



Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Wednesday September 21, 2016

10:00 a.m.

Bavarian Manor Country Inn

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending – Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Inn; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole House; Beth Stewart, Windham Mountain Resort; Courtney Reinhard, Baumann’s Brookside; Chuck Tomajko, Fairlawn Inn; Brian Christman, Christman’s Windham House; Tinker Nichol森-Pachter, Sunny Hill Resort.

Legislators in Attendance – Legislators Kevin Lewis, Linda Overbaugh, Lori Torgersen

Staff – Heather Bagshaw, Nancy Petramale, Teri Weiss, Patty Austin

Others in Attendance – Kelly Frady, Rebecca Steffan, Shelly Cihan, Hannah Babcock

Heather welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the TAC meeting and Suzanne for hosting it. Suzanne then spoke about the history of the Inn and mentioned that it’s 151 years old, with many renovations, updates and improvements over the years. One of them recently being the solar panels that have been placed on the property which has helped the Inn run much more energy efficient. Their clientele is from all over the world and they continue to receive positive feedback not only from them, but from returning visitors too.

Adworkshop was in attendance to present the Bi-Annual Marketing Report. Kelly started the presentation with an overview of the year to year metrics.

Sessions, page views, mobile visits and social organic have all seen an increase in traffic, additionally the bounce rate, TOS (time on site) and lodging-based entrances are decreasing industry wide, most likely do to increase in mobile searches. Mobile searches have increased over 33% from last year-to-date period. Direct traffic is up over 35% along with Organic and Referral traffic and overall users have increased too.

Shelly spoke about new Google algorithms updates that may have impacted organic visibility. With the continuous concern of ad fraud and viewability, Adworkshop continues to work with Integral Ad Science to block unsafe sites and ensure that our ads are in “above the fold”.

Kelly gave a resort and lodging analysis explaining some of the changes with Google Ad placement and search engine placement. Search engines have become much more competitive, with Google still ranking number one with the number of visitors to our site. Even though we've experienced a slight decrease in entrances to the lodging pages, it was not due to ranking. We saw a significant increase in the entrances by viewing various direct pages, as in events, outdoors, and attractions. In addition we've seen a substantial increase by direct entrances to all resorts & lodging-based pages on the website.

Rebecca spoke about social media, Facebook, Instagram and Pinterest postings.

Warren mention how we partnered with the Gray Fox Blue Grass Festival in an event sponsorship, and we were able to deliver Wi-Fi to the concert site, but in order to logon they were presented a link that drove them to the GNC website, that enabled us to capture their email and drove 6000 clicks to the site.

Tracking of WiFi users from the Historic Catskill Point also resulted in almost 400 page views, an increase of over 149% since installation. 23.5% then navigated to the GNC.com webpage for further information.

Warren mentioned that the he and Heather have been working on the strategy for 2017 and will be meeting with Ad Workshop in a series of meetings over the next several weeks in preparation for the November TAC Meeting. Warren indicated that the 2017 strategy will include advertising and marketing further down the "user engagement funnel" especially through social media and public relations as our metrics continue to show increases in this form of user engagement and we need to keep pace with the changing times.

Warren added, that as we continue to support our advertising efforts promoting the county as a four season destination, additional priorities in 2017 will include: A special seasonal campaign on the spring "shoulder" season to increase visitor spending and lodging stays as this season lags behind the others; additional investment in "Mountain Biking"; additional investment in "Craft Beverage"; and additional investment in "Events". These are all major drivers of user based recreation and activities to bring more visitors to Greene County. Additionally, new opportunities will be discussed on how to capture additional second homeowner spending as the Second Homeowner (SHO) Economic Impact Analysis is now complete and contains recommendations for both business and tourism engagement. A special workshop on the SHO will be forth coming.

Heather spoke about the importance of events to the county referencing the addition of two small concerts at the Game Farm (Meltasia) and Blackthorne (Anti-Punk Social) targeting the younger crowd. The topic of events lead into an open discussion amongst everyone with several ideas and suggestions being put forth. Warren indicated that additional funding for event attraction has been discussed as part of the 2017 tentative tourism budget as a means to seed attraction of additional large capacity events.

Patty mentioned how she has seen an increase in the number of performing arts events and venues within the County with these types of events taking place almost every week throughout the year.

Warren mentioned that the Greene County Legislature recently adopted a resolution regarding the Elm Ridge Wild Forest (UMP) recommending inclusion of Mountain Bike Trails on Mount Hayden. We are

also waiting to hear whether the department's application to ILNY for mountain biking advertising funds will be awarded. The department will also be organizing a mountain biking workshop as part of its 2017 campaign research and development.

Heather talked about the efforts to encourage travel writers and bloggers to our area, "our advertising efforts need to have a "hook" and be very engaging with specifics." We're looking at new themed approaches and have recently had great placements with Escape Brooklyn, Thrillest and Beautiful Destinations.

The next TAC meeting will be October 18th at the Kaatskill Mountain Club.