



## **Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Date: Tuesday March 17, 2015 - 9:30 a.m.  
Windham Mountain**

### **Attendance:**

**Committee Members Attending** –Carol Schreiber, Baumann's Brookside; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor County Inn; Chip Seamans, Windham Mountain; Denise Kerrigan; Zoom Flume; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain

**Legislators in Attendance** – Kevin Lewis, County Chairman; Patty Handle, Chairperson, Economic Development and Tourism Committee; Joe Kozloski; Gene Hatton;

**Staff** –Warren Hart, Heather Bagshaw, Nancy Petramale, Teri Weiss, Karl Heck

Chip welcomed everyone to Windham Mountain, and spoke about current changes, renovations and upgrades that have taken place at the Mountain over the past year. They are currently in the process of hiring a new marketing director. They've had a great winter, with fabulous conditions in spite of the bitter cold. They haven't had to make snow since January, which was a cost saving factor this year. Expected closing date is April 5<sup>th</sup>.

Chip also spoke about their \$11 million dollar infrastructure project taking place over the next two years, including upgrades to the snow making and grooming equipment. They've moved the beginner's area to the front of the main lodge, which created a much better experience for the novice skier and boarder. They've also created a new ski trail, and purchased the Windham Golf Course which now gives them a four season destination. This summer the mountain will transform into a full fledge mountain bike park, that was designed by the company Gravity Logics. The UCI Windham World Cup will once again be back this August, along with the Warrior Dash. They have also renovated the third floor Seasons Restaurant, which will be a contributing factor to the wedding industry growth for the resort. "More and more couples want to get married at the top of the mountain, with the reception following down in the Lodge" Chip said.

Additionally, the Mountain is renovating the Child Learning Center, and has added a full service spa, "Alpine Spa" within the Windham Mountain Resort. Currently under construction is the development of the Whisper Creek Condo project. This will create 41 units which is already over 65% sold.

Heather gave a brief history about our regional partners in tourism; Hudson Valley Tourism (HVT) and the Catskill Association Tourism Services (CATS) and then gave a detailed PowerPoint presentation. It included information regarding the awarding of a Regional Economic Development Council Grant in the amount of \$300,000 through the Capital Region Council. Grant activities centered on the marketing strategies of advertising, website growth, Search Engine Optimization, Facebook, and collateral development. Partnering with organizations like HVT and CATS allows us to attend travel shows on behalf of the county that normally we wouldn't be able to afford. Primarily HVT advertising efforts focuses on the New Jersey and Philadelphia areas. Within the PowerPoint were several examples of online advertising, magazine ads, banner ads and tweets that HVT has placed, along with some of the stats. Heather noted, that during the peak advertising period of the HVT campaign, it was our number referral site to the Great Northern Catskill website. This is proof that our matching funds are working for us.

HVT partnered with the New York Port Authority and Stewart Airport to help secure matching funds that allowed us additional advertising for the Hudson Valley Region. This included adding a new transportation page featuring regional partners on the website. Additional advertising was placed through radio spots, online banner ads and seasonal E-Blasts too. Partnering with HVT has also allowed us to participate in the World Travel Market, travel trade and journalist event as a corporate partner. In addition we also participated in ILNY Travel Writer Workshop, Philadelphia Travel and Adventure show, sponsored by the Classic Hudson Valley, a prestigious travel journalist event, and Brand USA, which is an international program.

Warren elaborated regarding the importance of the partnership with HVT. Partnering with entities such as, the NY Port Authority and Stewart airport has given us "a holistic arm" linking to our region, and by partnering with them our regional funding has helped to enlarge our advertising campaign, which has resulted in increase traffic to our website and visitor to the region. Our participation in HVT also ensures that we are serving the Historic River Towns. Heather is now on the marketing committee with Hudson Valley Tourism.

Heather then continued with the PowerPoint and reviewed with everyone the Facebook stats and SEO performance. She spoke about HVT collateral, including the tradeshow pull up banner, which identifies various stops along the river and a foldout map and rack card to coincide with it.

Some additional items that she spoke about were the Autumn Themed itinerary that was on HVT website this past fall and the results from those pages. She reviewed the Autumn E-blast and the Autumn Themed post card that was mailed to 12K recipients, all of which help to drive consumers to the itinerary page on the website. She also spoke about the online survey that was sent to consumers, with the results. To entice people to take the survey a Visa gift card was offered, and resulted in 85 gift cards being issued, this brought up some discussion regarding gift cards among the committee.

Heather presented another PowerPoint presentation, "Germany Fall 2014 Multi-Channel Campaign" from the Catskill Association Tourism Services (CATS) which Greene County is a regional partner. "This campaign was in hopes of attracting more of the international market. She gave an overview of the campaigns components.

Warren commented, "Partnering with CATS and pooling our resources allows us to promote to the international traveler, and to advertise and work with programs such as Brand USA, and VISA USA".

Talks ensued amongst everyone regarding international travel and the traveler. Warren mentioned that ILNY has made a new commitment to international travel and in a few weeks there is a large international trade show in Ottawa Canada. Many of the County TPA's and regional Groups are attending through cooperative arrangements with ILNY. This would be a cost effective way for Greene County to attend these types of events in the future.

Warren added that Adworkshop is currently working on a new motorcycle campaign and we have growing international motorcycle travelers coming from Canada. "Making a presence in the Canadian market is something that we need to consider for 2016".

Russ commented that the Canadian market is huge and it would be great if we could entice them to stop here for an overnight stay on their way through. During the Canadian holidays, there is big influx of Canadian visitors to the mountain. The Committee was in favor of evaluating Greene's participation at Canadian travel shows.

Gene mentioned that his wife, who is a teacher, has traveled to China with the school a few times, and "that is where the money is". Warren then mentioned that in 2013 ILNY did a 2 day seminar and met with travel writers and tour operators, hoping to attract more visitors from China to the region. ILNY continues to support this market.

Heather said that funding for the international market will be considered in the 2016 budget.

Carol commented about the number of guests that she has coming from Canada to attend a family reunion, and Suzanne also commented on her increased number of international guests that stop overnight and then proceed onto their destination.

Heather stated that starting in April Greene County will be saturating the market with advertising for the Kaaterskill Clove Experience. Warren stated that he was very pleased with the campaign, website and collateral materials and that it is finally officially launched. Many businesses, organizations, and people worked together to bring this campaign together and it was gratifying to see it. He added, that "it is one of the most important cultural and historical trails that we have in Greene County and it is very important to the State's history as well." Marketing for the trail will also be targeting the international traveler.

Warren also mentioned that ILNY has a new mobile application, and we've created a huge presence on that site and have gained more exposure to our county and regionally from it. Nancy is continually populating content, such as events, accommodation listings, packages and photo/video to the ILNY site. "We are usually always ranked on the top of the listing page with them", said Nancy. [http://www.iloveny.com/places-to-go/catskills/#.VR6sp\\_zF-So](http://www.iloveny.com/places-to-go/catskills/#.VR6sp_zF-So)

Warren indicated that the new County Tourism Gateway signs had received regulatory approval by the NYSDOT, that the sign design is at the printers, and County Highway will be installing them. Warren also mentioned that the Kaaterskill Clove Experience signage has been submitted to the NYSDOT for approval and we are waiting for their response.

Heather then announced that the Round Top Mountain Bike trail has just opened. They will have both single and double track trails available, but are for the more experienced rider. Windham Mountain will now be a full service mountain bike riding center, they'll provide a riding experience for everyone from beginner to expert. They'll also have lessons available and a full service shop for rentals and purchases. "With Windham Mountain being on board, this brings more opportunity to the area and an entirely new clientele to the County".

In addition, Heather also mentioned that the 2015 travel guide was printed earlier this year, so that we would have it available for our travel shows that we attend during the winter season. Also produced were an updated Golf Guide and Dining Guide.

Heather mentioned that she and Warren will be attending the Catskills Legislative Round Table reception at the Andes Hotel on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

The next TAC meeting will be the Tourism Seminar on May 5<sup>th</sup> at the Villa Vosilla in Tannersville.