

Economic Development Committee Minutes
October 4, 2017 – 4:00 p.m.

Present: Chairman Tim Szczepaniak; Supervisors Vince DeLucia, Alan Grattidge, Art Johnson, Jack Lawler and Dick Lucia; Spencer Hellwig, Chad Cooke, County Administrator; Steve Dorsey, County Attorney; Todd Shimkus, Annamaria Bellantoni; Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce; Pete Bardunias, Chamber of Southern Saratoga County; Press.

Chairman Szczepaniak called the meeting to order and welcomed all in attendance.

On a motion made by Mr. DeLucia, seconded by Mr. Johnson, the minutes of the August 2, 2017 meeting were approved unanimously.

A motion was made by Mr. DeLucia, seconded by Mr. Johnson, to designate the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce as the County's Tourism Promotion Agency and Authorizing the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce to apply for an "I Love New York" grant for 2018. Unanimous.

Mr. Szczepaniak introduced Mr. Shimkus from the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce. Mr. Shimkus distributed a handout and gave an update on Saratoga County tourism. Mr. Shimkus introduced Annamaria Bellantoni, VP of Tourism. Mr. Shimkus said that Supervisor Johnson is a member of their Board of Directors. Mr. Shimkus said that 2017 funding consisted of \$375K from Saratoga County, \$59,730 from the I Love New York grant and \$40K from private funding. The funds are spent largely on advertising, digital, radio, video, tv, social media, joint promotions and select print ads. Top destination products include horses/racing, history/museums/culture, parks/outdoor rec, health/wellness, dining/shopping, breweries/wineries, golf and spas. Mr. Shimkus said that marketing segmentation is based on specific behavioral segments and geographic performance, digitally selecting people that are interested in the destination products within the drive markets for Saratoga County. Occupancy statistics were provided in the handout for Saratoga County not including the City of Saratoga Springs. Running 12-month occupancy supply is up 14%, demand is up 9.5%, RevPAR (revenue per available room) is down 7.1%. Occupancy tax revenue is up over 5% from Q1 and Q2 from 2016. Summer tourism campaign ran from 4/1 to 9/15, their annual tourism contest package generated thousands of new email addresses, they are now up to 22,000 emails that receive their monthly e-blast. In addition to digital advertising, they utilize social media for promotions. Every week they pick two signature events or destinations within the County to promote through social media, for example, Hadley Maple Fest and Ellms Farm opening. Mr. Szczepaniak said that the county received major grant funding for improvements to the Zim Smith Trail and suggested the Chamber include the trail in their promotions.

In looking at the occupancy statistics, Mr. Lawler expressed concern over the fact that occupancy is falling and the average room rate is also falling, even though sales tax is up. Mr. Lawler said that if supply outstrips demand then the price falls, and if it continues, the drop in price will exceed the increase in demand creating a drop in sales tax. Mr. Shimkus said that they have been discussing this since 2013/2014 and at that point mapped out how many new hotels were being proposed and built. Mr. Shimkus said that at this point, they have to sell 300K more hotel rooms

(over the course of a full year) than they did 4 years ago. Mr. Lawler said that perhaps additional funding is needed. Mr. Shimkus said that two years ago the county contribution was increased recognizing that there were additional rooms coming on. Mr. Shimkus said that an increase in funding helps towards advertising to keep the demand increasing. Mr. Shimkus said that along with leisure, it's necessary to drive up commercial demand for rooms. Economic development, construction development increase demand. Mr. Shimkus also said that there are additional hotels being built in neighboring counties. Mr. Grattidge said that hotels should also contribute towards the marketing efforts.

Mr. Szczepaniak introduced Pete Bardunias from the Chamber of Southern Saratoga. Mr. Bardunias distributed a handout outlining their 5 years of collaborative community development activities and the projects scheduled for 2018. Mr. Bardunias said that the County contributed \$30K of funding for 2017. 2017 projects include maintenance of existing projects, robotic canal barge, canal placard and tv slide shows at exit 9 rest area, community business alliances, and improvements at historic lock 19. Plans for 2018 include maintaining existing projects, continue coordination of Area 3 project along Hudson River in Halfmoon, pursue Canal Corporation grant lead agency and a choice of 3 projects from a large community development project list.

A motion was made by Mr. Lawler, seconded by Mr. Lucia, to authorize the Conveyance of Kinns Road Park Parcel to the Town of Clifton Park. Unanimous.

Mr. Dorsey said that on September 13th the Governor signed into law the Home Rule Bills submitted by the county seeking authorization to convey the Kinns Road Park Parcel to the Town of Clifton Park. The next step in the process is a resolution from the Board of Supervisors authorizing the Chairman to execute the deed conveying the parcel. Conditions contained in the legislation would be if the Town ceases to use the property for parkland purposes, the title reverts back to the County, another key condition is that that the conveyance would be for no consideration and the final that the County does not need to create new reforested lands elsewhere.

On a motion was made by Mr. DeLucia, seconded by Mr. Lawler, to the meeting was adjourned unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,
Therese Connolly
Deputy Clerk of the Board