



Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: September 4, 2012

Location: Thomas Cole National Historic Site, Catskill

Next Meeting: Fairlawn Inn, Hunter

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending – Brian Christman, Christman’s Windham House; Kevin Smith, Sunny Hill Resort and Golf Course; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole National Historic Site; Chuck Tomajko, Fairlawn Inn; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain.

Absent: Carol Schrieber, Baumann’s Brookside; Bernadette Gavin - Palmieri, Gavin’s Irish Country Inn; Peter Maassmann, Blackhead Mountain Lodge and Golf Course; Troy Ketcham, Windham Mountain.

Others in Attendance – Chairman Wayne Speenburgh; Legislator Kevin Lewis; Legislator Karen Deyo; Legislator Patty Handel; Warren Hart, Director, Economic Development, Tourism & Planning

Staff - Karl Heck, Nancy Petramale, Patty Austin, Teri Weiss

The meeting opened with a welcome from Betsy Jacks, Executive Director of the Thomas Cole National Historic Site, giving details of the master plan and stating that in 2013 they plan on rebuilding Thomas Cole’s studio that was demolished in 1846.

Director’s Report:

Warren gave the Director’s Report. He spoke about recent meetings, ongoing projects and upcoming campaigns.

Warren began with an announcement that the Fall Campaign transition was underway and that Nancy would be giving a detailed marketing report.

Warren informed everyone that Nancy, Kelly Frady, from Adworkshop and he met with several representative groups from the Arts-Culture-History segment, including representatives from Catskill Mountain Foundation, the County Historian, Bronck Museum, Pratt Museum, Greene County Council on the Arts, and Sugar Maples. He distributed the draft media plan, explained the upcoming campaign, media buys and plans for next year’s media buy to dovetail with the Art Trail.



Warren also stated that Nancy, Kelly and he met with representatives from Hunter & Windham discussing the winter media buys.

The Winter Campaign concept and creative is underway. The goal this year is to relaunch and rebrand an electronically distributed “Adventure Passport” replacing the Greene Card. November 1st is the target date for the launch of the campaign. This card will be downloadable at the time of signing up thereby eliminating the printing and mailing of a card.

Warren will be speaking to the Hunter Chamber of Commerce on tourism related activities on September 6th.

Warren, Nancy, Kelly and Kevin Lewis will be meeting with the Golf Association on October 2nd.

Committee Reports (No Committees Formed yet)

Destination Marketing Report

Nancy spoke to everyone on items that she has been working on, such as package deals, tourism conferences, and the I love NY training session. She also handed out the Bi-Weekly Public Relations Report and Analytics and explained what that entailed. She spoke about hosting of travel writers and the importance of their visits and that it is essentially free advertising for the hosting property.

Nancy also informed everyone that the home page now has the new fall video featured, along with search engine optimized fall content on the home page. The fall media buy will begin the week of September 10th with a special landing page for fall packages. The fall SEO press release had already been sent and Nancy distributed a copy. The full e-newsletter to the external email list will also be going out. Nancy spoke about recruitment of outdoor recreation packages. She had emailed everyone two weeks ago asking for packages, but only received 10. It was brought up that possibly “package training” session may be needed. She also spoke of her upcoming travel shows that the County will be participating in.

Patty mentioned the Hot Deals page is not only limited to packages, but also for other related material. She also emphasized the importance of putting your events on the website.

Warren added that if anyone is hosting a travel writer to please make sure that the tourism office is made aware of it.

Special Projects (Brainstorming Tourism Initiatives)

Discussion pursued amongst everyone on the committee, touching issues of importance throughout the county. Items that were mentioned were hospitality, travel writers, transient business increasing, regional attractions, destination weddings and looped video.



Chuck mentioned the importance of packaging regional attractions in the area, within a 1 to 1-1/2 hour radius, stating that this could help fill rooms during slow periods and mid week. (Editor's note that the Attractions Profile Sheet in PDF is available for download on the tourism website)

Russ brought up the fact that campground numbers have increased considerably, but how do you get the recreational camper out of the campground surrounding to make use of daily trips and activities. Nancy and Patty both confirmed their experiences with North/South Lake.

Warren suggested that they begin to make a list of potential projects, activities or campaigns that could eventually be molded into a SHORT TERM ACTION PLAN and presented to the Greene County Legislature.

The beginnings of the list from the Tourism Department's perspective, included: Marketing to second homeowners; Events, especially music and outdoor adventure and recreational based; Tourism training.

The TAC also discussed items for possible inclusion in the Action Plan: The importance of hospitality as a tourism county; Social venues for tourism businesses, not just training seminars; Handout materials, as well as greater presence at events, with possible use of students and volunteers; Destination weddings as a growing segment; and additional focus on the shoulder or slow seasons.

Wayne emphasized the importance of utilizing Greene County businesses for services before using outside vendors, such as tent rentals. He also brought up the possibility of using Columbia-Greene students/interns to represent the County on a personal basis at different events or for distribution of advertising items.

Motorcross racing was mentioned, and the fact that it is a huge family event, two new road races will be coming to the County at the new track at Blackthorne.

Kevin made suggestions regarding post cards with QR codes to handout to help increase awareness of our events. He also suggested that we look into the advertising on trains, a poster or banner. Chuck mentioned Jazz possibly coming to Hunter Mtn. after Labor Day, and that it was a good fit due to the slow time of the year.

Karen mentioned discounts for locals.

Wayne spoke about several additional items:

- The importance of this committee.
- Troubling actions with the State Police presence at Mountain Jam. More discussion is needed with the State, possibly invite to meeting.
- Access needed to NYS lands to promote our County.
- Social events, not always seminars.



- Action Plan, short term, not long term, doesn't want to lose sight.
- Communication with other business.
- Business owners report to Legislature monthly, more impact.

TAC Member Announcements

- Betsy informed everyone that the New York Times did a two page spread on the TC National Historic Site on August 31st and since then the web site visitation has tripled and has caused a flurry of activity. This has been a culmination of years working with their PR firm to get this type of coverage.
- Suzanne reported that the Bavarian Manor just received the Hudson Valley award for Best Schnitzel.
- Patty announced that the Travel Channel will be at Catskill Mountain Thunder this year.

Meeting Date and Location:

The next meeting will be on Sept 27, from 3:00p.m.-4:30p.m. at the Fairlawn Inn, Hunter NY.