

MINUTES

DUTCHESS COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION Tourism Committee

**Thursday, November 18, 2010, 8:30 a.m.
EDC Conference Room
3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie, NY**

Present: L. Pensiero, J. Reynolds, D. DiNapoli, S. Rector, C. Laube, K. Hansen, E. Hayes, B. Krevolin, D. Garry, H. LaVarnway, L. Hubbard

Absent: J. D'Alessandro, P. Feder, D. Garry, M. Kangas, B. Pagano, S. DeKrey, B. Grems, G. Mure, C. North, S. Turk.

Staff Present: M. K. Vrba, L. Higginson, D. Hopper, F. Lauricella, N. Lutz

Welcome, Mary Kay Vrba

The regular meeting of the Tourism Committee was called to order by Mary Kay Vrba at 8:35 a.m. Mary Kay welcomed the committee. The minutes of the September 16, 2010, Tourism Committee meeting were reviewed. A motion to approve the minutes was made by D. DiNapoli, duly seconded by K. Hanson, and accepted. Mary Kay announced that EDC Board member Andrea Reynolds of the Community Foundation will be our new tourism committee chair in January, 2011.

Director's Report, Mary Kay Vrba

- **Matching Funds:** Positive indications we will get Matching funds for 2011, about \$55,000 to be used for advertising. We commit \$10,000 with the other Hudson Valley counties to regional effort
- **New business:** Starting in May with a Mother's Day cruise, Empire Cruise Lines will begin service on their ship the M/V Mystere, out of Waryas Park in Poughkeepsie. Captain Jeff Pyle out of Syracuse is meeting with others to plan dinner, sightseeing themed cruises.
- **New Walkway rack cards and maps:** Map of Walkway has ads from area businesses.
- **Budget:** Dutchess County Executive cut \$50,000 from our current budget, now in front of the DC Legislature. We will not fill the position of tourism resource manager; staff will take on extra duties formerly performed by the late Mary Wright. DCEDC was cut about 15% or \$35,000.
- **Dates to save:**

Tuesday, March 1 is Tourism Lobby Day in Albany; attend meetings with legislators.

Wednesday, March 2, NYS Tourism Conference, with focus on DMO trends, business operations and tourism services.

Tuesday & Wednesday, April 5 & 6, DONYS Group Trade Show. We'll co-sponsor seminar event with Ulster County Tourism on "101 Marketing Tips for Tourism with Social Media" presented by Doug Motel on Wednesday. Tuesday speaker is Peter Pantusso on group market travel trends, perspective on changes, and expectations. There's a two-hour trade show Wednesday afternoon, bringing in 300-400 group leaders. We expect 70 exhibitors, and 25-30 group leaders will stay for post-show FAM trips.

March 8 - National Women's Day, event planned on Walkway Over the Hudson.

May 14-15 - Heritage Weekend 2011

- Travel Guide ads sales are underway. New guide published at end of March.
- Small grants due Dec. 8 from New York State with remainder of Quad funding.
- Bed Tax is up 4.8% over last year.

Report from Deb Garry on 2010 advertising.

Dutchess is diverse, but that can be hard to brand. We want to reach out to a new market and younger audiences.

"Simple and Sophisticated. You Deserve Dutchess." will remain our tagline. It expresses our rural character yet says our offerings are sophisticated; arts, dining, culture. With a reduced budget, still used print media, and got good rates and packages. Facebook ad campaign targeted 30-55 year olds, 12 million impressions paid for click throughs. Can be switched around; we had 4,000 click throughs. Google Analytics said the most clicked-on ad was "Do Wonders for Your Soul". The Clinton wedding helped us out, no doubt, and we saw a 100% increase in views on lodging & dining pages.

Staff Report - DCT Staff

- *Nancy Lutz, Communications Manager.* Just finished successful FAM tour with The CIA, hosted nine travel writers. Spent two days visiting area farms and then cooking what was harvested at a mini CIA Boot Camp. Should result in numerous articles. 12-20 spotlight features posted on website monthly. 340 People Like us on Facebook; about to reach 800 followers on Twitter. 4,159 events viewed in online calendar, which has 907 events. Sent out news releases on Dutchess County Fair; Boxing: Rumble at Renegades; and Farm Fresh Fall Getaways.
- *Lydia Higginson, Deputy Director*
Farm Fresh tours up to 1300 visitors from 582 last year. Juggled 3-4 buses for tours. Surveys said that 95% learned something new and 99% would recommend trip. More young people stayed on their second visit to see Walkway and eat at The CIA. Read letter from Sprout Creek Farm thanking us. USDA grant has ended but is looking at next year's options.
- *Dawn Hopper, travel and tourism manager.*
Experiential video will debut soon. Reviewed what types of tours each site has created for groups. The new video cost \$2,500, so was very low cost. Has been filming this summer and wrapping up soon. User friendly thumb drives are being used to distribute video to group tour operators at NTA and ABA trade shows. Dutchess County is featured in November's Courier magazine.
- *Fred Lauricella, E-Tourism Information Services Manager*
Social media is climbing; visitation was high and will decline in winter. He converted our databases so we can easily update the listings. Pages are up from 5-6 to 21-22 because each section is broken up into more pages. He redesigned the color scheme and headers on website to reflect the agency's ad designs and logo usage.

New Business/Comments

- Linda Hubbard -Attend Mill St. Loft artist talk tonight at 7pm. Theme for the Beacon holidays is "Simple Gifts".
- E. Hayes: Mt. Gulian is reaching a new audience with their new Living History programs, highlighting the site's African American heritage using James Brown's diary. Was interviewed on WAMC radio. Mt Gulian was also featured in *Bride's Magazine* recently.
- Benjamin Krevolin –The arts council was cut severely by the county, by \$150,000. Need arts groups to lobby legislators. Sample letters available to send. Support appreciated.
- Mary Kay Vrba: Harney & Sons opened a retail outlet in NYC this month.

Closing Remarks

The next regular meeting of the Tourism Committee is scheduled for **January 20, 2010, at 9 a.m., in**

the EDC Conference Room, 3 Neptune Road, Poughkeepsie, New York. Note the new time.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:30 a.m.