

**Finger Lakes Visitors Connection, Ontario County, New York  
Board of Directors Meeting Wednesday, June 17, 2009 8:30 a.m.  
Geneva On The Lake, 1001 Lochland Road, Geneva**

**PRESENT**

Russ Kenyon  
Jessica Bacher  
John Brahm  
Dick Maltman  
Chris Iversen  
Mary Luckern  
John Maerhofer  
Lois Kozlowski  
Bob Bennett

**EXCUSED**

Alexa Gifford  
Mike Kauffman  
Suzanne Farley  
Lisa Fitzgerald  
Mike Roeder  
Dan Fuller  
Frank Riccio

**EX-OFFICIO**

Alison Grems, Cdga Chamber  
Rob Gladden, Geneva Chamber  
Mitch Donovan, Victor Chamber  
Bob Matson, FLCC  
Cynthia Kimble, FLTA

**STAFF**

Valerie Knoblauch  
Rebecca Donovan  
AJ Shear

**GUESTS**

Sherri Geary, Geneva BID  
Stuart Einstein, Geneva Mayor  
John Adamski, Finger Lakes  
Museum Project

**WELCOME / INTRODUCTIONS** – Chairman Russ Kenyon called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Our host, Bill Schickel welcomed everyone to Geneva On The Lake and noted that the building will celebrate its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year. The hotel was first opened for guests in 1981, and just received its AAA four diamond designation for the 26<sup>th</sup> year. Russ Kenyon asked for introductions and welcomed our guests Sherri Geary, Executive Director of the Geneva BID, and Stuart Einstein, Mayor of the City of Geneva.

**EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM** – Valerie Knoblauch introduced John Adamski, Project Director of the Finger Lakes Museum Project. John presented a slideshow on the Finger Lakes Museum Project, whose goal is to create a museum showcasing the cultural and natural history of the Finger Lakes region. The coalition was granted a museum charter by the New York Board of Regents in May 2009, and has received 16 submissions from 6 counties for proposed sites. The 40-45 million dollar plan calls for a 40,000 square foot building on 50-200 acres. Russ Kenyon asked about a time table, and John cited the Project's strategic plan which proposes site selection in 2009 and anticipates opening by the summer of 2014. Russ thanked John Adamski for taking the time to present to the Board.

**CORRESPONDENCE NOTEBOOK** – Rebecca Donovan passed the correspondence notebook.

**OFFICIAL BUSINESS** – Lois Kozlowski moved to approve the **Minutes of the April 29, 2009 Board of Directors meeting**. Mary Luckern seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Valerie presented the financial reports, and reiterated her answers to the two questions from the April meeting, noting that Visitors Guide, FLTA and website expenses had all hit in May, and that marketing payroll adjustments have been made. John Brahm made a motion to approve the **April, May and Year-to-Date Financial Reports**. John Maerhofer seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Valerie Knoblauch reported for the Nominating Committee.

**Recommendation: John Maerhofer is re-nominated for a three year term to expire September 30, 2012.**

Mary Luckern moved to **accept the recommendation of the Nominating Committee**. Dick Maltman seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

**CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT** – Russ Kenyon asked Valerie to report on the status of the Canandaigua Chamber contract. Valerie reported that the basis of the contracts with the chambers remain the same. In 2009, FLVC will partner with the Canandaigua Chamber to produce a white paper on the economic value of special events. The Canandaigua Chamber contract has been approved by the Ontario County Planning and Research Committee. The contract, which runs from May 1, 2009 to April 30, 2010 is within the 2009 budget (\$8250) and is focused on recruitment of meetings.

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT** – Valerie Knoblauch reported on the challenges to be faced in the budget process for 2009-2010. Valerie reported a 10% decrease in occupancy tax collections through February 2009, and disappointing occupancy numbers for April 2009, with both bookings and RevPar down. Valerie is positioning the finances now for the further drop in occupancy tax collections by investing this year in collateral, and paying down the house mortgage. Valerie then asked the board members “How’s business?” Board members shared their experiences in their own businesses.

**AGENCY REPORTS** – Bob Matson reported on FLCC’s proposed Go Green Tour the first weekend in October. The program, still in the planning stages, will be marketed from Buffalo to Ithaca and will have an educational focus. Valerie noted that FLVC will be positioned as a partner with board approval. She also noted there could be concerns expressed again about the windmills, which are included as a stop on the tour.

Rob Gladden reported the launch of the Geneva Chamber’s new website. The Chamber is working closely with the City of Geneva on the new Visitor Center plan, partnering with the Finger Lakes Boating Museum. Rob is ready to move forward with the next FLVC contract. Mary Luckern noted that the Town of Geneva is supportive of the Visitor Center proposal. Chris Iversen asked whether there could be a conflict between the Visitor Center/Boating Museum and the Finger Lakes Museum Project; Rob replied that the two projects are very different.

Mitch Donovan thanked the board for their new relationship with the Victor Chamber and noted that Victor is 1/3 of the way through their contract. Mitch noted the success of the ISOC snowmobile event in February, reported on sales calls made with Sue Schmidt, and noted the upcoming Homearama in Victor.

Alison Grems reported that the Canandaigua Chamber is providing phone assistance CMAC, and has held ribbon cuttings for Doc’s Lakeside, Sky Lodge, and Susan’s Shop at Loomis Barn. Town approval has been received for the new welcome signs. The Chamber will hold a FAM tour in July for front-liners, and is partnering with FLCC tourism students for a Secret Shopper program. Alison noted new advertising opportunities on the Chamber website.

Cindy Kimble reported that early results from a TPA-commissioned conversion study show a conversion rate of 72%. A survey of private partners was conducted to help formulate the FLTA marketing plan, and another survey will ask private partners “how are we doing?” FLTA has advertised with I Love New York, Travelocity, Orbitz, and AAA, as well as working with travel writers to promote the 14 county region.

Sherri Geary reported that the Geneva BID, with partner funding, has hired a consultant to assist with retail occupancy and business recruitment.

Mayor Stuart Einstein reported that funding sources have been identified for the proposed Visitor Center, to be designed as a destination attraction with four-season programming. Four Restore NY grants within the City of Geneva received approval, three of which are tourism-related.

**MARKETING REPORT** – Valerie reported that the Honeoye Chamber of Commerce is reactivating and had been in contact with our office. Sue Schmidt is attending their upcoming meeting.

Valerie spoke about the dilemma of how to position/package all of our contact information and messaging opportunities with the evolving of social media for marketing. Our solution is Finger Lakes Insiders, which will allow consumers to contact us by their preferred method (e-mail, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) and allow our messaging to be more direct and personal as is required for credibility in this new media. We will continue to look for other Insiders (especially Board members) whose expertise lies in specific areas such as golf, wineries, etc.

AJ Shear and Meg Colombo attended a VOCUS seminar in Washington, D.C. The main message was that Public Relations is in transition. The focus currently is on text, video (YouTube ranking 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Google for SEO), photos (Flickr), and links to Facebook and Twitter, but it could all change in a year. Social media will be the topic for the September board meeting; Meg and Valerie will have been to ESTO in August. FLVC is guiding the NY Wine and Culinary Center in social media as a test case for advising other businesses. Meg Colombo has been invited to attend the US Travel ESTO as “official tweeter.”

FLVC has partnered with Livingston, Wayne and Cayuga counties to participate in a cooperative marketing campaign with VisitRochester. The campaign will use radio, TV, internet and print to target Canadian markets in late summer/early fall. The theme of the campaign is Prizes & Surprises.

Valerie reminded the board that a Public Authorities Accountability Act required training session will take place on Friday, June 19<sup>th</sup> at the County Office Building. The Board needs to all be trained as per the new regulations.

Valerie also noted that Slice, Dice and Spice NY is ongoing, but she prefers to present more in-depth at a later meeting.

On a national level, Valerie noted that a passport is now required to enter the U.S. from Canada, and that there is a link for information on our website. Russ Kenyon noted that a portion of the passport fee is retained locally if you apply locally rather than online or by mail. John Maerhofer noted that strict requirements are also in place for pets crossing the border.

Valerie reported that FLVC supported the Tourism Promotion Act, which has passed the Senate and is going to the House. At last check, Senator Charles Schumer had not signed on to co-sponsor.

**OLD BUSINESS** – None

**NEW BUSINESS** – None

**ADJOURN** – On motion from Dick Maltman, Russ Kenyon adjourned the meeting at 10:30 a.m.

**Next meeting:**                      September 9, 2009 8:30 a.m.  
Victor Town Hall  
85 East Main Street, Victor