

Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors Meeting, Wednesday, July 23, 2014 8:00 a.m.
Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park, Carriage House, 151 Charlotte Street,
Canandaigua, NY

PRESENT

Lisa Fitzgerald
Audrey Carrier
Bob Bennett
Dick Maltman
Frank Riccio
David Hutchings
Dan Fuller
Alexa Gifford
Jessica Bacher
Michael Kauffman
David Linger
John Cowley
Suzanne Farley

EXCUSED

Mike Roeder
Russ Kenyon
Carl Carlson
John Brahm

STAFF

Valerie Knoblauch
David Lee
Michelle Dawson
Sue Schmidt
AJ Shear

EX-OFFICIO

Alison Grems - Canandaigua Chamber
Mitch Donovan – Victor Chamber
John Hicks – Geneva Chamber

GUESTS

Sharaf Mirzayee, HWS intern

WELCOME – Mike Kauffman, 1st Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and asked David Hutchings, Director of Sonnenberg Gardens and Mansion State Historic Park to speak a little about the Gardens. Dave gave a brief history on the Gardens and spoke about the new “wedding/tent site” and Sonnenberg’s growth into the wedding arena, including 50 x 100 foot tent and would mirror the tent at the Inn on the Lake.

Education Session – Valerie addressed the New York Nonprofit Revitalization Act and noted that she and Michelle Dawson participated in the webinar regarding the Revitalization Act. She mentioned the notable changes of the Revitalization Act including the conflict of interest statements, non-collusion and set up of the board committees and operations for transparency. David Hutchings affirmed that Sonnenber is also reviewing its operations for compliance.

Correspondence Notebook –Michelle reported the following from the correspondence notebook: the June 27, 2014, copy of the Rochester Business Journal which listed Hotels and Motels ranked by Average Single Room Rate, an e-mail dated June 1, 2014, from Lois Kozlowski advising that on the morning of June 4, 2014, two big trucks would be pulling up and by night, 3231 Halseyville Road in Trumansburg New York would be her new home, copy of proposal to host MTWA (Midwest Travel Writers Association) Spring 2015 meeting, “The Man behind the Mall” an article about our 1st Vice Chair, Mike Kauffman, an article about Nazareth College and how it is working with experts on degrees, an overview of the I Love New York, New York State Tourism Summit, Tourism Means Business 2014 attended by Sue Schmidt.

Also in the correspondence notebook were thank you cards from Lois Kozlowski for the sendoff party, Harvey Botzman, Program Manager for Bike New York State for our participation, Maureen at Cayuga County Tourism for allowing her to job shadow at our office, Vicky from Canal New York for allowing use our conference room and Lisa from Livingston County for offering her chance to participate in a #FLXperience.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS

Valerie noted that Michelle, David Linger and Audrey Carrier had all completed the PARIS training which is mandated by our Local Development Corporation status. We are now in 100% compliance with the state on this.

Mike Kauffman asked for a motion to **approve the minutes of the May 7, 2014 Board of Directors meeting**. David Hutchings made the motion and Dick Maltman seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.

Valerie presented the financial reports for May, June and year-to-date. She advised the board the Regional Matching Funds account is now closed. Our Profit and Loss statement shows that we have unspent funds in the marketing areas. These are planned for our will be utilized for the Fall mini guide and plans towards the Midwest Travel Writers Association, which is estimated to cost about \$50,000. The potential exposure to the Finger Lakes will be tremendous and exciting and will provide a very effective ROI in the long run. Valerie briefly touched upon the mobile visitor center. She explained it is not entirely off the table but, it is currently on the back burner. Insurance, personnel power, and the ability to move it around are issues. Lisa Fitzgerald added that maintenance is a big issue as well. There were no other clarifications on the financials and no further questions from the board. Bob Bennett moved to accept the May, June and Year-to-Date financial reports. Frank Riccio seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Chamber Reports - John Hicks reported on behalf of the Geneva Chamber. He advised that the visitor center on the lakefront was very busy. It is staffed by both staff and volunteers. He said there is a second site located in downtown Geneva. When asked by Mike Kauffman what the tourists are looking for when they come to Geneva, John said wine trails, restaurants, Corning Museum of Glass and Bristol Mountain. John lastly reported that there is a need, through the contract with the Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, for a large map to depict the entire region.

Alison Grems reported on behalf of the Canandaigua Chamber of Commerce, sharing that this is a great visitor season. Attendance was good at the Arts Festival and CMAC is doing well. She also added Visitors Guides and maps are going out. Lastly, Alison mentioned that the Chamber is currently accepting Athena award nominees. The Athena awards are in September this year.

Mitch Donovan reported on behalf of the Victor Chamber of Commerce. He advised he is excited to work on the Gateway Project with our office.

Policy - Valerie advised that changes would need to be made to some of the language in the Bylaws and new committees would need to be formed according to the Revitalization Act. Dan Fuller made a motion to appoint a Bylaw committee and David Linger seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously. David Hutchings agreed to work on this committee.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT- Valerie about the Regional Economic Development Center updates and her recent trip to Italy and how the Finger Lakes area with its manufacturing and agriculture and culinary lifestyle compares to Italy. Valerie went in cooperation with the Ontario County Office of Economic Development. She noted that opportunities include a focus on nutraceuticals (using food to promote health instead of drugs), agriculture, and tourism. Board members inquired as to how this connection came about John Hicks explained the connections to economic development opportunities at the Food Tech Park, etc. John mentioned that the Geneva BID office is close to providing teleconferencing ability so they will be able to communicate with opportunities like this. Valerie finished her report indicating that she also went to Naples, Italy to fact-find about for the #FLXPerience promotion's trip to Naples, NY and Naples, Italy. Valerie noted that she had connected with an Italian travel writer who had been here on a state familiarization tour this winter. Angie Vitaliano facilitated a connection with the government officials of Naples. Valerie now needs to connect Naples, Italy to Naples, NY in an informal, sister-city-like endeavor. John Cowley, being present is obviously key to this followup.

AJ Shear joined the meeting and he spoke about the #FLXperience campaign and its results to date. AJ said he appeared on both Channel 13 and Channel. There had been 879 Instagram photos posted and it's going viral! The contest (foodie phase) ends in September. There will ultimately be an event at the New York Wine and Culinary Center.

AJ informed the board about his torn Achilles tendon and his surgery and he would be out for an unidentified amount of time. Valerie noted that other staff members will be sharing AJ's workload.

MARKETING REPORTS AND UPDATES- Sue Schmidt lead off the marketing reports with a review of the Tourism Summit in New York City on May 14, 2014. Coincidentally there was also a "Path through History" event at the same time. FLVC sponsored Ronnie Reiter from Ganondagan to accompany Sue. Sue also shared with the board the I Love New York Sales Mission to the UK. Sue told the board the experience was incredibly aggressive. And, the UK people are planning a trip here next year.

Public relations was the next topic and the board asked about how we heard of some of the opportunities that we tapped in to. Specifically, AJ spoke about "National Smores Day". AJ explained we work closely with Quinn (the 14 County PR Firm and Finn (The I Love NY PR Firm). Valerie mentioned the upcoming Lunch and Learns, which are being pitched as part of FLVC University. Next up is China Ready, a program which is designed to prepare our hospitality industry for Chinese visitors, the fastest growing international market.

STRATEGIC PLAN- Valerie spoke about the Ontario County Fair and how FLVC helped them this year. They were very thankful to upgrade their presence and that we shared our marketing expertise and brand knowledge with them.

Valerie provided background on strategic plan initiative for gateway centers and noted that the contracts on the table are directly tied to the opportunities identified in the plan. A handout that she provided took specific language from the strategic plan and tied it to tactics that could help us achieve our goals. It is our responsibility to connect the communities into a common brand for visitors to understand and flow through. The handout illustrated the big picture of Gateway information including, a presence would include Eastview's hallway redone, Ganondagan's visitor's center, the event center in Geneva having a map on the wall, and airport, D38, branding. Lastly, Valerie spoke about the proposed chamber contracts with Geneva and Victor. David Linger made a motion to approve the chamber contract with Geneva, Bob Bennett seconded, and Jessica Bacher and Audrey Carrier abstained. The motion was passed. Dick Maltman made a motion to approve the chamber contract with Victor, Alexa Gifford seconded, and Bob Bennett, Mike Kauffman and Audrey Carrier abstained. The motion passed.

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

NEW BUSINESS –Valerie advised the board that 25 Gorham Street was going to be featured as one of the homes on the Sonnenberg Holiday Home Tour on December 6, 2014.

The 2015 Budget was the next item of new business. Valerie explained that it is expected that the budget will need to be lowered next year due to occupancy levels being down. There was a brief discussion regarding this and the potential causes of reduced occupancy. No one factor was concluded – other than there is still an extremely cautious consumer when it comes to spending money. Other factors were mentioned including more competition in the marketplace and the start and stop of the weather this year. Valerie reviewed some line items of the budget – most of which have been discussed earlier in the meetings. A more specific budget would be presented after the summer occupancy revenues are received from the county. At the October meeting, a specific budget plan can be provided. In the meantime, Valerie asked the board to approve this plan. **Bob Bennett made a motion to approve the 2015 proposed budget David Hutchings seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.**

ADJOURN –Having no more business to come before the board, Bob Bennett **made the motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by John Cowley. All voted in favor of adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:52.

Minutes submitted by Michelle Dawson

Next Meeting: September 10, 2014; Brew & Brats, Naples, NY 14512