

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York
Board of Directors, Wednesday, February 18, 2015 8:00 a.m.
New York Wine & Culinary Center, Canandaigua, New York**

PRESENT

Mike Roeder
Mike Kauffman
John Cowley
Dick Maltman
Jessica Bacher
Russ Kenyon
Dan Fuller
Carl Carlson
Audrey Carrier
John Brahm

EXCUSED

Bob Bennett
David Linger
Alexa Gifford
Lisa Fitzgerald
David Hutchings
Frank Riccio
Suzanne Farley

STAFF

Valerie Knoblauch
David Lee
Michelle A. Dawson

EXOFFICIO

Alison Grems, Canandaigua Chamber
Mitch Donovan, Victor Chamber

WELCOME – Mike Roeder called the meeting to order at 8:25 a.m, after fixing some glitches with the computers.

EDUCATIONAL SESSION – The 2012 strategic plan had a category called Assets – then, Now, The Future. Valerie reviewed the concept of this item and tossed out the idea that perhaps we were looking too microscopic on this and that the board and staff needed to look beyond current product enhancements to what we would want in the future. She had recently been asked to be part of the 2015 committee for the Traveling Market Outlook Forum from that, she realized that the pace in the U.S. was moving much faster than New York State. While tourism is a “trend industry,” we need to be on the cutting edge of trends. Young Strategies report will undoubtedly address this when it commences at the end of March.

OPEN DISCUSSION – Several board members were interested in discussing the recent PR stunt which Ithaca had performed. Their website had been redirected to Key West indicating that they are giving up on the winter here, go to Key West instead. While some thought this was a creative ploy, others, particularly the Ski Industry thought it was counter-intuitive to the state advertising campaign which emphasizes our winter assets. Dan Fuller mentioned the concern with this is that for one example, one February weekend had a decline of 36% over last year. This Ithaca website redirect happened and could make it worse. Russ Kenyon commented that he enjoyed our tongue-in-cheek reaction to it, which told about our assets and suggested that Ithaca should be “heartier” than that; we were not giving up. Mike Roeder indicated that this situation shows how weather truly affects business and/or reports and images of weather are also branded in our mind. Valerie will report back if she gets any specific results from the campaign.

EX-OFFICIO/AGENCY REPORTS

Chamber Reports – On behalf of the Canandaigua Chamber, Alison Grems advised the board three economic development initiatives are underway. 1) the Northshore Project has a closing date is March 13, 2015; 2) There are talks about the old Labelon building; 3) Approvals on Steamboat Landing are pending. Other projects in progress include the 2016 Visitors Guide and map. Alison also advised that Lisa Marie Thompson, the current BID Manager is leaving so Canandaigua is looking for a new BID Manager. Alison also told the board that a big topic as of late is the increase in minimum wage.

On behalf of the Victor Chamber, Mitch Donovan reported that the Pinnacle Athletic Campus along with Ganondagan is two of the major projects going on in Victor presently. Mitch also advised that the Victor Chamber is trying to develop a tourism tool to move the people around to the big attractions in Victor such as Campus and Ganondagan. He is figuring out how to commoditize it. Mitch told the board that Monday night will be comedy night in Victor and perhaps this could move around the county for other Monday nights. Finally, he is working with Sue on setting up a softball tournament in July.

On behalf of the Geneva Chamber, Jessica Bacher spoke about the Frost Fest which will take place on February 21, 2015 in Geneva at the Ramada Inn to benefit the YMCA.

CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK –Michelle reported on the Correspondence notebook:

- A visitor request regarding Martin Luther King Day, commenting about how places are closed and there is nothing to do.
- Article in the Finger Lakes Times regarding the Finger Lakes and how it offers views, food all year long.

OFFICIAL BUSINESS - Mike Roeder asked for a motion to **approve the minutes of the January 14, 2015 Board of Directors meeting**. Dick Maltman made the motion and Mike Kauffman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

Financial Reports for January and YTD. Valerie reviewed the January Budget vs. Actual reports, the YTD financial reports, and the Balance Sheet. Russ Kenyon **moved to accept the January and Year-to-Date financial reports. Dan Fuller seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Valerie advised the board that FLVC had purchased a state of the art camera and that she would like to have the authority to sell Nikon 35 millimeter and the Canon30D, thus removing them from inventory. **Russ Kenyon moved to approve the sale of these cameras. John Cowley seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

The website “re-do” project is underway. FLVC received 6 RFPs with only one bid coming in at the budget of \$80,000 and inclusive of all the items in the bid. Valerie focused the discussion on the potential adoption of the Simpleview software as a service model which would require a different approach to our bid and website development. The company Simpleview submitted an RFP which included the “back-end” of the website as a software item. Simpleview has become somewhat of an industry standard, servicing over 400 Destination Marketing Organizations (DMOs) across the country. Simple View can handle FLVC’s database structure/back end content and what’s fed into it – and connect with I Love NY as requested in the RFP.

Valerie provided a presentation which outlined the concept of potentially moving the backend of the website to a singular project and funding that separately. Since, this was an unanticipated development, she was requesting consideration of funding this (approximately \$45,000 development charge from our reserve fund. While Valerie and David had done quite a bit of research and clarification, more needed to be done before a commitment should be made. However, in order to move the project forward, Valerie was asking for a motion contingent upon satisfactory results of the research into Simpleview. If approved, Valerie and David would come back to the committee of Alexa Gifford, Lisa Fitzgerald, Steve Fuller and Chelsea Campbell to help evaluate front end proposals. Research had shown that many DMO’s were using the Simpleview backend with an independently designed front end.

Valerie indicated that she was interested in receiving separate approvals through three motions - a motion to access the reserve account, a motion to accept Simpleview as the company to do the backend of the website (contingent upon satisfactory review of capabilities and capacities) and a motion to rebid the front-end of the website, up to \$125,000. (\$45,000 more than the current level, which could be taken from next year’s budget.)

A lengthy question and answer session followed, with questions surrounding the annual subscription fees of Simpleview, integration of TripAdvisor and other priorities, itemization of the annual fees.

Specific questions included Dan Fuller’s question on the quantifiable return on investment for this website. For example, he asked, can we measure occupancy impact or incremental site visitations could it attract by spending this much more money? Valerie indicated that it is difficult to peg success on one factor, like site visitations and definitely nearly impossible to tie this back to occupancy conversions as had been asked. However, she did elaborate that we would hold the website company accountable for goals and promises they make for enhanced functionality of the website. Valerie reminded the board of our previous discussions about the aging of our website and reviewed the priorities of the new website, including brand integrity and increased SEO, etc. She also qualified that a destination website metrics dashboard does not mirror an individual attraction dashboard, as one of our goals is to get people off to our site to other’s sites.

Russ asked about the funding levels and clarification. He noted that we had already approved spending up to \$80,000 in this fiscal year for a website. He summarized that the bottom line of the request was to access the reserve fund for an additional \$50,000 in this fiscal year; and to know that another \$40,000 would be committed in the next fiscal year. Valerie agreed with this summary. A question arose as to if we could wait until the next board meeting for this. Valerie indicated that we could, but we hoped to move forward as the lead time in getting a new site is at minimum about nine months. Dan Fuller also inquired as to whether we have done due diligence on the longevity of Simpleview. Mike Roeder and Mike Kauffman both spoke on behalf of the executive committee review, indicating that while this was more money than had been anticipated, they did understand the need for commitment.

Valerie indicated that she had a conversation with I Love NY and others about this and she was confident that this company is solid –at this point. Of course, she noted any e-commerce type company could change quickly, but this is the company that I Love NY is committed to, if that offers additional assurances. The annual fee(s) were discussed and Valerie shared that she would clarify and get an exact amount before any commitment. Finally, she indicated that the committee would be reengaged in the process once we moved forward, particularly on the front-end features and selection. Russ asked about our budget and the percent of our budget dedicated to the website vs. brochure. Additionally, he wanted to make sure that this was an authorized use of our reserve fund. Valerie indicated that it was in that it was a large capital expense.

Russ Kenyon called the question and made a motion to access the reserve funds in an amount not to exceed \$50,000 for the purposes of developing the database backbone and interface for the next generation VisitFingerLakes.com. **Mike Kauffman seconded.** Mike Roeder asked for discussion. John Cowley inquired as to whether or not Miles Media would bid on the front end of the website. Valerie indicated that they would be included in the process if another RFP goes out. Dan Fuller reiterated his expectations for analytics of performance on the website and the desire to set benchmarks to grow from. **Mike Roeder called for the vote and the motion passed unanimously.**

Russ Kenyon moved to accept the Simpleview quote for database backbone development and apply the necessary pre-approved reserves toward that purchase contingent upon Valerie and David's review of the specifics of the services and a line item understanding of these services. **John Cowley seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Russ Kenyon moved to reissue an RFP for front end services and delivery services in the event that Simpleview is not selected for the design aspect and to follow all the procurement guidelines of the organization for a design proposal and integration not to exceed \$125,000. **John Cowley seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

CHAIR'S REPORT – Mike Roeder led the discussion on the Board self- evaluations. The lowest ranked category had to do with board involvement. There was a discussion about the board goals, which could help address this if the board members got involved. There was also a discussion to reword the question that asked about “fair share” since that is hard to judge. Mike thanked everyone for their participation in this.

Board Member, Russ Kenyon, left the meeting at 9:30.

Next, the board reviewed the Board Goals which had been presented at the last meeting. Valerie indicated that the only modification was #1 which dealt with shoulder season activity. The board will become engaged in potential solutions for this. The rest of the endeavors were considered appropriate and constructive. **Jessica Bacher moved to accept the board goals. Mike Kauffman seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.**

Committees. Mike and Valerie shared the committee list and assignments. We will need approval of these at the next board meeting.

PRESIDENT and CEO REPORT – Valerie quickly noted that she had a few inquiries for people who were interested in filling AJ's position. She hasn't made any specific commitments but has two very strong leads. She is not planning on advertising the position, but welcomes any referrals the board may have.

Valerie talked about her upcoming sales trip with I Love NY to China. We want to retain a position in the consumer's mind as they develop itineraries between New York's hotspots of New York City and Niagara Falls.

Valerie asked the board to look at their calendars for May 5 – 10 for MTWA. She requested that the board help with two activities specifically: the Thursday night dine around and the Friday afternoon tour options. We will follow-up.

OLD BUSINESS – Due to the time constraints, Valerie asked if anyone wanted to engage in the discussion of a position on propane storage on Seneca Lake. She noted that several articles have been posted to the one drive to provide more background with regard to this issue. This item will be rolled to the next agenda.

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

ADJOURN – Dick Maltman **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 10:10 a.m.

Minutes submitted by Michelle Dawson

Next Meeting: April 1, 2015, The Left Bank, Geneva, NY 8:00 a.m.

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