



Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: Tuesday, September 30, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.
Historic Catskill Point**

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending –Kevin Lewis, Committee Chairman, Greene County Legislature; Patty Handel, Greene County Legislature, Economic Development and Tourism Committee; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Suzanne Oldakowski, Bavarian Manor Country Inn and Restaurant; Troy Ketcham, Windham Mountain; Brian Christman, Christman’s Windham House; Carol Schreiber, Baumanns Brookside; Betsy Jacks, Thomas Cole House; Bernadette Gavin-Palmieri, Gavins Resort

Legislators in Attendance – Eugene Hatton, Joe Kozloski, Linda Overbaugh

Others in attendance: Kelly Frady & Shelly Cihan from Adworkshop

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

Warren welcomed everyone back from the summer hiatus, and thanked everyone for attending. This month’s meeting was being held at the Historic Catskill Point, and he went on to explain about the use of the building and all of the upgrades and renovations that have been done over the past few years.

Heather talked about the marketing efforts that the tourism office does on behalf of the property. She also mentioned some of the logistics of the Freight Masters Building and Warehouse.

Warren commented that this was like a little mini retreat from our normal office meetings and that we would now be hosting the meeting at various places throughout the County.

Kelly Frady and Shelly Cihan from Adworkshop attended the meeting and presented the 2014 Bi-Annual Marketing Strategy. Kelly gave statistical comparisons from our old website to the new adaptive website, and then gave her presentation. Some of the projects from 2014 were;

- New events photographer
- New adaptive website
- New travel guide & vacation map
 - Vacation map has a wider distribution radius than Travel Guide
- Creation of a film landing page
- The launch of the Kaaterskill Clove website
- PicWithRip Mobile Tour & social media campaign
- 2014 Tourism Seminar

Heather told everyone that we've updated and improved our monthly reporting system with the eventual goal of an integrated report by campaign. Heather also commented that we've added three target markets, who have different travel needs, with the objective being to increase our overnight stays. She also spoke about paid advertising stats that identify the landing page that each goes to. Betsy suggested a thematic one page template for each campaign.

Russ asked the question if the reports can be broken down quarterly or by seasonality. In which they can be.

Shelly Cihan from Adworkshop talked about items such as, direct traffic, organic searches, paid searches, and organic traffic to the site.

Warren stated, "With all the advertising efforts that Adworkshop and our Tourism office does on behalf of the County, attractions like the Kaaterskill Falls are being written up everywhere. It is our top natural attraction in the County". He mentioned the safety issues that have come to the forefront due to the Falls becoming such a popular spot and updates the tourism department has made to bring safety to top of mind for those searching for places to hike in Greene County. In the spring we'll be focusing on safety as part of our outdoor adventure campaigns.

Gene Hatton was wondering if it would be possible to link to the Town and Villages website on the Tourism site, in hopes of motivating them to keep their sites current and up to date. Warren explained to him that we'll be launching a new website for the Buy In Greene, Invest in Greene program, and that's where those links would be placed.

Heather talked about the number of press releases that have been sent out this year so far, which has resulted in eight travel writers that have visited the county thru the end of June. There is a chance that a couple key writers could be coming this fall also. Discussion continued regarding the steps that we take once a travel writer is interested in seeing the area. Warren explained the steps. He also commented "We've seen more focus on travel in general, and we're very pleased".

Russ brought up the subject of actual results for our advertising efforts, and our ROI. How are we doing, and are we driving sales tax revenue? Warren then explained that there is no easy or set formula to calculate this. Destination marketing and advertising is our goal. The four tools currently available to the county include: our performance metrics from the website and public relations; feedback from our tourism partners; state sales tax reporting, though the numbers are not reported in a timely manner, and specific enough for our needs; and the annual tourism visitor spending report. The last time the county conducted a detailed economic impact analysis (Tourism Economics), the results showed that there was a 10 dollar return for every dollar spent on tourism. This is a standard metric that the state tourism associations use and consistent with our findings in Greene. Additionally, the hospitality sector accounts for roughly 10 percent of the revenue of the county's annual budget. We do an exceptional job of tracking and reporting though we all wish we had access to better data.

Heather also mentioned the awareness that the mobile tour has created. This year we invested 10K but may be scaling down next year to focus strictly on assisting visitors with tourism information.

Warren gave a brief overview of staff recommendations for the 2015 priority projects list, consisting of maximizing our advertising efforts, including some international advertising for the Kaaterskill Clove Experience, and taking advantage of our new website and interactive map; a focus on safety for our outdoor adventure campaign; establishing a beverage campaign for our growing number of beer and wine producers; tourism signage for major roads leading in and out of the county; a landing page for film production; and continuation of our mobile campaign. He's made the request to the Legislature for funding for the upcoming year. We will once again give an end of year TAC report to the Legislature. We have rebuilt our brand over the past couple of years, put in place the necessary website and digital marketing tools, and have created more public awareness about Greene County. Heather asked TAC members to come prepared at the next meeting with thoughts on the staff recommendations and a discussion on additional ideas.

The next meeting will be in October 28, hosted by Patty Handel at Blackthorne Resort.