



## **Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Tuesday, June 21, 2016**

**10:00 a.m.**

**The Country Place Resort/Zoom Flume**

### **Attendance:**

**Committee Members Attending** –Lenore Whitcomb, Winter Clove Resort; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Inn; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole House, Beth Stewart Windham Mountain Resort; Courtney Reinhard, Baumann’s Brookside

**Legislators in Attendance** – Legislators Kevin Lewis, Aidan O’Connor, Jr.

**Staff** – Heather Bagshaw, Nancy Petramale, Teri Weiss

**Others in Attendance** – Jeff Friedman, Greene County Chamber of Commerce; Stephonie Jozic, Washington Irving Inn; Jennifer Thelemarch, Kaatskill Mountain Club; Dorothee Walliser, The DeWitt Oak Hill; Rick Rasmussen, Hotel Vienna; Vitaliy Bobkov, B&B Lounge; Sherry & Jared Hull, Hull-O-Farms; Shama Hekim, The Country Place Resort

Heather welcomed and thanked everyone for attending the TAC meeting. This meeting brought together members of the lodging community within Greene County. Heather emphasized the importance of using the tourism office as a means of shared resources, not only for advertising efforts, but to inform us of your challenges and insights into your customers and experiences. We are here to help enhance visitor awareness of your facilities through destination advertising and marketing. Heather also gave a brief overview of the programs that the tourism office executes: the yearly marketing campaigns; digital and social media campaigns; press releases; working with travel writers; consumer travel shows; event logistics; Visitor Center and Historic Catskill Point operations; and other various aspects of the department. She then opened the meeting to a round table discussion.

Shama Hekim, the new owners of The Country Place Resort, welcomed everyone to her place and then spoke briefly about herself, her family and her background. Some of the items she discussed, included, Memorial Day and Father’s day weekends, her marketing campaigns, and the need to attract a younger crowd, and packages. She feels if the lodging facilities and attractions all work together to create a variety of packages it will help increase business for everyone. Heather concurred and reminded everyone to put their packages on the tourism website.

Suzanne Oldakowski added that one of the challenges Bavarian Manor has is attracting festival goers on the mountain top to travel down to Cairo for overnight accommodations. She's in the valley region of the county, and even though it's not that far, it's far enough to make a difference as visitors don't want to travel to her Inn. In addition, she hears a lot of her clientele wishing that there was public transportation within the county. She also felt that golf packages were not profitable for her as golfers are always looking for discounts. When doing golf packages she has to deeply discount the room rate. Heather recommended that she promote golf as an activity within the area but not as a package. She also recommends doing that with other various activities within the county too.

Kevin Lewis then spoke about the public transportation that was available within the county. It is now being operated by The Arc of Ulster Greene. They've recently purchased eight new buses and have added new routes to the service.

Aiden O'Connor also mentioned that some of the concerns he's heard from his constituents were the lack of available taxicab service during festivals within the County.

Some of the suggestions that were brought up during the meeting were:

- Third party booking outlets.
- Constant Contact as a resource for sending Email blasts.
- Rainy day activities promotional handout/listing of Farmers Market promotional handout.
- The advantages of Facebook and linking of articles and boosting post.
- Partnership opportunities with packaging.
- Exchanging and linking of logos on others website.
- Discount tickets to area attractions and providing a shuttle service.
- Website ADA requirements.

Various other items were mentioned as a means of attracting visitors and for packaging purposes were Audubon Society activities, kayak trips, guided hikes throughout the Catskills, music in the parks, and our new beverage trail.

Heather then added that the Catskill region has partnered with Amtrak in promoting the Catskills BeverageTrail, which also includes a car rental with Enterprise Rentals in Hudson. She also spoke about the millennial generation of travelers; a lot of our marketing efforts, along with I Love NY's are focusing on their likes and behaviors. Millennials are looking for unique and different experiences to explore and then immediately share them on all of their social media channels. She also mentioned that she would share a presentation with everyone that Adworkshop created regarding the millennial generation and thanked everyone for attending.

The next TAC meeting will be taking place in September due to the summer break.