

# DRAFT

## COUNTY OF OSWEGO Tourism Advisory Council

05/17/2023

Riverside Room, Clarion Hotel and Suites, 70 E. First St., Oswego

<b>MEMBERS PRESENT:</b> Jim Hotchkiss, Chairman Thomas Brown, Hon. Mary Ellen Chesbro, George & Karen DeRousie, Paul Lear, Linda Middleton, Kelly Morrisette, Mercedes Niess, Jennifer Torrese.	<b>STAFF:</b> Tim Stahl, Daniel Breitweg, Jen Longley, Raven Ahart, Lisa Gray, Savannah Wyckoff, David Owens.
<b>GUESTS:</b> Paul Baxter, David Granoff, Josh Ludden, Kelly Miller, Jeff Weigand.	
<b>EXCUSED:</b> Andy Bliss, Eva Corradino, Kristi Eck, Dan Harrington.	
<b>MEDIA:</b>	

Chairman Jim Hotchkiss called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

### 1. Welcome and Introductions:

### 2. Approval of Minutes from April 18, 2023

**Motion to approve minutes:** Mary Ellen Chesbro

**Second:** Linda Middleton

**Vote:** Unanimous, motion carried

### 3. Old Business

- A. Introduction of Tim Stahl, Director of Community Development, Tourism, and Planning:** Daniel B., Deputy Director of Community Development Tourism and Planning(CDTP), introduced the new director of the CDTP department, Tim Stahl. Daniel said micron is on its way and the CDTP department needs more help. Tim thanked everyone for the warm welcome. Tim spoke about his background as a former legislator and committee chair for the Economic Development, Tourism, Planning committee as well as being the director for the city of Oswego’s Community Development Office. Tim announced that Daniel will be the main contact for any tourism activity.
- B. Gun Law resolution:** Daniel said Tim and he have been investigating this issue and have reached out to Paul for further information. Daniel said the gun policy has changed to allow weapons for parades and reenactments. Daniel also said the problem with this new gun law is the transportation of the guns to the travel site. Paul agreed with him. Daniel explained that the gun law is currently in a gray area on transporting guns. He said they are working with other counties and towns to gather information on their policy and plans to solve this. Tim said he reached out to Ogdensburg, which mirrors Oswego County, to ask how they were proceeding. Jim asked if the VFW in Mexico can still carry rifles in the Memorial Day parade, or in solutes at the cemetery. Paul explained that the rules are unclear. Daniel said he spoke with other members at the NYSTIA conference and other historical venues are also struggling with this issue and the “gray area”. Mary Ellen said the resolution should wait until all the facts are gathered. Paul suggested that Tim check with Bob at fort Niagara for a copy of their resolution.
- C. NYSTIA Conference Recap:** Lisa said Oswego County set an attendance record of 212 people at NYSTIA. She also said attendees raved about the food at the conference and how much history the county has, especially in the City of Oswego. Daniel said the conference was very well attended and the attendees he spoke with wanted to come back to visit. He thanked the Broadwells for their hospitality and going above and beyond for this conference. Daniel explained the history bus tour Tuesday night was a huge success, stops were made at the Safe Haven Museum, Fort Ontario, and the H. Lee. White Maritime Museum. Lisa said attendees of the conference were surprised that the Port of Oswego was a working port. Kelly Miller said the NYSTIA conference was a very powerful and positive conference. Jim said the Friday underground railroad history tour was very well attended. He said that normally people leave early

# DRAFT

on the last day of the conference, but people stayed for this tour. Mercedes said that people came to the museums and restaurants in their free time to get a sense of the community beyond the event. Mercedes also said they had a NY Canal meeting that was very well attended during the NYSTIA conference. Jim said Oswego County gave a warm welcome to all the attendees. Mary Ellen said the conference wasn't just about tourism it was an economic development event as well. Following the discussion, Kelly Miller introduced Kaitlyn Dexter, front office manager for BHG, as the point of contact of the hotels.

- D. Brochure Delivery Update:** Raven, Kelly J. and Luke from Planning delivered visitor guides, fishing & hunting guides, history guides, salmon river falls information along with some left-over government directories, throughout the southern part of the county. Raven said all brochures were dropped to hotels, marinas, RV parks/campgrounds, libraries, village offices and more. Lisa, Jen L., and Savannah distributed along the northern end of the county. We still have distribution to do. Mary Ellen asked if our guides are distributed to the Thruway. Lisa said we have some contracts with some of the places on the Thruway, but it is not free, so we must pay to have our guide along that route. Lisa explained we do send guides to our distributors in Pennsylvania, all throughout New York State and more. Mary Ellen explained there is a law on Rte. 81 that you can only distribute your guides in your designated region. Lisa said that we could have the guides there, but they are not allowed to be displayed. She expressed concern that our brochure would only be given out if specifically requested. Lisa said our guides are in Preble, along Rte. 81 and in the past, there was a display in Binghamton but once New York State created regional visitor centers, we were no longer allowed to display our brochures in any area outside our region which has had a negative impact. Lisa also said a lot of the stations on 81 that our guides used to be in have closed, some with plans to reopen but others permanent closure. Mary Ellen asked Tim to consider submitting a resolution about the regional centers that can create positive change for tourism brochure distribution.

#### **4. New Business**

- A. TAC ideas: Themes/Hosts:** David O. talked about changing the TAC meeting to incorporate themes. He explained that it could be a way to increase attendance from different industries. David suggested starting with the Fort Ontario meeting in June when the theme could be history and the fort could have a short history/tourism-related presentation to share with the group. He said another idea was to have breakout brainstorming sessions during the time of the tourism budget to get ideas for spending/marketing campaigns. He said it should be driven by TAC members. Mercedes asked the staff why TAC meetings do not start until March. Jim said because we are waiting for members to be appointed for the TAC year. Tim asked if Mary Ellen could look at the bylaws and see if the appointments could begin earlier in the year. Lisa said not meeting in January and February might be weather related. Paul said he prefers meeting on Wednesdays.

#### **5. Member and Guest Communications:**

1. Jim said the Tin Shop is open and is scheduling tours. He also said the bank will be open for summer or before June 21, 2023.
2. George and Karen D. said the fourth of July fireworks in Brewerton have been scheduled for Monday, July 3, 2023. George distributed a car show event flyer for May 25, 2023. They also requested brochures for the new donut shop in Central Square, Country Glazed.
3. Danielle talked about a women's symposium that will be held at Fort Ontario June 24-25, 2023.
4. Mercedes said the H. Lee White Maritime Museum will be hosting the Lake Ontario Waterfront Festival Saturday, May 20, 2023, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. She said paddlefest is scheduled for July 15, 2023. Mercedes said the Erie Canal hosted event Beer, Bikes, and Barges will be held on June 22, 2023. Murdock's will have bikes for rent if needed. George asked if scooters can be included for people who cannot ride bikes. They can.
5. Tim said the legislature has allocated funds, \$2 million, to upgrade county owned baseballs fields. The fields are located on Churchill Rd. in Oswego. He said six fields will get full upgrades that will expand the baseball/softball tournament season. Tim said 50 teams are expected to travel to Oswego County to use the upgraded facilities. He explained to TAC members that this will have a huge economic impact on our county. Jim asked where the headquarters would be for this facility. Tim said they are still working that out with the

# DRAFT

company, Champion Events. Lisa suggested that we display our visitor guides at the fields. Paul suggested instead we post a QR code on a bulletin board. Jen T. said when her son participates in the tournaments Champion sends all the parents and teams an informational email. Jen T. also suggested sending all our visitor information to parents/teams via email. She said it would eliminate paper flying away. Linda asked where the funds were coming from or if it was a grant. Tim said it is a county investment. Mercedes said the fields have received ARPA funding in the past for netting upgrades. Mercedes asked if Oswego County has enough hotel rooms to accommodate these families. She mentioned that hotels on route 31 are closing. Kelly Miller said there are not enough rooms in our county alone. Mercedes said this could be an opportunity for opening new hotels in our county. Daniel said the problem with building another hotel would be occupancy would be from May to September with an average of 55% all year long. Paul mentioned with micron there will be a collapse of available hotel rooms due to temporary occupancy from workers. Kelly Miller was told there needs to be an occupancy plan for the next four years.

6. Kelly Miller said Harborfest is on schedule for July 27-30.

7. Jim said the village of Mexico has put up 99 hometown hero banners downtown.

## 6. **Adjournment: Tour of Splash Indoor Water Park**

Chairman Jim Hotchkiss adjourned the meeting at 11:08 a.m.

Next meeting will be held **Tuesday, June 20, 2023, 4 p.m. Fort Ontario**, 1 E. Fourth St., Oswego.