

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, July 20, 2011 8:00 a.m.
Inspire Moore Winery, Naples

PRESENT

Dick Maltman Alexa Gifford
Lois Kozlowski John Brahm
Russ Kenyon Dan Fuller
Mike Roeder Chris Iversen
Suzanne Farley Lisa Fitzgerald
Bob Bennett

EX-OFFICIO

Alison Grems, Canandaigua Chamber
Spike Herzig, Geneva Chamber

STAFF

Valerie Knoblauch
Sue Schmidt
Rebecca Donovan

EXCUSED

Mary Luckern
Jessica Bacher
Frank Riccio
Mike Kauffman

WELCOME – Mike Roeder called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m..

CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK – Rebecca Donovan passed the Correspondence Notebook.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Russ Kenyon moved to **approve the Minutes of the March 30, 2011 Board of Directors meeting as amended at the May 4, 2011 meeting.** Chris Iversen seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Chris Iversen moved to **accept the March, April and year-to-date financial reports.** Russ Kenyon seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Valerie presented the financial reports for May, June and year-to-date, noting that with the collection of industry payments for marketing partnerships we have crested the \$1 million mark for the first time. Those payments will be used to continue with web and print programs. John Brahm moved to **accept the May, June and year-to-date financial reports.** Dan Fuller seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

COMMITTEE REPORTS –The Nominating Committee recommended the appointment of Carl Carlson, Cheerful Valley Campground, to fill John Maerhofer's term expiring September 30, 2012. Russ Kenyon moved to **accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee** to appoint Carl Carlson, Cheerful Valley Campground, to fulfill John Maerhofer's unexpired term which expires September 30, 2012. Alexa Gifford seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Lois Kozlowski moved to **direct Valerie Knoblauch to write a letter of endorsement to be signed by Board Chair Mike Roeder in support of the appointment of Ed Hall (VisitRochester), Dan Fuller (Bristol Mountain Winter Resort), Valerie Knoblauch or Cynthia Oswald (Livingston County Chamber of Commerce) to the Finger Lakes Region Economic Development Council.** Chris Iversen seconded and the motion was passed unanimously by those present.

Russ Kenyon moved to **approve the Minutes of the May 4, 2011 Board of Directors meeting.** Chris Iversen seconded and the motion was passed unanimously.

Lois Kozlowski made a motion to **request designation from the Ontario County Board of Supervisors that Finger Lakes Visitors Connection be appointed the official Tourism Promotion Agency for Ontario County in 2012.** Dan Fuller seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – BUDGET PRESENTATION

Valerie Knoblauch shared her philosophy for the Finger Lakes Visitors Connection budget calculations for 2011-2012, noting that both occupancy and room rates are up over 2010 and that she anticipates an increase in income of approximately \$40,000. Resources will also be increased compared to the current year because we won't be spending \$70,000 on website redesign. Valerie anticipates no new staff, but there may be some expenditures related to technology issues and volume. Valerie listed five items impacting the 2012 budget:

- 1) Research and strategic planning, with intent to update the Top Product Development list. Valerie will put out an RFP for research on who our consumer is, what their interests are, and what product voids exist, anticipating a \$40,000 price tag. Dan Fuller suggested it would be beneficial to survey board members and the industry to learn what information they would like to see and need for their own studies.
- 2) A mobile version of our website; no price estimate.
- 3) Continue website upgrades, in particular focusing on the backend systems which would allow the industry to input data into the site. Estimated cost \$25,000.
- 4) Nature's Health Club app for mobile technology, which visitors can use to log in, check in at various locations and earn rewards; no price estimate.
- 5) Develop programs for two new niche markets – one groups and one leisure. Bank travel is the niche market selected for groups. Sue Schmidt reported that bank travelers are qualified, younger, upscale, and tend toward "park and fly" travel. The niche leisure market has yet to be determined. On July 28, the industry has been invited to meet and explore niche market possibilities.

Russ Kenyon asked about the new leadership in the County. Valerie reported that she and Sue Schmidt met with County Administrator John Garvey, and that he has goals in mind for tourism, including assistance with the Ontario County website and photos. Sue reported that the NYS County Executives annual conference will be held in Ontario County in June of 2012. Russ Kenyon also noted that this is an election year for Ontario County supervisors, and suggested a reception for incoming supervisors. Valerie noted that there will be a new Chief Information Officer for Ontario County, and that she and Sue have a meeting scheduled in August with Mary Krause, the new Director of Human Resources for the County.

Mike Roeder suggested that, as part of brand development, we reach out to neighboring counties and cooperatively program to strengthen the regional brand. Valerie reported that she and Sue had met with their counterparts in both Rochester and Syracuse to discuss cooperative programs.

Valerie reported that the new website was scheduled to launch today, July 20, 2011. The website had been seeded with particular attention to partners first, and Valerie expects to hear concerns as this is a new mode of operating for us. Valerie is planning two days to allow industry to come in and update their data noting that face to face meetings promote conversations. Partnership participation and upgrades remain an option for any of our industry. Staggered print dates on the visitors guide allow for the addition of new partners, and some of the programs, such as QR codes and video, have not yet begun. John Brahm congratulated Valerie on her forward thinking.

Lois Kozlowski asked for an update on the Atomic Design legal action. Valerie reported that she will be back in court on July 21, 2011 for the continuance. Valerie deferred to Russ Kenyon for more information. Russ noted that the judge would have thirty days to render his decision.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT – continued

Valerie distributed copies of the board metrics, and noted that the metrics will remain the same except for web metrics. Meg Colombo had suggested some changes in web metrics; for example, mobile views of our website in June 2011 increased 642% over June 2010.

Valerie reported that we are seeing more visitors in person at our office, with a wide variety of demographics, and that the staff is spending more time with them. Discussion ensued on what board members are seeing in their visitor demographics. Valerie suggested that anyone who has the space create a “comfort corner” for visitors.

Russ Kenyon noted that the new Canandaigua Airport runway will open soon, and wondered if FLVC should acknowledge this occasion. Chris Iversen suggested that the airport should be listed as an access point on our website, and that perhaps the board could have an educational presentation at the airport.

CHAMBER UPDATES – Alison Grems reported that visitors to the Canandaigua Chamber are more “high tech, high touch” as well. The City of Canandaigua’s strategic plan committee recognizes tourism as a stakeholder group, and consultant Peter Fairchild will be reaching out to Valerie and to Alexa Gifford. A landscape architect has been hired by the city to design the streetscape to be installed in 2012. Alison and Sue have had successful meetings with a planner of high-end womens’ retreats, planning a conference here in the fall of 2011.

Spike Herzig reported for the Geneva Chamber. The HOG Rally brought over 2,000 participants to Geneva July 7-9, and the Musselman Triathlon had 2350 registered athletes in town on July 15-17. The search for a new president/CEO has been narrowed from 31 applicants to 3, and a decision is expected by Labor Day.

MARKETING AND SALES REPORT – Valerie presented board members with some of the branded items that have been produced for media and trade. Sue Schmidt reported on a recent success. The Sisters of Notre Dame Mid-Atlantic Region submitted a request for RFP at the end of June for their 2012 conference, with requirements for 880 room nights, and a variety of meeting spaces. The Inn on the Lake responded quickly, hosted a site visit and Sue was successful in bringing the conference to Ontario County. When Sue asked how the Sisters found us, the answer was that they googled “Finger Lakes CVB” and we came up first.

Valerie noted that we have become a focal point for media on the topic of gay weddings. I Love New York is promoting to this niche market. Valerie suggested that we in the industry should make sure that our language is gender neutral if we purport to be gay-friendly. Alexa Gifford reported that the New York Wine & Culinary Center is putting effort into gender neutral promotion with a social media push. The board agreed that promotion is up to industry partners, but we should make the industry aware of the importance of gender neutral language.

OLD BUSINESS – No old business was brought before the board at this time.

NEW BUSINESS – Mike Roeder reported on the National Junior Tournament to be held the first week of August at Ravenwood, with over 100 families from around the country attending. Mike asked everyone to spread the word that Ravenwood is looking for volunteers.

NEW BUSINESS – continued

Russ Kenyon congratulated Meg Colombo (@VisitFingerLake) for being ranked #15 in the Top 100 Most Influential Tourism Professionals on Twitter.

Alison Grems noted a trend in international tourism - both India and China have a “middle class” for the first time. Discussion ensued on resources in support of this trend, including interpreters, the area colleges, and marketing in places where the international travelers are going, i.e. Niagara Falls. Spike Herzig noted NTA is pursuing the Chinese market, and that groups are coming for the university perspective. Sue Schmidt recently met with a group from the Republic of Georgia, and Bob Matson noted that the Georgian group had visited FLCC to learn about the Viticulture Program.

John Brahm informed the board about the opening of Brews and Brats at Arbor Hill. Arbor Hill has partnered with Custom Brewcrafters and Hartmann’s Sausage to offer this new dining option in the carriage house on Friday through Sunday.

The board congratulated Lisa and Mike Fitzgerald on the arrival of their daughter, Isabella Rose.

ADJOURN – Bob Bennett moved to adjourn the meeting, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.

Next meeting: September 14, 2011 8:00 a.m.
 Notre Dame Retreat House
 5151 Foster Road, Canandaigua

Goal B. Brand Development:

Strategy 4: Create a documented understanding of our current markets and market drivers and communicate these and identify the high potential visitor demographically and geographically and their interest psychographics.