23/monthly (office iPad) from over \$400/monthly. This will take effect on August 1. David asked for a motion to stipend the staff's cellphones, \$50 each, and get rid of the company cell phones. Mark made the motion with a second by Sherry. The Board voted 9-1 with Russ voting no.

Once the vote was done, Russ asked to make a comment. He does not think it is the board's responsibility to be determining little things like that. If it is within the budget, it is not the purpose of the board to micromanage the administration of the organization. That is Alicia's job.

The last piece of the committee's report is the credit card from Capital One. This needs to be closed as it is under Valerie and it is tied to her personally. Alicia will need to open a new credit card under FLVC/Ontario County Four Seasons. She is looking at options, including Chase who would offer some benefits to the company. Russ made a motion to allow Alicia to open a credit card account under terms and conditions that are approved by the Finance Committee, with signers that are also approved by the Finance Committee. The second was made by Steve.

**Nominating Committee.** Lori Proper identified the seats we need to fill including Sheryl Mordini and Sherry Brahm-French (terms have expired), Mike Kaufman (retiring), and Mike Darling (stepped down due to work conflicts). Both Mike's have 2 years left on their terms. Jim Cecere may have to step down if he becomes the Mayor of Geneva but plans to stay on until January at this time. The committee has a list of recommendations and will meet after the board meeting to continue the process. The four recommendations will be brought to the board meeting in August for a vote and then to the PEQ committee on September 2 and the Board of Supervisors on September 11 for final approval.

The board also discussed the number of members and if we want to limit it to a smaller group. The bylaws say no more than 17. We have 16 members currently. It was agreed that the number does not matter as much as the level of engagement.

**President's Report.** Alicia spoke about the new and now regularly scheduled monthly partner newsletter. In addition, she summarized items that we covered since last meeting:

We participated on a statewide campaign July 1 with I Love NY for Canada Day including various social media posts and content. We thanked our neighbors to the north for 150 years of friendship and wished them Happy Canada Day from their friends in the Finger Lakes and NYS.

FLVC participated with the Finger Lakes Regional Tourism Council on a series of six passion videos that were done on hiking, biking, and others focused on sustainability and accessibility. Our area was focused on four of the six videos. We have access to use them as needed, and we put the link to them in our July newsletter for the accessible boat grant and look to use them in other promotional avenues.

We also met with Destinations International to get updated information on our Reaccreditation for the Destination Marketing Accreditation Program. We will have a checklist of about 175 items that we have to complete to receive our accreditation status, which is a visible industry distinction that defines quality and performance standards in destination marketing and management. We will begin this in the fall and with a deadline for completion by April 2026.

FLVC participated in the Ontario County Historical Society Historic Homes and Gardens tour this month. Team member Jaynee Straw welcomed 200 people and had refreshments as they enjoyed our gardens and learned about the history of the house. The original rack card was also updated and re-printed including with a QR code for more information on the house that drives to our website.

Alicia mentioned that she had been asked about the Ontario County Parks Master Plan at PEQ. She and Tracey looked through the report and she was able to discuss it at the most recent PEQ meeting. This will be a useful tool for us to do our own internal audit on parks in our system and on our website. This data will help us to recommend how to promote our parks and recreation activities with more emphasis on them.

The Consolidated Fund requests for letter of support have been coming in. We have done letters for Sonnenberg, the East Lake Landing (formerly the Ontario Beach Park), the 1816 Farmington Quaker House, and the new development of Pinnacle North and the lakefront arts and natural park. Alicia has been sitting on a committee with them as well.

We met with Visit Rochester discussing some new collaborations with them, including public relations, communication, and marketing and especially in the international market.

Alicia met Senator Pam Helming at the Ontario County Chamber event and will be working to schedule a meeting with her in late August to talk about tourism and potentially begin the discussion on short-term rentals.

Alicia and Tracey met with the auditors to introduce Alicia. The audit is scheduled for the week of November 3. Both she and Tracey received access to the back-end portal so that we can begin reviewing various pieces to prepare for this year's audit. PARIS reporting is also due at the end of this month, specifically submitting a budget which needs to be approved by the board.

Internally, Alicia updated the timesheets to make it simpler to fill out and to separate out any overtime, which we are trying to control.

Alicia mentioned that Jaynee is out for a hip replacement. Her surgery went well, and she is recuperating. We do not have a definite date for her return currently.

Alicia was asked about any interaction with the Ontario Chamber. She said she and Tracey Dello Stritto touch base often and are on a committee or two together. She also mentioned seeing Ryan Davis and that she is aware of the airport and their need for funding, which could be proposed from the FLVC reserve fund. She also has met with Chris DeBolt, County Administrator and Alissa Bub. It is going well. They will have another meeting on August 7. She has also had the opportunity to meet Jared Simpson at a few meetings and have a brief conversation.

There is a Canandaigua town tourism group that is new, and Andy Griffith asked if Alicia would chair this. She said she would be happy to participate but does not have the bandwidth to chair at this time.

Russ asked about the airport. Tracey learned at a County Planning Meeting that Ryan Davis may be looking into the possibility of using the room tax reserves to help fund the airport. Russ said at the Chamber State of the State meeting Ryan asked if anyone wanted to buy an airport. Russ wants to keep an eye on this since this entity was a big proponent of the airport from the start. Ryan is trying to collect data on the visitors and businesses that utilize the airport. It was suggested that the BOD have a tour and a meeting there.

The board discussed the timeline for the New York Kitchen closing and moving to the new park facility. The building will go up for sale and there are some interested parties. The last piece of funding would make it all start in spring of 2026. We would likely be without the New York Kitchen for one year. The development by the Lake - FLCC and NYK construction will likely begin in 2027.

**Marketing Team/Destination Development Update.** Tracey reported that the NYS School Business Officials held their board retreat at The Lake House. This was the second time the group met there. FLVC provided welcome bags and assisted with arrangements for offsite dining at FLX Table and an event at Vinifera.

*Meetings Subgrant* - We are in our final year of our 3-year grant. Tracey will be wrapping this up with Empire State Development and our four partners: Cooperstown; 1000 Islands, Chautauqua, and Watkins Glen. We are doing some final digital marketing and social media to finish out the program. Overall, the program results look good. Once she has a final report she will share it with the board. As we look at the budget for next year, we must really put some money into the meetings market as we will not have the grant. There is a show called Connect Marketplace that caters to meeting planners. I Love NY, which is representing our Waterfronts program this year. Next year we need to collaborate with our partners to see if we want to cooperatively fund a show like this. We have received three out of four payments for this program and need to submit our final expenses by the end of September for final payment.

**Budget.** Alicia shared the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year.

Revenue

Partner revenue - kick off partner program is potential Jan/Feb. We have not done this partner program

since Covid. Currently we need to build up our assets to build a foundation so that we can sell based on metrics and to make sure that we are getting the rating on traffic.

Virtual Museum - David asked if we were getting any dollars in the next fiscal year for this program. Alicia indicated that to the best of her knowledge we are not, based on Valerie's preliminary budget that did not have any in there, she assumes Val would have known best.

### Expenses

Promotions - the focus is resources such as user generated content (UGC), videos, content development, website, and digital marketing. We hope to refresh the website later in FY 26/FY 27. With the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the World Cup we want to be prepared.

Payroll - We are using this time to evaluate where assistance/needs are for staff support, and we hope to add an additional staff person based on need.... March earliest.

Content - freelance writing and some internal writing.

### Operations

We would like to Cut back by selling the van. We do not feel there is a need for this overhead and liability.

Gross Pay

Depreciation - question was raised from Russ as to why the reduction proposed for this next year? Alicia showed a to-date filing of depreciation that supports the number proposed.

Phone system - we are looking into our landlines phones that are currently analog. We currently have 11 landlines and feel we can lower this number and potentially have a digital phone system that allows for staff to be reached regardless of where they are, i.e., working remote, traveling for work, etc.

We have \$14,000 less than the last budget. David asked if we are prepared to approve the budget. Steve made a motion to approve the budget and Charles made a second.

**Executive Committee.** David spoke of Valerie's agreement and the Executive Committee has been working with Valerie to modify the agreement to become a contractor instead of an employee. She would work specifically on the Virtual Museum program. The committee is hoping to have the agreement signed by August 1. She will get paid \$2,000 per month which we will be able to expense out to the grant. David has been working with Steve, Lisa, and Charlie as Executive Committee members. It was sent to Bowers as well as Mengel Metzgar Barr to be sure we covered ourselves. David feels we are at a place where we can send it to Valerie and if she agrees we can move forward with the new contract. David feels this is FYI and we will not need to vote on this. Steve felt we should vote on it.

Steve made a motion for the Executive Committee to make negotiations with Valerie to sign on as a contractor to complete the Virtual Museum. Sherry provided a second. All voted and there were nine in favor and Russ abstained.

August 1 would be the start, and the agreement would end on 12/31. At that time anything remaining can be managed by the staff.

### **Additional Business:**

Chris mentioned that the sales tax was up 2% last year despite the Canadian visitorship being down. Also, they

are developing 26 budgets and for the first time are running through AI in partnership with New York State just to see what AI has to say.

David mentioned a committee on county tourism he was asked to sit on and is unable to attend. Alicia explained that it is a focus group, so others are also invited. It was through Ryan Davis and Economic Development. David talked about their admissions increasing from last year and they are heading towards 40,000 people this year. They are also starting a music series and moonlight strolls on Thursday night.

Alicia talked about ways we are streamlining our calendar of events, by re-utilizing the top performing event listing, vs. submitting new events. Previously submitted events have been ranked and indexed by Google and have higher search capabilities. She is working with Chloe to distinguish the top performing event that you'll all be asked to start updating each year, saving from duplicate entries and time spent.

**01. Adjourn.** Chris made a motion with a second by Lori. Meeting adjourned at 10:02am.

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*Next Meeting: August 21, 2025, 8:30 - 10:00 a.m. at The Microtel Inn & Suites, Farmington*