

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York**  
**Board of Directors, Wednesday, April 1, 2015 8:00 am**  
**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Canandaigua, New York**

**PRESENT**

Mike Roeder  
Bob Bennett  
Jessica Bacher  
David Hutchings  
Suzanne Farley  
Russ Kenyon  
Dan Fuller  
Carl Carlson  
Audrey Carrier  
Frank Riccio  
David Linger

**EX-OFFICIO**

Alison Grems, Canandaigua  
Chamber

**EXCUSED**

John Brahm  
John Cowley  
Lisa Fitzgerald  
Alexa Gifford  
Mike Kauffman  
Dick Maltman

**STAFF**

Valerie Knoblauch  
David Lee  
Carol Hicks

**WELCOME** – Mike Roeder called the meeting to order at 8:02 am.

**CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK** –Carol reported on the Correspondence notebook: She noted that dividers have been added to the notebook for organization; and she highlighted article about Honorary Board member Lois Kozlowski and her granddaughter participating in the Trumansburg Elementary School Drama Club production of “Dig It”. Valerie shared photos of Jim Kozlowski’s paintings – his new art project.

**INTRODUCTIONS OF NEW PERSONNEL AND PERSONNEL STRUCTURE** –

Valerie advised the board of the hiring of Karen Miltner as Chief Content Officer and Public Relations, with a starting date of April 7. Carol Hicks has accepted the position of Executive Assistant to the President. The position of Marketing Assistant is now open. Valerie told the Board that we do have our two FLCC interns that will be available to work additional hours over the summer.

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS** – Valerie gave a brief update on OneDrive, specifically that the meeting would be following the documents posted on OneDrive. Carol and David have reworked OneDrive so that it follows the structure of the Board notebooks used previously. Valerie explained the documents for the current Board meeting will be in *Current Board Meeting* folder. Those documents will then be moved to the appropriate folders after the meeting, e.g. minutes for today’s meeting will go into the *Past Board Meetings* folder. *Board Reports* will be a special folder for executive summaries, articles and any information for the Board members to review prior to the next meeting.

Mike Roeder asked for a motion to **approve the minutes of the February 18, 2015 Board of Directors meeting**. Dan Fuller noted that his comment about the 36% decrease in skiing business was for only one weekend, not the entire season. Carl Carlson **made the motion to approve the amended minutes; Russ Kenyon seconded; the motion passed unanimously**.

**Financial Reports for February and YTD.** Valerie reviewed the February Budget vs. Actual reports, the YTD financial reports, and the Balance Sheet. Frank Riccio **moved to accept the reports. Bob Bennett seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Credit Card Report Updated.** Valerie reported that the Credit Card Report has been updated. Michelle Dawson and AJ Shear have been removed.

**Website Contract Status.** The draft contract has been posted on OneDrive. Valerie gave a report on her and David's visit to Simpleview and other Tucson based companies and those at DMO Mojo in order to do research on this proposal and the company. Services have been eliminated from the contract that we do not need at this time, reducing cost. A fully integrated website, e.g. will replace email and hosting services.

**CHAIR'S REPORT** – Mike Roeder led the discussion about activation of Committees and Task Forces. Initial meetings will be held here at FLVC, 25 Gorham Street, Canandaigua. Audrey Carrier requested to be on the Visitor Services Task Force and the Tourism Recognition and Awards Task Force. Russ Kenyon **moved to accept Mike Roeder's recommendation for membership and activation of the Committees. Carl Carlson seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

**Meeting Locations.** Mike Roeder discussed the difficulties that have surrounded the past few meetings, including the location of today's meeting. Discussion ensued. The second floor conference room at the Ontario County Office Building is available for our use and the option of using the County Office Building more often and interspersing various Ontario County locations, when appropriate, was discussed. One point of discussion was making the meetings "time appropriate" for the location. Mike requested that the issue of meeting location be added to the executive committee agenda for a recommendation.

**EDUCATIONAL SESSION** – Valerie led the discussion about the current trend of "The Shared Economy". There is a lot of talk in the industry regarding alternative accommodations, such as VRBO, AirBnB, and Homeaway. Valerie provided information on what other DMO's and hotelier's are doing regarding these accommodations. The Board needs to be aware of what is happening across the country, including lawsuits by cities, for bypassing laws, most specifically the tax laws. Many other issues are being looked at, including safety and regulations. The alternative accommodations are more prevalent in leisure destinations. The hotel industry is adapting to the trend of making accommodations more "home-like", one of the main appeals of these alternative options. These accommodations are cutting into the profits of the hotel industry. Valerie noted the article posted on OneDrive showing the impact on hotels – estimated that every 10% increase in Airbnb supply results in a 0.35% decrease in monthly hotel revenue.

Sales tax and occupancy tax are currently not being collected from these alternative accommodations. Valerie reviewed a conversation that she had with the Ontario County Treasurer's Office and noted that a meeting was planned before our next board meeting on this issue. Discussion ensued regarding income tax, sales tax and occupancy tax. Dan Fuller suggested that we needed to track these rentals, more specifically with Young Strategies being aware of the data as they develop our strategic plan.

Board Member, Russ Kenyon, left the meeting at 9:00.

Valerie shared updated Occupancy Tax collection for last quarter. Collection for the quarter was \$131,297.54. Also, the prior quarter, when adjusted also showed a healthy increase year-to-date. this was adjusted from \$268,210.37 to \$340,155.49.

### **EX-OFFICIO/AGENCY REPORTS**

**Chamber Reports** – Alison Grems advised the board that the Finger Lakes Resort deal should be completed in the next couple of months and the resort is expected to open May 2016. No new news on the North Shore project. The 2015-2016 Visitor Guide for the Chamber is in process. Working on getting the Tourism Committee reengaged. Wave Park at Roseland Water Park is opening this summer. Chamber Alliance of New York State is coming to Canandaigua in June.

David Linger reported on Geneva Night Out for Friday, April 3, highlighting a tribute Scott LaFaro, a local musician that died back in the 1970's. Jessica Bacher mentioned that David Crosby will be performing at the Smith Opera House. Jessica mentioned being in touch with Paul Thomas of the Seneca Lake Wine Trail and there is a wine trail conference in August. They will be bringing a busload of the conference attendees to Geneva for a day-long visit on August 12, to visit wineries, etc. Valerie highlighted a note in the Correspondence Notebook from Dave Bunnell of the Finger Lakes Wine Symposium. He was asking for our support with upcoming Wine Symposium in August. This date has moved from April to June to August.

### **TASK FORCE REPORTS**

Jessica Bacher reported on the Hotel Sales Task Force meeting last week at Nedloh Brewing in Bloomfield. Sue Schmidt's Rochester Home & Garden Show is on OneDrive. Midwest Travel Writers Association conference in May is on the mind of the Hoteliers, and they would be responding to our need for volunteers. We are requesting packages for the summer. She noted that Sue had responded quickly with a sales effort with St. John Fisher College and the NCAA tournament – was able to get attendees to stay in Victor versus Rochester. Finally, there is a sales blitz in Albany with meeting planners, motorcoaches. Jessica highlighted that the Hotel Sales Team is a consistent, productive group.

David Hutchings reported on the Sales Attraction Task Force meeting. Ten different attractions attended. They will meet quarterly to increase sales and cross-promotion. He noted the current package between The Canandaigua Lady and Sonnenberg – The Land to Lake Package.

Sue Schmidt shared motorcoach contacts with the group. The Task Force wants to track festival attendance. Bob Bennett suggested offering discounted tickets / packages at hotels for the attractions. Jessica Bacher suggested the hotel frontliners be given discounted or free tickets to visit the attractions, so that they can be familiar with the attractions.

**PRESIDENT and CEO REPORT** – Valerie discussed the opportunity to be engaged in development projects. Developers are becoming more interested in engaging tourism as a component in their project, seeking input from the industry perspective. Rich Rising, of Harris Beach, contacted Valerie about utilizing the model of an Advisory Task Force which would include Economic Development, Tourism and others. Valerie requested input from the Board on being involved in these development projects via an Advisory Task Force. The board felt that our voice at the table was important and that as long as we could maintain the necessary confidentiality and broad based support that we should be involved. This is, in fact, aligned with our strategic plan recommendations for economic development.

Governor's Tourism Summit is May 13. Ontario County needs to make a better connection between New York City visitors and upstate traffic, specifically the Chinese market, with the large population of Chinese in NYC. One of Valerie's goals in going to China was to be with I Love NY and to help position Ontario County as a player in the international market. Valerie gave a short presentation of her China visit, including photos.

**MARKETING, SALES AND VISITORS SERVICES REPORTS** - FLVC has been nominated for Public Relations for the #FLXperience Instagram contest, one of our biggest nominations yet. Dan Fuller asked about any feedback regarding the exchange rate and the struggle with the drop in Canadian visitors. Discussion ensued, including offering deals and independent properties marketing themselves better. The various committees and the staff will look in to further data and insights into this market.

**OLD BUSINESS** – Mike Roeder asked for an update the Board on the status of the Casinos in New York. She indicated that she only had information from the newspapers at this point which indicated that several lawsuits had been launched against the Lago development. Additionally, NYS has agreed to consider another license in the Southern Tier. The board asked Valerie to reach out to Steve Martin at Finger Lakes Gaming and Racetrack for further information.

**NEW BUSINESS** – No new business was brought before the board.

**ADJOURN** – Dan Fuller **made the motion to adjourn the meeting and it was seconded by Carl Carlson. All voted in favor of adjournment.** The meeting was adjourned at 9:48 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Carol Hicks

Next Meeting: April 29, 2015, Ontario County Office Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> floor Conference Room, Canandaigua, NY 8:00 a.m.

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