



Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday, December 8, 2015 - 9:30 a.m.
Athens Cultural Center
Holiday Meet & Greet

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending –Carol Schreiber, Baumann's Brookside; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Denise Kerrigan, Zoom Flume Water Park; Jesse Tolz, Communication Manager, Windham Mountain Resort; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole House; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Inn.

Legislators in Attendance – Kevin Lewis, Chairman; Gene Hatton; Linda Overbaugh; Lori Torgersen, Legislator Elect; Aiden O'Connor, Legislator Elect.

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

Others in Attendance – Shaun Groden, County Administrator; Nancy Richards, Village of Catskill; Courtney Rienhard, Baumann's Brookside; Carolyn Bennett, Zadock Pratt Museum; Al & Cathy Guart, Catskill Mountain Lodge; Vitaliy Bobkov, B&B Lounge; Will Soter, Upstate Adventure Guide, LLC; Ed Kerrigan, Zoom Flume Water Park.

Heather Bagshaw welcomed everyone to the Holiday TAC Meet and Greet, explaining that this informal gathering was in place of the regular monthly meeting. "It's very nice to have in attendance some of our resort, lodging and attraction owners whom normally wouldn't be at our monthly meeting. This gives us the opportunity to talk one on one and give each other an idea of what is going on within the tourism industry."

Gene Hatton the Legislator representing Athens spoke and welcomed everyone to Athens and the Athens Cultural Center, where the meeting was being held. He gave a brief description and history of Athens and some of the significant events and movies that have been filmed in the Town. He also invited everyone to attend the Holiday Stroll that was taking place that upcoming weekend. He emphasized that "Athens is ready to do business."

This being an open meeting, everyone was encouraged to ask questions and speak on behalf of their venue. Russ Coloton from Hunter Mountain encouraged everyone to pray for cold

weather!! Additionally he spoke about the Mountain's biggest news, Hunter Mountain was sold to Peak Resorts of St. Louis, MO. He gave some background information on the company and its latest acquisition, stating that "as of now, he foresees no major changes occurring and the company will continue with events during the summer and fall seasons." He also mentioned that they acquired Mt. Snow approximately six years ago and has retained the same staff and only made minimal changes to the resort.

Carolyn Bennett felt that this allows for new partnerships opportunities between Main Street and the Mountain. Warren mentioned that the County will continue to support and partner with the Mountain and feels that this is a very positive move.

Warren also mentioned that Carol Schreiber of Baumann's will be stepping down this year from the committee, but all remaining board members are being reappointed for the 2016 year.

Warren spoke briefly regarding the upcoming budget year, and mentioned that the contract with Adworkshop as our Tourism Agency of Record has been extended, and the 2016 budget has also been approved. In addition, Warren informed the TAC that the yearly funds allocated to the TAC have now been included in the Department's annual budget allocation. This is great news and demonstrates the Legislature's recognition and support of the good work of the TAC.

Tourism marketing for 2016 will continue with our Programmatic Advertising and we'll start "Story Telling" and "Influential Marketing", which is the selling of the authentic experience to the visitor. We will also be pursuing influential writers who are knowledgeable in the travel industry to provide video experiences within Greene County. In addition we're leveraging Amtrak and creating destination itineraries for the County.

Warren mentioned the growing interest of the Chinese tourists to the Catskills and that we'll be hosting twelve tour operators in the county this weekend. Heather also thanked everyone who helped out to accommodate the group.

The REDC CFA grants awarded by the Governor will be announced on Thursday. We have three grant applications that we're hoping to receive funding for.

Warren and Kevin spoke jointly about the recent opening of the Kaaterskill Falls overlook and the new forty car parking lot at the top of the falls, accessible from Laurel House Road before entering North South Lake State Park. These improvements now make the falls handicap accessible and will increase visibility to our number one natural attraction in the County. They both also mentioned the "Ride the Catskill's Challenge" and state funding that was received to support the program. Warren also spoke about a prospective adventure snow-tubing park that's in the development review phase and to be located on County Route 2 in the Prattsville area. "This would be a wonderful addition to the county and would fit well with the hard work of the community which has worked aggressively since the hurricane to rebuild the western gateway of the County."

Ed Kerrigan, owner of Zoom Flume then spoke about the new waterslide addition to the park, which should be completed in 2016. "This will be a million dollar investment into the park," Ed said.

Karl Heck talked about some of our recent economic development activities that are taking place throughout the County. A few of those being the old Cameo restaurant that will be reopening in the spring as a French restaurant, Scribner Hollow was recently sold. It will remain open while renovations take place throughout the spring.

Betsy Jacks gave an update on the Thomas Cole house and the completion of the New Studio. She mentioned that 2015 was a record year for attendance for them, and credited the partnership with Olana, Main Street and the Hudson Shuttle for the increase in foot traffic. May 1st will be the official ribbon cutting for the studio. The refurbishing of the inside wall that Thomas Cole painted on, that was recently discovered will continue throughout 2016 and will be unveiled in 2017.

Carolyn Bennett spoke about the Zadock Pratt Museum. She mentioned that it's one of the oldest museums in the County and it holds the largest collection of artifacts. She also felt that the museum is underutilized and encourages everyone to spread the word about it and come and visit.

Al Guart owner of Catskill Mountain Lodge touched on a subject regarding a means of transportation for visitors coming to the area from Amtrak and from the city, such as a shuttle service. Warren then mentioned that I Love NY does sponsor a ski bus to the area throughout the winter season. Additionally there is the Trailways bus that stops in Palenville. He also encouraged everyone to create packages to encourage overnight stays and make sure that you post them to the tourism website.

Kevin Lewis then commended the TAC Committee for all of their time and effort they've put forth. He also mentioned that there will be six new legislators that were recently elected to the Legislature and they'll be starting at the beginning of the year, and they all want to serve on the tourism committee. He also mentioned that our tax revenue continues to grow, so keep up the good work.

Shaun Groden also applauded the efforts of the TAC members, stating that tourism is our prime industry and we need to continue to cultivate and continue to make it grow. He thanked everyone for their participation.

Lori Torgersen, the newly elected legislator from Windham, stated that she was excited to be serving as a legislator and is looking forward to being part of this campaign.

Aiden O'Connor the newly elected legislator from Durham also applauded the group and looks forward to working with everyone.

Warren encouraged everyone to visit the tourism website www.greatnortherncatskills.com and social media channels. In addition, if anyone is interested in viewing some of our marketing material you can make arrangements with Heather access them through Dropbox. It holds our videos and ad campaigns. The date of the 2016 tourism seminar is April 26th. He also mentioned the Buy In Greene-Invest In Greene program that has been successfully running over the past year.

Warren thanked everyone for attending and wished them a very happy holiday season. The next TAC meeting will be on January 26, 2016.