

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 16, 2009

AG, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

PRESENT: Campbell, Rymph, Brown, Scribner, Lindsay

AG, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

ABSENT: N. Hall, Hurley

SUPERVISORS: Wilbur, LaPointe, G. Hall

Debra Prehoda, Clerk

Kevin Hayes, County Administrator

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Barbara Winchell, Personnel Director

Phyllis Cooper, Treasurer

Public – Bruce Ferguson, Salem, Dana Haff – Supervisor Elect Town of Hartford

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Discussion on Planning Department and Tourism
- 3) Other Business
- 4) Adjournment

Chairman Campbell called the meeting to order at 1:07 P.M.

Christine Hoffer, Tourism Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Monthly Report – Christine distributed and explained her monthly report, attached.
- Snowshoeing and Cross Country Ski Trails – She has reached out to the area golf courses in the County about the possibility of snowshoeing and cross county ski trails. She stated this idea needs to get started earlier next year and some owners that she reached expressed concerns with liability issues.
- Website Development – Christine is recommending entering into a contract with Avenue 3, a Washington County based business, at a cost of between \$16,000 and \$22,000 for the branding, logo development and website development. She stated she has grant funds and I Love NY funds available to put toward the cost. They have extensive experience in the travel and tourism industry. The website should be minimally up and running by Wednesday. A copy of the proposal from Avenue 3 was distributed, on file. From Avenue 3's proposal, the project outline and rates are attached. Seventeen requests for website development were sent out and responses received back ranged in price from \$998 to \$38,000. Kevin stated the first phase would cost approximately \$10,000 and that funding is in the budget. Chairman Campbell stated he wants to make sure that the County will own the website and logo with this initial \$10,000 investment of funds. Christine should approach Avenue 3 requesting a contract that should include sole ownership of all intellectual content developed to Washington County. A motion to enter into a contract with Avenue 3 for the maximum of \$10,000 for development of the Washington County Tourism website as detailed in the project outline with funding coming from the Washington County Tourism funding with the balance coming from I Love NY and grants and the County retaining all intellectual content was moved by Mr. Brown, seconded by Mr. Lindsay and adopted.

A motion to recognize the small business award recipients was moved by Mr. Lindsay, seconded by Mr. Scribner and adopted.

A motion to recognize the Washington County Tourism Association for their service to the County was moved by Mr. Campbell, seconded by Mr. Brown and adopted.

Buy Local – Christine definitely has ideas about the buy local program but would like to discuss this fully with the Tourism Advisory Council. She feels this should be tied to generating sales tax revenue.

Tourism Advisory Council At Large Member - Betty Bardin, Adirondack Scenic - A motion to appoint Betty Bardin as the at-large-member to the Tourism Advisory Council was moved by Mr. Rymph, seconded by Mr. Brown and adopted.

Map – Mr. Brown stated the Washington County Tourism map does not include many roads and the natural resources are not designated. Christine stated we need to use the County map in future publications.

Christine is changing any publications that are in a digital format to reflect the new website address.

PLANNING –

Barb Winchell, Personnel Director, distributed a list of applicants for the position of Director of Planning. Eight out of ten qualify for the position. Chairman Campbell recommends interviewing everyone who is interested in moving to Washington County. Barb stated the job specifications should be revised due to the change in LDC now being separate and the TPA duties. Now is the time to review these specifications and the job specifications should be established prior to interviews. The committee discussed changes to the job description such as works cooperatively with LDC, has to be involved in tourism, applying for, administering and actively securing grants, works with the Tourism Advisory Council, and performs the duties of the planner. Mr. Brown suggested Cornell Cooperative Extension could do some of the Planning work and hire a part time planning position. He stated we have time to restructure before filling this position. December 29th at 11 A.M or 1 P.M., depending on the number of candidate, was the date set to interview candidates.

Barb stated that Tori Riley, Executive Director LDC, has requested Chris DeBolt's, former Planning Director, emails forwarded to her attention so items are not left unattended. Roger Wickes, County Attorney, stated she is not a county employee. He would not recommend forwarding the emails as then they become the property of the LDC but rather grant her access to that account.

Ag Stewardship Update – Renee Bouplon distributed a status report, attached, and a recent newsletter. She stated it is highly unlikely the State will come out with requests for proposals this year and believes the next requests will not be until next summer. The

earliest something would close is probably late spring. She mentioned that ASA was selected to receive a new state grant administered by the NYS Department of Agriculture, see attached handout. No monies have been received to date.

Washington County Snowmobile Association – Dave Perkins, representing the Washington County Snowmobile Association, stated they would be hurt without someone to sign the snowmobile trail voucher. He stated the Snowmobile Association passed a resolution requesting the County give the association a greater roll in the administration of this program. They want to do as much as they can. Kevin Hayes, County Administrator, stated the County is required to have oversight.

A motion to enter an executive session to discuss the medical, financial, credit or employment history of a particular person or corporation, or matters leading to the appointment, employment, promotion, demotion, discipline, suspension, dismissal or removal of a particular person or corporation was moved by Mr. Rymph, seconded by Mr. Scribner and adopted.

A motion to return session was moved by Mr. Rymph, seconded by Mr. Lindsay and adopted.

No action was taken during the executive session.

The meeting adjourned at 3:08 P.M.

December 16, 2009

Washington County Tourism Monthly Report

Advertising/Promotion:

Due to restricted funds we did not place any additional advertising in local papers.

Meetings and Events:

Hebron Center

A hidden gem in Hebron. The property owned by the Presbyterian Church is 460+ acres, seventy beds, swimming pool, dining facility, outdoor recreation – a great adventure and retreat destination. The facility is in a quandary and unsure what they should do with the facility. After a two hour meeting I was able to give them suggestions on ways the facility could be used outside of the events they already do. Including, retreats, adventure destination, destination weddings, corporate retreats and cycling events. Specifically Cyclacrosse. Offered guidance on establishing pricing and regulations, suggesting they visit Christ the Kings Beaver Cross website – located in Easton.

ACTION: I connected Dieter Drake, Anthem Sports, with Reverend Larry to begin to discussion on a Spring and Fall program. Dieter recently facilitated an event in New Jersey which had 600 riders.

Additionally, I connected Spoonful Catering with the Center to discuss weddings and corporate retreats. Spoonful has a clientele that is outside of the region and could potentially bring in an all inclusive group.

Cap-Saratoga Regional TPA's

Washington County is part of the Capital/Saratoga region for I Love NY. The region includes Albany, Fulton, Saratoga, Schenectady, and Rensselaer. The meeting was focused on year end, fourth quarter reporting to I Love NY. Each county contributes a dollar amount to support regional programs and promotion WA CO contributes \$6,000 to groups \$58,283 approximately 10% of the overall budget. I question the amount that Washington County contributes based on our populations, number of lodging rooms, dining, and retail. Saratoga and Albany County contribute double what we do, however, they have much more to gain and the website is a direct reflection of them – in name.

The group spends the money on:

- Website : www.capital-saratoga.com
- Brochure: See copy
- Phone: 1-800 number
- Unlimited Potential: An agency that responds to information requests from the site or 800 #
- Clear Tel & Saratoga Online: Web facilitator
- Travel Shows
- Great Vacation Getaways*
 - To be included in this we must join the TPA Council

Currently the group has a surplus of money that is being used to prepay for 2010. WA CO is delinquent in our 2009 payment to them of \$4171. Invoice has been given to Kevin Hayes for processing.

The meeting also focused on restructuring the I Love NY regions and should Washington and Fulton County to able to split off and partner with the ADK region. This is a huge branding issue and can't be done quickly.

ACTION: I am in the process of updating the information about WA CO on the above site, adding links and information about the county that will drive visitors to the county. I have also requested that the regional group consider creating itineraries that would generate demand in need areas – Arts and Agriculture specifically.

TPA Council

The TPA Council is a member organization of NYS TPA's. The cost is \$500 and allows access to collaborative advertising and access to programs such as Great Vacation Getaways. An e-blasting program that allows lodging establishments to promote packages. I have reached out to seek membership information, but have not yet heard back from the council.

ACTION: \$500 should be allocated to join the TPA Council

Other Events/Meetings:

- Attended the WA CO Small Business luncheon on December 4. I would like to suggest that the BOS recognize those businesses at the 18Dec meeting.
- Attended a Tour of the Battenkill roundtable hosted by Village of Cambridge Mayor Mark Spiezio, I wore both my tourism and tour hat. The meeting was to focus on how to make the race better and remedy issues the Main Street businesses have. Greenwich and Cambridge were well represented, no participation from Salem. Mayor Spiezio will be producing minutes which I will provide when I receive. It was a good meeting, with positive end results.
- Attended the ARCC WA CO mixer luncheon at the Cambridge Hotel. Sadly the WA CO representation was limited to very few WA CO businesses.
- **ADK Region.** WA CO has requested to partner with the ADK Region. I don't foresee this partnership happening due to the contribution costs to WA CO. They spend \$900,000 promoting the region and our percentage would exceed our entire budget. Instead we are discussing very specific events and areas in which they have a need and we have the product. Specifically Agri-tourism and promotion of the arts. Additionally, creating itineraries to the ADK via WA CO rather than I87.

I LOVE NY, Buy Local and Occupancy Tax:

I'm working with Kevin to wrap up the 2009 I Love NY and Buy Local Funds to best promote the county. We used a portion of the funds to do a Buy Local Campaign, presented last month. A portion will be used to support the ADK Life piece and the remaining funds to support a new website.

ADK Life Magazine: We will begin to solicit area business to partner in producing an ad campaign in ADK Life's March/April issue. The issue will have a feature story about the Tour of the Battenkill. Please see Mock Up.

Other Items:

Website/Branding Update: My recommendation is to enter into contract with Ave 3 a Washington County based developer that possess the skill set and has experience in the travel and tourism industry. Ave 3 would develop our website, our logo and branding items.

North Country Tours <http://www.northcountrytours.com>

Is a tour operator and step on guide based out of Hartford. Tina does a few tours in WA CO, but not too many. I am meeting with Tina on January 7 to discuss tours and promotion for overnights and day trips into WA CO. Tina also attends two Motor Coach Trade/Travel Shows that we should partner in. She is sending me the details and costs. I Love NY will cover these costs.

WA CO Snowmobile Club at their request I am attending their monthly meeting on January 7 at the Hartford Fire Station.

City of Glens Falls meeting with Director of Tourism, Alice, at her request to strategies cross promotional opportunities on January 4.

Empire State Tourism Conference: February 8-10 in Albany. Registration = \$225. There is also a TPA meeting on February 7 prior to the conference, charge undetermined.



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Project Outline & Rates

1. Develop branding/visual identity for Washington County Tourism website

- > Logo
- > Website design (including site map, home page, sub-site pages, tabs and animation)
- > Guidelines re: photography, graphics, colors, copy and visual identity
- > Create a digital photo library for use throughout WCT, which will promote consistency and cost-effectiveness

\$85 per hour; timeframe: 2-3 weeks

2. Editorial Content Development

- > Tagline and editorial theme creation
- > Writing navigational text (static and dynamic)
- > Research/writing of feature articles
- > Writing/editing of blogs and social media posts (tweets, Facebook entries, etc.)

\$75 per hour; timeframe: 3-4 weeks

3. Maintaining/updating the site

- > Monitoring of site usage (tracking hits)
- > Editorial coordination (updating calendar, editing information), working closely with the Tourism Administrator
- > Managing the photo gallery posted on the site
- > Maintaining the photo library (for WCT Marketing approved visuals)

\$25 per hour; timeframe: ongoing

4. Assistance (for reduced cost) to local businesses who want to leverage the WCT website through expanded information, links, etc.

\$50-75 per hour, depending on assignment



**Washington County Farmland PDR Program
Status Report
December 16, 2009**

Recently Completed Projects

Moses Farm (Rich and Kathy Moses) – 2006 Award to Washington County (cross-endorsement from Rensselaer County AFPB)

The state granted final approval of the project in March 2009, but funding to purchase the development rights was not received until mid-August. The closing took place on September 2nd and a press event was held at the Moses residence on November 20th. Senator Betty Little, Assemblyman Tony Jordan, Legislator Ken Herrington, Ag. and Markets Deputy Commissioner Jerry Cosgrove and many others were at the event.

Projects in Progress

Stewart Farm (Cliff and Janet Stewart) – 2007 Award to Easton Stewart II Farm

The Stewart Farm is a 234-acre dairy farm on State Route 40. Title search, survey and appraisal completed. Secured additional project funding through private sources and the NYS Dept. of Ag. and Markets given the unanticipated higher easement value. Purchase contract currently under review. Anticipate sending the project package to Ag. and Markets by the end of December and expect closing in spring 2010 depending on state review period and funding availability.

Slocum Farm (Ed Slocum) – 2007 Award to Washington County

This 321-acre former dairy farm is currently leased to several neighboring farmers and is used for crops. Title report, survey and appraisals completed. Appraisal report indicated a lower easement value than anticipated, so ASA commissioned a second appraisal to compare. Working on purchase contract. Anticipate sending the project package to NYSDAM by the end of January and expect closing in summer 2010 depending on state review period and funding availability.

Clark Family Farm (Skip and Selena Clark, ESNID, LLC) – 2007 Award to Rensselaer-Washington Counties (3 separate easements)

The project consists of parcels in Hoosick, Jackson and Petersburg and is used for raising heifers and crop production. Title reports, surveys and appraisals completed. Purchase contracts signed for all properties. Anticipate sending the project package to NYSDAM by early January and expect closing in spring or summer 2010 depending on state review period and funding availability.

Hand Melon Farm (John Hand) – 2009 Award to Washington County

Hand Melon Farm is a diversified 418-acre operation offering u-pick fruit and vegetable, straw and hay as well as horse boarding. State PDR project was awarded in May 2009. ASA received federal funding from Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP) to cover the entire 25% match requirement. Currently working with landowner on site plan and easement drafting.

Anticipate sending draft easement and site plan for Ag. and Market's preliminary approval by end of December.

Deep Roots Holsteins Farm (Albert and Donna Marns) – 2009 Award to Town of Kingsbury

The Marns family operates a 343-acre dairy farm with a roadside stand that offers sweet corn, pumpkins and gourds. State PDR project awarded in May 2009. ASA was notified that this project was not awarded federal funding in July 2009 to cover the 25% match requirement, but it is in the pool of applicants in the current funding cycle at the encouragement of USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service. Staff currently working with the landowners on site planning and easement drafting. Anticipate sending draft easement and site plan for Ag. and Market's preliminary approval in early January.

PDR Pre-applications for the next grant round were finalized in August. It is unclear when or if the state will announce a request for proposals for this state fiscal year. It is likely, that it will be postponed until next summer due to the state budget and limited staff capacity at the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets.

Applications for the next funding round include:

<i>Applicant</i>	<i>Farm/Landowner</i>
Washington County	Landview Farms (Walker Family)
Town of Easton	Petteys Farm (Stephen and Dan Petteys)
Town of Greenwich	McArthur-Sauert (Joan McArthur-Fiske)

NYS Agriculture and Markets Non-for-Profit Grant – ASA was recently selected to receive a new state grant administered by the NYS Dept. of Ag. and Markets. The grant is to provide capacity-building support for land trusts that assist municipalities with farmland conservation projects. ASA was awarded a two-year \$100,000 grant (\$50,000 per year) to assist in farmland conservation projects, conduct outreach for new farmland protection projects, update ASA's farmland conservation plan, develop outreach materials, administer the PDR pre-application process, address stewardship needs and update equipment. This grant will allow ASA to maintain existing staff to carry out the current land protection workload without having to reduce staff hours or let staff go. ASA has been providing assistance to the county free-of-charge to administer its PDR program and this grant will help cover a portion of those costs.

Report prepared by the Agricultural Stewardship Association.