



Greene County Tourism Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

**Date: Tuesday, October 28, 2014 - 9:30 a.m.
Blackthorne Resort**

Attendance:

Committee Members Attending –Patty Handel County Legislature, Economic Development and Tourism Committee; Russ Coloton, Hunter Mountain; Chuck Tomajko, Fairlawn Inn B&B

Legislators in Attendance – Eugene Hatton

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

Warren opened the meeting and thanked Patty Handel for hosting. Warren spoke about the 2015 County budget, and was pleased to say that the TAC funds are included in the 2015 Draft Budget. The County Administrator wanted to reinforce that the promise to increase funding for tourism has been fulfilled and will continue each budget cycle. Warren shared that “the most recent labor department figures reported that Greene County had the highest percentage of job increase in the State, 1.2% which estimates to approximately 300 new jobs”. In 2013, Greene County also had the highest percentage of job increase in rural counties outside of metro areas, 2% or approximately 400 jobs. The increase is not solely due to new businesses opening within the County but also newly created jobs that are needed as part of the tourism industry. Ferguson Enterprise will be opening in 2015 with 100 new jobs. This is just an example that tourism is a driving force within the county and a substantial contributor of tax revenue. The County will be relying heavily on sales tax revenue for the 2015 budget. Warren also expressed how well tourism is doing, with increased overnight stays and the growth of large events contributing to the increase in spending dollars. Over the years, the TAC funding has allowed us additional advertising for broadcast television, adventure tourism advertising, wedding advertising, and the launch of our new adaptive/responsive website launched in April of this year.

Heather added, these funds have allowed us additional opportunities to focus on priority projects, advertising and marketing campaigns, and targeted markets that we would not have otherwise been able to accomplish with our baseline funding. Many of these campaigns have now been integrated into our annual marketing plan.

Heather then went through the Draft 2015 TAC Marketing Campaign and budget allocation figures. As currently proposed, the 2015 TAC Campaign is divided into two categories, being described as new campaigns and a continuation of previous campaigns. The New TAC Campaigns are planned to include: Beverage (Travel); Motorsports/Touring (Outdoor, Travel, Event); and Safety Messaging (Outdoor). The

Continuation TAC Campaigns include: TV Advertising (Skiing & Travel); Weddings (Travel); Mobile Tour (Travel). Each of the campaigns were discussed by Heather and the TAC with the following feedback and comments.

Heather spoke about the creation of a Greene County beverage campaign. Greene County will soon have seven breweries and possibly two wineries for the creation of the campaign. Greene County Tourism will be supporting a dual function with regard to the campaign. The Tourism Office will be creating a landing page, establishing an advertising campaign, a media buy, and any collateral, such as a rack card. The second task will be coordinated with Economic Development and the County Chamber to assist the beverage producers with the establishment of a "beverage trail". Heather explained the steps that are required with the State for the formal approval of a beverage trail. The producers will run the formal trail, and operate as independent entity. To date, Carlo and Dominique DeVito, from Hudson Chatham Winery have been assisting the County and the beverage producers with their knowledge and experience on the formation of beverage trails and marketing of the Hudson Berkshire Beverage Trail. Forming the trail will also entitle the producers and the County to apply for grants. The TAC agreed to the campaign goals.

Heather spoke about the creation of a Greene County Motorsports/Touring Campaign. This campaign will focus primarily on motorcycles and motorsports, both on-road touring and off-road activities, in response to the county's growing market in this segment. It was agreed by the TAC that this is an excellent growth opportunity for the county. A list of current on-road and off-road motorsports activities and events that would be represented through this campaign is included in the PP presentation. It was discussed that a web landing page would be created to represent this segment, establishing one or more driving trails throughout the county, and that advertising funds would be increased to support the campaign. Warren stated the goal is to get more people here to ride and take advantage of our riding related events. We will be creating one or more themed riding trails and driving tours to market with a specific name, like the Tail of the Dragon in North Carolina and the Cabot Trail in Nova Scotia. Gene Hatton mentioned that the Catskill Mountain region has its own legacy and we need a good tag line, similar to Arches National Park, he could envision touring being symbolic of Greene County.

The discussion then turned to the Safety Messaging Theme and tourism safety issues, primarily relating to the Kaaterskill Falls, and the recent events that have taken place during the summer season. Heather talked about the safety message that the tourism office is considering and current research that her department is doing. The goal is to create a catchy tagline that doesn't deter visitors from hiking rather reminds them to be mindful of their surrounding and how to keep themselves safe while hiking. There was considerable discussion on whether safety messaging would create a positive or negative response. The question was also raised as to whether it is the responsibility of County Tourism to be involved in leading a safety theme. Russ Coloton and Patty Handel both weighed in on limiting our role in this. Heather discussed our current safety messaging, what we currently do on our website and how we link to the DEC and the hiking organizations. It was agreed that it would be removed from the TAC budget and treated the same as creative and messaging for the outdoor campaign in the general budget. No additional funds would be used for the safety theme. Safety issues will be addressed on the website

hiking landing page, in partnership with the hiking clubs and organizations, and it will address the different levels of hikes throughout the County.

Gene Hatton suggested that we seek legal advice whether the County or DEC is liable if we decide not to have safety signage on the different hiking trails through the County. It was also discussed and agreed by staff that the advertising for Kaaterskill Falls may have reached a saturation point, and that the Kaaterskill Clove Experience campaign is a good method of dispersing the tourists to all of the stops along the trail.

Discussion ensued regarding the percentage of spending on the campaigns. Russ mentioned the pie only being so big and we need to look at our "low hanging fruit" like motorcycles. It was agreed that an increase percentage of advertising would go towards the two shoulder seasons, spring and fall. A discussion ensued on our target markets, the amount of funds allocated for PPC by ad group, cost per day, and how we breakout the campaigns by demographic, target audience and season.

Heather proceeded with the PowerPoint presentation covering TV advertising, weddings, and the mobile tour. The mobile tour will be scaled down from this past year; we'll still have prizes, more middle of the road ones, and ones that encourage overnight stays. The tour will become more of a mobile visitor center, only going to our top events, and using Twitter to help increase our awareness.

Russ Coloton made the suggestion of tying the mobile tour and our campaigns to the use of discount coupons, or pay-to-play. A discussion took place with many ideas on its merits and how to accomplish this. Heather is going to do look into this further.

Chuck Tomajko mentioned Air B & B, voicing his concerns and the concerns of the state tourism associations over Air B&B's not contributing to sales tax and the difficulties associated with tracking spending and visitor spending. He asked if we could look into state association efforts and possible support of future legislation. Warren agreed to look into this further. Chuck also mentioned and supported the success of the County's Tourism Website Assessment Program, and suggested we consider continuing the program.

Warren briefed the TAC on CATS activities. CATS will be interviewing for a Tourism Agency of Record for 2015 professional services. CATS is doing cooperative advertising in 2015 through ILNY for a Brand USA Campaign with significant international advertising. Heather is providing video and photographic assets. Warren has arranged for CATS to meet with Trip Advisor for development of a 2015 Regional Trip Advisor Catskills Webpage, similar to what the Poconos do as a travel region.

Warren concluded the meeting mentioning that Heather and the team have worked very hard and smart in the April launch of the new tourism website, as well as the soft launch of the new Kaaterskill Clove Experience website in October. He also spoke about the creation of the Business Advisory Committee (BAC) and the funding that the Legislature has committed towards the newly revised Buy in Greene/Invest in Greene campaign. We are still hopeful that the County will also receive additional funding through a CFA Grant that we applied for.

The next meeting will be held on November 25th at Bavarian Manor