

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, April 29, 2009 8:30 a.m.
Phelps Arts Center, 15 Church Street, Phelps**

PRESENT

Mike Roeder Frank Riccio
John Maerhofer Mary Luckern
Dan Fuller Mike Kauffman
Chris Iversen Dick Maltman
Alexa Gifford Russ Kenyon
Bob Bennett John Brahm

EX-OFFICIO

Barbara Walters, Cdga Chamber
Rob Gladden, Geneva Chamber
Bob Matson, FLCC

EXCUSED

Lois Kozlowski
Jessica Bacher
Suzanne Farley
Lisa Fitzgerald

STAFF

Valerie Knoblauch
Meg Colombo
Rebecca Donovan
Sue Schmidt

AJ Shear

GUESTS

Lynne Stewart
Shannon Combs

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS – Chairman Russ Kenyon called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. and asked for introductions. Russ welcomed our guests Lynne Stewart, Director of Marketing at Bristol Harbour Resort and Ontario County’s representative to the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance Board of Directors, and Shannon Combs, Geneva Chamber of Commerce. Valerie Knoblauch introduced our host, John Maerhofer, who gave us a brief history of the Phelps Arts Center.

CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK – Rebecca Donovan passed the correspondence notebook.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM – Valerie Knoblauch reported that she had received occupancy numbers from Ontario County for December through February, and shared the results of the informal “How’s Business?” survey of our industry. The consensus was that March was a “killer” but there is cautious optimism for the summer based on pre-bookings. Valerie expressed that “the customer is king” and that many in the industry are concentrating efforts on existing loyal customers. Valerie noted the changes in lodging inventory across the county over the past 25 years, noting that Victor will soon have the highest room count with the opening of Homewood Suites in June.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS – Mike Roeder moved to approve the **Minutes of the January 21, 2009 Board of Directors meeting**. John Brahm seconded. Mary Luckern abstained. The motion passed unanimously.

Valerie Knoblauch stated that a record of the board retreat for strategic planning on March 4, 2009 was included in the Board mailing, noting that there was a consensus to cancel the March 18, 2009 board meeting.

Valerie presented the financial reports, noting the new budget format. John Brahm observed that expenses seem to be down and Valerie responded that expenses for the Visitors Guide, roof repairs, and Explore NY program are coming in. Chris Iversen observed that payroll is up while marketing expenses are down and Valerie responded that the adjustment for marketing salaries had not yet been made. Frank Riccio made a motion to approve the **January, February, March and Year-to-Date Financial Reports**. John Brahm seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS – continued

Valerie reported that the Ontario County Attorney's office had overviewed the background of our Local Development Corporation status. We are also incorporated as a 501-c-3 and the question became "do we need both statuses?" The Executive Committee reviewed this information with Valerie and determined that both statuses have advantages to the organization. In particular, the LDC status fosters our close relationship with the county. Therefore all reporting under PAAA will need to be completed for compliance as an LDC.

Chris Iversen moved to **approve the Conflict of Interest Policy**. Dan Fuller seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Mary Luckern moved to **approve the Whistleblower Policy**. Dick Maltman seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Dick Maltman moved to **approve the Document Retention and Destruction Policy**. Chris Iversen seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Chris Iversen moved to **approve the Process for Determining Compensation Policy**. John Brahm seconded and the motion passed unanimously. Frank Riccio moved to **approve the Joint Venture Policy**. Alexa Gifford seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Valerie reminded the board that another requirement is the training of all board members by December 31, 2009. Training will be offered by Maureen Duggan, Ontario County Office of Economic Development. Valerie surveyed the board for possible dates in June; information will be forthcoming on the selected training date and time.

Valerie reported on the proposals received from Canandaigua National Bank, First National Bank, and Five Star Bank for refinancing the mortgage on 25 Gorham Street, indicating that the best option was to stay with Five Star Bank as there would be no closing costs for a rollover and the rate was lowest. Russ Kenyon moved that **Valerie Knoblauch be empowered to pay down the mortgage principal balance no lower than \$40,000**. Chris Iversen seconded and the motion passed unanimously. John Brahm moved that **Valerie Knoblauch be empowered to recast the Five Star loan with a fixed rate of 6% for five years**. Russ Kenyon seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – Valerie Knoblauch reported that she was invited to join the Economic Development strategy session, and was pleased to learn how they value the tourism market segments. Valerie passed around a copy of the presentation, and noted that Fairweather Consulting has developed a virtual planning website for this project.

Valerie reported that the Finger Lakes Museum proposal group has issued an RFP for potential sites in the Finger Lakes, with the focus on available acreage and proximity to attractions. To date, there are no submissions from Ontario County. Valerie noted that a Finger Lakes Museum proposal presentation is planned for the June 17, 2009 board meeting.

Valerie reported that FLVC staff members have been attending meetings on the Geneva Visitors Center sponsored by Senator Nozzolio. City Manager Mat Horn, on behalf of the committee, has issued a draft document proposing a lakefront location and affiliation with the Finger Lakes Boat Museum.

AGENCY REPORTS – Barbara Walters reported that Canandaigua Chamber president Alison Grems had a baby girl, Isabella, and that Deb Fenn joined the Chamber staff as Finance and Administrative Coordinator. The Chamber will hold its volunteer orientation on May 12, and the Chamber building has many improvements resulting from a Main Street grant. Upcoming projects include a FAM tour for seasonal employees, and a “Secret Shopper” program with FLCC students.

Rob Gladden introduced Shannon Combs, who staffs the front desk at the Visitors Center and is the primary for the Tourism Council and Finger Lakes Leadership. Rob thanked Valerie for her presentation to Finger Lakes Leadership in April. Rob reported that he is working on completion of the Chamber contract with FLVC, and gave an overview of what the Geneva Chamber does for tourism.

Lynne Stewart, Ontario County representative to the FLTA Board of Directors, reported that FLTA is working on updating and expanding their e-mail list. The new motorcoach guide will be condensed from 60 to 30 pages, and FLTA is getting a wrap car to increase visibility at events and gatherings.

MARKETING REPORT – Valerie reported on the Hiking and Biking co-op program; Ontario County will be adding 5-6 new cards in the next printing. FLVC responded to a HARO lead for a book on “wowability” (repackaging a product), submitting for the region, and got a response back. Meg Colombo reported on the e-Tourism Boot Camps, with sessions scheduled through July 22. Valerie reported on the new cover designs for the Visitors Guide and Accommodations brochure. “Finger Lakes Insiders” is a new concept that will be introduced with the new Visitors Guide, positioning us as the source for “insider” information and providing an umbrella for the various social media. “Guest” insiders are welcome to join us.

AJ Shear reported on press releases to local media on geocaching, Podcast 2 the Past, and summer events. National Tourism Week is May 9-17, and AJ has solicited the industry for people willing to be the “faces of travel” and to write a guest essay. AJ is responding to about four HARO leads per week, and distributed a handout of tourism statistics. A press conference launching Podcast 2 the Past is scheduled for May 13 at Sonnenberg Gardens; the Steuben County launch is scheduled for May 12; AJ played a sample podcast. Chris Iversen asked whether podcast downloads are trackable; Meg responded that we can, and noted that we must track downloads and packages to report to I Love New York as part of the Explore NY grant. With Steuben County, we will be hosting Marilyn Green of the International Food, Wine, and Travel Writers Association in June.

Slice, Dice and Spice NY will include three media FAM tour opportunities around farm market events, a “Field to Fork” media event at Bejo Seeds, and the actual competitions in October (handout of events). The “save the date” message was sent as a short cartoon-like video, which AJ played for the board. The board was appreciative of this innovative technique. This will be followed up with a 3-D media kit.

OLD BUSINESS – Strategic Planning

Valerie Knoblauch handed out an overview of the Strategic Planning session, spoke about the next steps, and indicated that the staff would retreat sometime between May and August to formulate a plan. Valerie suggested targeting September for affirmation. Valerie noted that previous strategic plans focused on core beliefs, mission and vision. This recent session suggests that certain themes need to permeate everything we do – specific marketing goals should be applied to internal audience, external audience, product development and fundraising. Chris Iversen agreed, suggesting that current technology is not a goal, but rather a tool.

NEW BUSINESS – AJ Shear reported that FLCC is planning a Sustainability Weekend, October 3-4, 2009. FLCC has solicited our expertise in marketing, PR and media for this event. More details on this partnership will follow.

ADJOURN – Russ Kenyon adjourned the meeting at 10:25 a.m.

Next meeting: June 17, 2009 8:30 a.m.
Geneva On The Lake
1001 Lochland Road, Geneva
Topic: Finger Lakes Museum proposal