

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, November 19, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Bristol Mountain Winter Resort, Canandaigua**

PRESENT

Russ Kenyon
Mike Roeder
Dick Maltman
Frank Riccio
Alexa Gifford
Jessica Bacher
Lisa Fitzgerald
Suzanne Farley
Bob Bennett
Mary Luckern
Mike Kauffman

EXCUSED

John Brahm
Lois Kozlowski
Brian Nicholson

ABSENT

Chris Iversen
Kevin Reeder
Gary Ross

STAFF

EX-OFFICIO

Alison Grems, Cdga Chamber
Rob Gladden, Geneva Chamber
Cindy Kimble, FLTA

Valerie Knoblauch
Sue Schmidt
Meg Colombo
Rebecca Donovan

WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS – Chairman Russ Kenyon called the meeting to order at 8:40 a.m. He welcomed Mike Roeder back to the board. Russ also welcomed our two new board members, Jessica Bacher and Lisa Fitzgerald. Jessica Bacher is the manager of the Hampton Inn, having been there since June of 2005. Jessica has many years of experience in the tourism industry, and is the proud mother of a young son. Lisa Fitzgerald, with her husband Mike, operates Finger Lakes Winery Tours, with special attention to green and sustainable practices. Lisa holds degrees in journalism and education, and has a strong writing background. Russ asked other board members and staff for self introductions and made note of Rebecca's recent marriage to Mitch Donovan. Russ Kenyon also commended Suzanne Farley, who received the 2008 Athena Award for Entrepreneurial Achievement from the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce and the Canandaigua Business and Professional Women's Club.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM – Valerie Knoblauch reported on the Travel Industry Association's Marketing Outlook Forum, held in Portland, Oregon in October. The near future is not looking bright, as the tourism industry has been hit worse than some and further declines in occupancy are predicted. Nationwide, numbers are down 1%, but despite these declines, tourism is in the best position to hold a bit steadier locally. The challenges are that trips are shorter and planned "on the fly" – about 6-9 days out. Current trends include sustainability, avoiding "greenwashing", a focus on value. Valerie gave a profile of the "Millennial Market for travel" (born 1985-1995) and noted that more information is posted on the Partners Page of the FLVC website.

CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK – Rebecca Donovan passed the correspondence notebook and noted the following: a letter of support that Valerie wrote for the Victor Chamber in their efforts to be recognized by the Victor area government entities. There was also an article on South Bristol zoning and guidelines regarding site and vista regulations. Rebecca showed a calendar that was produced by the Naples Rotary Club. This features Valerie's photo of Gentner's County Road 12 vineyard.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS – Bob Bennett moved to approve the **Minutes of the September 10, 2008 Board of Directors meeting**. Mike Roeder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS – continued

Valerie Knoblauch presented the financial reports for September and year-to-date, and reported that the audit for the financial year ending September 30, 2008 was progressing smoothly. According to recent changes in law, the auditing firm must present their findings to the board in person. Fredericksen and Sirianni, LLP will do so at the December board meeting. Frank Riccio made a motion to approve the **September 2008 Financial Reports**. Mary Luckern seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Valerie presented the budget for 2008-2009, which has been reformatted with the help of the auditors to better reflect the way we do business. These changes are in functional areas such as meetings and conference, e-marketing and leisure marketing. The matching funds program has been cut, and Valerie expects further reductions; Governor Paterson has proposed an additional 25% cut, but no action has been taken yet. Ontario County occupancy, as tracked by Smith Travel Research, was down 10% in September. Valerie reviewed the budget and commented that this is her third version of the budget and, given the current climate, the budget is conservative. More changes may need to be made as New York State government officials begin to address the state budget and deficit. Russ asked what FLVC's budget was in the first year; Valerie estimated \$117,000. This budget is \$ 919,975 and is a result of increases in occupancy levels. It is often noted at the county level that the FLVC budget is one of the few performance based budgets in the county. Mike Kauffman asked about the distinction between Personnel Marketing and Payroll Expense; Valerie explained that payroll was distributed between marketing and administrative with a journal entry. Russ asked about the status of our computer system; Valerie has budgeted for the purchase of a copier/printer and a social media workstation.

Valerie noted that, in reorganizing the office, some furnishings have become obsolete and requested the authority to dispose of such furnishings. The board determined that she does not need approval for liquidating low value assets.

Valerie informed the board that we did receive \$41,135 in matching funds from NYS as vouchered for the Slice, Dice and Spice NY program.

Valerie received a quote from David Schlossnagel for the Yankee gutter replacement. She would like to re-bid the painting portion of the quote, and asked board members for contractor recommendations. The money from New York State for the slate roof repair grant will be reinvested in this, and in the replacement of the four remaining tin valleys in the slate roof. Approval of the quote was tabled; Valerie will pursue additional quotes.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – Russ Kenyon reported on the proposed 2009-2010 Victor Chamber of Commerce contract for \$5,000, to be paid in three installments as requirements are completed. Dick Maltman commented on the significant growth in Victor. Valerie indicated that the room inventory for Canandaigua, Geneva, and Victor are now nearly equal. Russ Kenyon asked whether the County reports occupancy by zip code. Valerie indicated that the County does track occupancy by zone, and she has requested that information. Russ indicated that it makes sense to partner with the Chambers for their strong business contacts. In response to a question, Valerie noted that Victor Chamber had requested funding from the Town and Village of Victor. This is not resolved yet. Russ noted that this item is for information at this point and the board is only giving conceptual approval of the contract at this time. Valerie will follow up with Mitch Donovan, Victor Chamber president regarding this discussion and the board's interest and intent.

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT – continued

Russ reported on the Tourism Legacy Awards and Marketing Day on November 5, 2008. He lamented the fact that there was no newspaper coverage as the quality of the award winners' achievements should be noted by the local media. Russ was particularly appreciative of the blue glass awards crafted by Peter Secrest, and asked if Meg could post the video of the making of the award.

Russ noted that Gary Ross will not be able to continue on the board due to the demands of his position at Thompson Health. Russ requested that the Nominating Committee reconvene to fill Gary's position, as well as that of Brian Nicholson who will not renew his term expiring January 31, 2009. Russ appointed Dick Maltman as chair of the Nominating Committee which includes Frank Riccio and Lois Kozlowski.

MARKETING UPDATES – Valerie reported that Pat Charland will retire on December 31, 2008, and the Vice President of Marketing position will be eliminated. From January until March 31, 2009, Pat will work as a contractor, primarily to transfer what's in her brain onto paper. Valerie will use this time to identify our needs, as the traditional PR model no longer exists. Valerie noted that the staff is already down ½ person, as Joey Norsen was not replaced. Valerie expressed to the board the many contributions Pat has made and the challenges that she has faced with the changes that continue to occur in the communications field.

Valerie and Meg Colombo recently attended an e-marketing conference in Providence, RI, which reaffirmed what they are hearing elsewhere. Social media is creating "tribes" – a group of people with a common goal. Valerie suggested that time equity will be the "new money" in 2009 – an example being bartering writing or blogging for program participation. Another idea may be to have FLVC become the "lab" for tourism classes at FLCC. Meg Colombo noted that "content is king" and that constant updating is the key to rankings; Meg's addition of an RSS feed to the FLVC website "brought the spiders back", increasing our ranking considerably. Meg also noted the concept of different time perception: 3 months on a calendar = 1 year in computer time. Russ Kenyon asked about a change in SEO providers; Meg noted that we had not used a provider for the past year and that our rankings had remained strong through an internal focus on this. Valerie suggested that the industry is not coming with us, as they are particularly challenged with their small staffs and limited technology knowledge; we need to bring them along. She referenced the Apple "Genius Bar" at Eastview, and suggested that we position ourselves with a similar concept of "help" by appointment. Suzanne Farley suggested that it's difficult for business owners to find time to participate in social media. Mike Roeder suggested that we start with invitations for a group learning experience.

Russ Kenyon asked Bob Bennett for his input from a corporate perspective; Bob noted that Holiday Inn is no longer printing a hotel directory, and that the corporation owns all the Holiday Inn domain names. Jessica Bacher noted that Hampton has discouraged individual websites, but is promoting a "Local Flavor" theme for 2009. This provides opportunities for our agency to interact with these franchises to supply local content. Jessica also noted that the Hampton server blocks Facebook, MySpace, etc. from their corporate computers. This makes it difficult to conduct social media initiatives at the hotel since employees are not allowed onto these sites. Mike Roeder noted that the travel hockey website offers links to hotels near the rinks where games are scheduled; Russ Kenyon noted the same for the swim team.

AGENCY REPORTS – Valerie noted Sue Schmidt had to leave to attend a meeting for Tour de NY biking event coming to our county in 2009, so she would present Sue's update on the current Chamber contracts, covering March 1, 2008 through February 28, 2009. Sue is working with Rob and Alison to fulfill the contracts with our agency. While most of the welcome bags are complete, the sales calls are now a priority.

NEW BUSINESS – Valerie reminded the board that the December meeting would be a breakfast meeting on Friday, December 12 at Simply Crêpes in Canandaigua. The agenda will include the auditors' report, and will be followed by a holiday open house recognizing Pat Charland and Martha Wilson. Dick Maltman announced the grand opening of the new Victor Town Hall, also on Friday, December 12th. Tours will be given from 10-4, and a reception will be held in the evening from 7-10.

Valerie noted that Ontario County appoints a representative to the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance's Board of Directors; John Brahm has ably served in this capacity for the maximum allowed two terms. Our board recommends a representative to the county. John and Valerie had talked and asked our board to recommend Lynne Stewart, Marketing Director at Bristol Harbour, as the Ontario County representative. Valerie will present the board's recommendation to the County Planning and Research Committee. Suzanne Farley made a motion to **recommend the appointment of Lynne Stewart, Marketing Director at Bristol Harbour, as the Ontario County representative to the Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance's Board of Directors.** Mike Roeder seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

ADJOURN – Russ Kenyon adjourned the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

Next meeting: December 12, 2008 8:30 a.m.
Simply Crêpes
101 South Main Street, Canandaigua
Topic: Audit Report and Holiday Gathering