



Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: September 27, 2012

Location: Fairlawn Inn, Hunter

Next Meeting: Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant, Purling

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending – Brian Christman, Christman’s Windham House; Gary Nicholson for Kevin Smith, Sunny Hill Resort and Golf Course; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole National Historic Site; Chuck Tomajko, Fairlawn Inn; Gerry Tschinkel for Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Bernadette Gavin Palmieri, Gavin’s Irish Country Inn; Troy Ketcham, Windham Mountain; Carol Schrieber, Baumann’s Brookside.

Absent: Peter Maassmann, Blackhead Mountain Lodge and Golf Course; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant; Kevin Lewis, Chairman, Economic Development and Tourism Committee.

Others in Attendance – Legislator Patty Handel; Walt Birmann

Staff - Warren Hart, Karl Heck, Nancy Petramale, Patty Austin

Chuck Tomajko, the owner of the Fairlawn Inn, gave a brief description of the nine-room property to open the meeting. Chuck noted that the Inn is the #1 ranked property of Hunter B&B’s on TripAdvisor, and won the Inn of Distinction from the New York State Hospitality and Tourism Association in 2010. The Fairlawn is also the only eco-tourism rated lodging property in the Catskill Region.

Minutes:

The minutes of the September 4, 2012 were moved by Betsy Jacks, seconded by Brian Christman and approved unanimously.

Director’s Report:

Warren Hart gave the Director’s Report. The fall campaign focusing on fall travel, arts, culture and history is underway, and the winter campaign will be debuting the Adventure Passport with a November 1 target date for launch. The winter media buy, creative, landing page and adventure passport are all being worked on in partnership with Hunter and Windham.



As far as the Adventure Passport is concerned, all of the major attractions have decided to be included, as well as all of the golf courses with the exception of Colonial, who has not been able to be reached. There is a golf media buy meeting to review the results of the 2012 golf campaign scheduled with the golf courses for next week. Warren also reported that he met with the Hunter Chamber of Commerce to discuss tourism issues.

There will be a Tourism Seminar conducted in cooperation with the Great Northern Catskills Chamber of Commerce at the 3500 Club at Windham Mountain on Thursday, November 15 from 9 a.m. to noon involving County staff and Adworkshop, the destination marketing agency the County uses for its marketing and public relations. The County and Chamber are beginning to advertise this event, and it is hoped that all of the lodging places in the County will attend.

Issues related to the substantial police presence during Mountain Jam weekend were discussed. It was discussed that the TAC could play a significant role in meeting with law enforcement to discuss the economic impact of the festivals to the county and the state. Patty Handel noted that such roadblocks were not part of Catskill Mountain Thunder this year after a discussion with the State Police Captain, though such roadblocks had been put up in the past.

As a follow-up to last month's discussion regarding potential advertising venues was launched. Warren reported that signs at certain MetroNorth commuter stations were costed-out by Adworkshop and determined to be very costly and was deferred for the present time. In response to a question, Warren noted that the County has spent \$60,000 on television advertising in the Tri-State area, as well as in County, and 2,240 travel packs had been requested through the special landing page linked to that advertising. The buy was performing well and positively received.

Gary Nichol森 said Sunny Hill Resort had had considerable success with advertising through Verizon FiOS into the New York City suburbs. Sunny Hill had cost the Boston market as well and didn't like the potential return, but they feel the FiOS advertising is a potentially attractive venue for the County's destination marketing as well.

Committee Reports (No Committees Formed yet)

Destination Marketing Report:

In response to a legislative inquiry, the issue of sending County staff to travel shows was discussed in great detail. Nancy Petramale gave a report on the shows attended and the annual budget, which is approximately \$11,000 with some cost-sharing from industry partners when appropriate. The categories of travel shows attended include Consumer Shows in various niche markets, Motorcoach/Group tours, wedding planning, motorcycle, camping and golf shows. Nancy also noted that the number of shows has declined in recent years, and while many of the shows repeat from year-



to-year, there is some discretion used each year on which shows perform the best. The consensus of the TAC was that the travel show money was money well-spent.

Special Projects (Brainstorming Tourism Initiatives, Short Term Action Plan)

There was a significant discussion on the charge of the Legislature to the TAC to prepare a Short Term Action Plan, and the expectation to prioritize projects for future funding.

Warren reminded the TAC that the Draft Short term Action Plan could include a comprehensive list, but that the projects should be ranked and prioritized for some quick actions. Items such as new deep media buys were discussed. Many committee members thought fewer projects with more funding behind each one would be a more effective use of the money.

One idea that had been previously discussed was the beginning of a second homeowner campaign. It was noted that most second homeowners were tourists to Greene County in the first place, and that visitor spending from second homeowners is very significant. Betsy Jacks mentioned a group in Catskill is looking to attract more weekenders to expand the tax base there and help rehabilitate historic properties, as they have the wherewithal and interest in doing so.

Some new initiatives tried this past season for skiing included a test market pay per click campaign targeting Albany for Windham Mountain and Philadelphia for Hunter Mountain to determine whether visitors could be enticed from these markets. Another technique being used for the family travel market is a pay per click campaign for those searching in the Poconos area to be offered packages in the Great Northern Catskills of Greene County. Questions were asked about the use of conversion tags (finding out the amount of money spent on a click-through), making sure tourism businesses are linked to the Great Northern Catskills web site, and whether the County was utilizing saturation marketing or a more shotgun approach.

Based on a concern raised by the Irish Cultural Center's Irish Festival regarding declining attendance and the ICC's meetings to redefine the festivals to a more family friendly cultural event, the issue of the County paying for event advertising for private businesses was discussed. This request was tabled for an agenda item at one of the next TAC meetings. Warren noted that a meeting with the ICC was also scheduled to discuss this topic.

Comments included the need for additional tourism marketing funding in general, as each dollar invested by a DMO results in ten to eleven dollars in additional visitor spending. A comment was made that the current campaign has the strength of one costing much more because of its focus and consistent message. It was also noted by the Golf Association members that strength in numbers is critical to success, and "a win for one is a win for all," instead of competing against each other.



TAC Member Announcements

Suzanne Oldakowski was not present because she was receiving an award from Hudson Valley Magazine for the best "Schnitzel".

Meeting Date and Location:

The next meeting will be on October 16, from 9:00a.m. - 10:30a.m. at the Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant, Purling.