

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT  
COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES  
AUGUST 26, 2008

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEMBERS  
PRESENT: Brown, Lindsay, Scribner, Alexander, Campbell

AGRICULTURE, PLANNING, TOURISM & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MEMBERS  
ABSENT: N. Hall

SUPERVISORS: Trinkle, Wilbur, Henke, Rymph, G. Hall

Debra Prehoda, Clerk

Roger Wickes, County Attorney

Chris DeBolt, Planner

Kevin Hayes, County Administrator

Tori Riley, ARCC

Sandy Buxton, Cooperative Extension

Marge Mohn, Tourism

AGENDA AS PRESENTED IN COMMITTEE NOTICE:

- 1) Call to Order
- 2) Approval of Minutes – July 23, 2008
- 3) Bed Tax Update
- 4) Department Reports/Requests
  - A) Planning
    - 1) Empire State Development Corp Project Funding
      - a. Upstate Blueprint Fund
      - b. Upstate Agribusiness Fund
    - 2) Local Artist Display – County Complex
    - 3) Snowmobile Trails
      - a. Grant Application Process
      - b. Discuss Use of NYS Canal Corp Land by Snowmobile Clubs/Resolution Request
    - 4) Budget Amendment Request
      - a. Office Renovations – moving .1 to .4 \$1,000
    - 5) County Planning Board Monthly Report
  - B) Tourism
    - 1) Monthly Update
- 5) 2009 Budget and Committee Areas of Discussion
- 6) Other Business
- 7) Adjournment

Chairman Brown called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M.

A motion to approve the minutes of the July 23, 2008 meeting was moved by Mr. Scribner, seconded by Mr. Lindsay and adopted.

BED TAX UPDATE – Christine Hoffer addressed the committee on the occupancy tax proposal as Kate Ziehm was not available for today's meeting. They are recommending a 4% occupancy tax, up to 10% collected annually goes toward administrative fees and if it goes over 10% then the additional funds would come out of the bed tax funds, and they will use the Warren County mission statement with the addition of the wording "preserving our heritage, and celebrating our agricultural community". Campgrounds do not collect sales tax and if and when they do they would participate in the bed tax. The bed tax funds would not replace the allocation to tourism. They would like to use the funds towards matching grant funding, proper signage and marketing. Handout attached on the Occupancy Tax presentation. This bed tax is estimated to generate at this time approximately \$38,000.00 per Kevin Hayes, County Administrator. Mrs. G. Hall

suggested putting monies aside for improving infrastructure. Roger Wickes, County Attorney, stated the more the County structures the occupancy tax like the sales tax the easier the enforcement and the less administrative cost. He distributed a summary of facility definitions, attached. Christine Hoffer distributed a copy of an article that appeared in the Chronicle referencing a Smith Travel Research report, attached. Roger Wickes, County Attorney, stated he needs to know the following to draft the occupancy tax: what is the rate going to be, what the administrative hold back is going to be if any and what is it going to apply to, who is going to be taxed i.e. hotels, motels. A motion to move forward with drafting an occupancy tax local law with the rate at 4%, up to 15% administrative cost (not to exceed), following the state guidelines on what facilities are taxed and incorporating the wording “preserving our heritage, and celebrating our agricultural community” was moved by Mr. Alexander, seconded and adopted. Roger stated he will contact Betty Little’s office regarding the parameters of our proposed law and hopefully present a resolution at the next Board meeting to request legislation be introduced.

#### DEPARTMENT REPORTS/REQUESTS:

PLANNING - Chris DeBolt, Planner, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Empire State Development Corp Project Funding (Upstate Blueprint Fund and Upstate Agribusiness Fund) – Chris and Mac Sanders, LDC, met with a representative from the Empire State Development Corporation regarding potential funding streams that might be available for economic development, handout attached. The representative stated nothing is formalized at this time. He would like to formulate a list of infrastructure items that needs to be done and be able to refer to it when funding becomes available. Kevin suggested having the Board develop criteria for consideration of projects.
- Local Artist Display – County Complex – Sandy Kaiser, a local artist, has received a grant through LARAC and a stipulation is that she needs to display her artwork, landscapes. At this time, the County does not accept artwork for display.
- Snowmobile Trails
  - Grant Application Process – The 30% vouchers for 08/09 season have been submitted and approved by the State. They are in the process of completing the next phase for submission.
  - Discuss Use of NYS Canal Corp Land by Snowmobile Clubs/Resolution Request – The NYS Canal Corp will no longer allow snowmobiles to cross the canal after this year. Dave Perkins, Washington County Snowmobile Association, addressed the committee. He stated snowmobiles cannot use trail after the bike trail is built. The Town of Kingsbury has passed a resolution of support for the snowmobiles clubs use of the canal. A motion to support a revision of NYS Canal Corporation regulations to allow snowmobile clubs to maintain a trail on the canal and allow them use of the Champlain Canalway Trail being developed between Fort Ann and

Fort Edward was moved by Mr. Lindsay, seconded by Mr. Scribner and adopted.

- Budget Amendment Request
  - Office Renovations – A motion to amend Planning Department budget, transferring funds between line items( personal services to contractual) in the amount of \$1,000 for office renovations was moved by Mr. Alexander, seconded by Mr. Lindsay and adopted. Mr. Brown opposed.
- County Planning Board Monthly Report – Handout on file. There was one disapproval, they strongly opposed proposed zoning amendment for junk yard.

TOURISM – Marge Mohn, I Love NY Program Director, addressed the following items with the committee:

- Monthly Report attached.
- I LOVE NY Program – Marge distributed and explained Washington County Tourism Association tally sheet for I Love NY that details expenses totaling \$132,951.28 and total I Love NY Program revenue in the amount of \$132,312.00, on file. A new map is being developed and it will be proofed for errors prior to printing ( 60,000 to be printed). The projected balance to begin 2009 is \$40,268.00. The following additional handouts were distributed: WC Tourism Association – Washington County Marketing Program 2008 and Washington County Tourism Association I Love NY Budget 2009, on file. Kevin Hayes, County Administrator, distributed the attached handout detailing information on the I Love NY Program which the County contracts with the Washington County Tourism Association as its I Love NY Tourism Promotion Agency (TPA). Discussion ensued on the I Love NY Program and what they can support. Mr. Alexander stated the Battenkill bike race should be sponsored if at all possible. She stated that guidelines must be followed to qualify for this funding. Details on how to apply for this funding should be made easily available. Marge stated she has a packet of information available if anyone is interested in applying for funds. Kevin was unable to reach someone at the State to explain how it is determined how much money the county will receive in I Love NY funding. A motion to appoint WC Tourism Association as the TPA was moved by Mr. Scribner, seconded by Mr. Campbell and adopted. Mr. Brown opposed.

2009 BUDGET AND COMMITTEE AREAS OF DISCUSSION – Discussed matching funds in Tourism budget, not budget any additional funds but reallocate funding.

#### OTHER BUSINESS –

Sandy Buxton, Cornell Cooperative Extension, addressed the committee on the upcoming Cheese Tour scheduled for September 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> , flyers distributed. This event was well attended last year. A twenty-eight page visitors guide will also be available during the tour as well as various farmers markets and meal events. Last year they received matching fund from the I Love NY Program \$750 for printing and were told they would receive this year but there were challenges. She stated there is no

application for matching funds either from the Washington County projects or I Love NY funding on the web site. They were advised that they had missed the deadline for filing for matching funds. WC Tourism did agree to fund the printing cost. Sandy stressed a need for easier access to funding information. She stated although they had been through the process once, they still experienced difficulties this year.

Tori Riley, ARCC, updated the committee on the upcoming Regional Agricultural and Tourism Showcase, flyer attached. She also explained how she was not aware of the application process for funding through the Tourism/I Love NY Program.

Christine Hoffer stated the towns and villages of the Battenkill Valley partner with these upcoming events, cheese tour and Ag Tourism Showcase. She stated the Tour of the Battenkill cycle race is the single largest one-day bike race in the US but they have to beg to get funds from Tourism. Kevin mentioned during the budget process stipulating funding for certain events such as the cheese tour, bike race, i.e. a simpler and more straightforward approach to receiving funding is needed.

Chris DeBolt, Planner, mentioned a request from Senator Little for Community Capital Assistance program projects and the possibility of \$100,000 in funding. The following three projects were submitted: provide internet service to Hampton Alternative Energy Park \$20,000, extend fiber optic cable internet service Town of Cambridge \$50,000.00 and extension of water main in Village of Granville \$30,000.

The meeting adjourned at 4:07 P.M.