



Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, October 16, 2012, 9:15 a.m.

Location: Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending – Kevin Lewis, Chairman, Greene County Legislature Economic Development and Tourism Committee; Brian Christman, Christman’s Windham House; Kevin Smith, Sunny Hill Resort and Golf Course; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole National Historic Site; Chuck Tomajko, Fairlawn Inn; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Bernadette Gavin-Palmieri, Gavin’s Irish Country Inn; Troy Ketcham, Windham Mountain; Carol Schreiber, Baumann’s Brookside; Peter Maassmann, Blackhead Mountain Lodge and Golf Course, Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant

Others in Attendance – Legislator Karen Deyo

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

Suzanne Oldakowski opened the meeting, welcomed everyone to Bavarian Manor and provided a brief description of the history of the Inn, stating that the Inn opened in 1860 as a hotel, and in 1930 her Grandparents bought the property from the Lennon’s, and it has remained in her family ever since.

Minutes:

The minutes of the September 27, 2012 were approved.

Director’s Report:

Warren spoke about the Department’s 2013 budget request for tourism and the TAC 2013 Budget. He also talked about the winter media campaign and the new Adventure Passport, which are both on track for a November 1st launch.

Destination Marketing Report:

Nancy Petramale reported on the winter press release that went out last week. The Campground Owners of New York (CONY) is celebrating their 50th anniversary in 2013, and is asking if any event is hitting a milestone year, to please send pictures to Nancy for potential submission. Hunter will be hosting the CONY 2013 annual conference.



Blackhead Mountain Lodge and Christman's Windham House hosted a travel writer, which resulted in advertorial in the Examiner.com on September 24. We also had articles in the New York City "L" Magazine and Table Magazine.

Nancy has mailed out the group profile sheets to lodging facilities asking for updates. Ms. Petramale also updated us on a couple of the resorts. Green Lake Resort has been sold to a church organization, but they plan on opening it as a resort with a restaurant in 2013. Cedar Terrace is holding an auction on their remaining items at the resort. The preview is Friday, October 19, with the auction taking place on Saturday, October 20.

Karl Heck spoke briefly about the Tourism Seminar 2012 that is being held Thursday, November 15 from 9 a.m. to noon at The Club at Windham Mountain. The office will be asking TAC members to call other lodging owners in order to maximum attendance at the Seminar, which we believe will be extremely valuable for the lodging industry in Greene County.

Nancy told the TAC that the County has advertised on hudsonvalleywedding.com, web site, and also a banner ad on *Brides Northeast* web site, a yearly publication distributed in the Capital District.

Patty Austin informed everyone that the Historic Catskill Point had hosted 11 weddings in 2012, and already has 17 weddings booked for 2013.

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

Chuck Tomajko suggested we create driving tours with a radius of 30 minutes, 60 minutes and 90 minutes from the center of Greene County. Mr. Tomajko said that Budget Travel magazine has a three-day tour in the back of each magazine, and those three-day tours make excellent marketing pieces for the community. They also serve as an excellent inventory for visitors to see all the attractions within an hour and half drive.

Suzanne, Betsy and Russ were all in agreement that Columbus Day weekend was very busy. Betsy stated that the gift shop at the Thomas Cole House brought in more than \$1000 each day, well above average. Chuck noted that Columbus Day is much like Martin Luther King Day weekend on the Mountaintop in terms of economic impact.

Russ Coloton requested an increased emphasis on destination weddings, noting they are becoming big business and the County sees an immediate sales tax return. He stated that Hunter Mountain generated significant sales tax revenue through its wedding business so far this year. Mr. Coloton felt that the County's current wedding marketing for the Catskill Historic Point property along with wedding vendors should be expanded with a destination marketing focus for tourism businesses that host weddings.



He also felt we should be adding more “key” words for the Greene wedding page, and/or perhaps having a special domain name and enhanced landing page.

Other suggestions made by Committee members include a food trail and farm tours, possibly involving Story’s Farm, which is a large farm strategically, located in Palenville between the mountain and the river regions.

The possibility of a County-administered online reservation system was also discussed, and Warren explained there are no immediate plans and it would take considerable resources and buy-in from the lodging businesses to implement a successful system. Warren also mentioned expanding the County’s partnership with the Great Northern Catskills Chamber of Commerce.

Russ mentioned working in conjunction with the surrounding colleges and students as a source of internship labor and to develop skilled workers needed by tourism businesses in order to deliver their services. Mr. Coloton noted that Columbia-Greene Community College does not have any tourism courses despite the strong need for tourism-related workers, and that his property works more closely with SUNY-Delhi as a result. He further said that both Hunter and Windham had received SUNY training grants, and encouraged other tourism businesses to try to work through SUNY to obtain training dollars.

Russ, Kevin Smith and Warren talked about television advertising, voice-overs on television commercials, and professional video. Mr. Smith mentioned the difference that voice-over makes, in the impact and quality of the commercial even when the same video is used. Sunny Hill have used New York Knicks announcer Mike Breen on their commercials, and he may be able to ask him to do it for the County, as Mr. Breen is a regular customer of Sunny Hill’s.

Betsy Jacks, mentioning that the Walkway over the Hudson was rated the #1 attraction in Poughkeepsie on tripadvisor.com, and felt that we could do the same with the Rip Van Winkle Bridge, calling it the Hudson River Sky Walk.

Warren spoke about the second homeowners market. Russ would like to convert skiers into summer visitor/residents. Chuck mentioned that Cornell did a study in 2002 on second homeowners and Hunter Mountain season ticket holders. Committee members did note that some of the other marketing and public relations measures would also reach many of the weekenders as well.

Warren asked all Committee members to review the Short Term Action Plan Priority List and to get back to him by the end of the week if there are any additional projects or ideas to be added. Once the list is finalized it will be distributed to the TAC for each member to identify their top five priorities.



Committee Reports (No Committees Formed yet)

TAC Member Announcements/Discussion:

Warren and Kevin met with the Irish Cultural Center to discuss the Memorial Day East Durham Irish festival. The Cultural Center is hoping to give the festival a new facelift and reenergize it with a more well-rounded Irish theme to it, making it a more family-friendly event, as well as consolidating several web sites into one with an integrated marketing campaign.

Chuck Tomajko, recently hosted the Education Director for the Jazz at Lincoln Center and along with Gerry Tschinkel, Pam Weisberg and Warren Hart they toured Hunter Mountain and Catskill Mountain Foundation facilities. Originally the focus was to have a concert series similar to Mountain Jam, but once they toured the area the plans changed to a four-week jazz camp for middle and high school students. They have been looking at different locations for this camp, one being in Aspen, CO. The representatives were very happy with our area, being the location is closer to the city and a few board members have homes here. It was noted that Wynton Marsalis, the jazz superstar running the camp, does not fly and therefore getting to Colorado would take more logistics as compared to Upstate New York.

Chuck suggested that a few of the TAC members tour their facility in New York City, possibility in November or December.

Warren spoke about the trail-based tourism project, and the federal grant that the County recently received for \$118,000 to create a non-motorized, trail-based tourism plan with specific projects identified for future development. The consulting team is Elan Planning, Design & Landscape Architecture and Alta Planning. An Advisory Committee will be working with the Department along with input from the TAC.

Kaaterskill Falls was discussed as one of the County's most heavily used trail based tourism assets and that any improvement to this trail would need to include pedestrian and vehicular access plans. Chuck made a suggestion about using the Mountain Top Historical Society parking lot as a possibility, both as a means to get Kaaterskill Falls traffic up on the mountain and therefore more likely to explore other Mountaintop locations and to drive traffic to the Historical Society. Parking fees could fund a shuttle to bring tourists down the mountain to Kaaterskill Falls.

Meeting Date and Location:

The next meeting will be held at Hunter Mountain on Thursday, November 8, at 3:00 p.m.