

2016 RETREAT MINUTES
FEBRUARY 23, 2016

Present: Roberta Byron-Lockwood, Herb Clark, Phyllis Andrews, Danielle Gaebel, Stacy Cohen, Elaine Fetting, Sims Foster, Franklin Trapp, Paul Carlucci, Jennifer Grimes, Alan Rosenblatt, Richard Glisson, Rick Lander, Darlene Fedun

Absent: Steve Vegliante, Sonja Hedlund, Scott Conley, Elaine Giguere

Introductions were made. Reasons for Absences: Sonja Hedlund had a fall and injured some ribs, Elaine Giguere had a respiratory illness and Scott Conley was away on vacation. There wasn't any communication from Steve Vegliante regarding attendance.

A thank you was extended to Jennifer Grimes for providing the location & food for the day and to Alan Rosenblatt for being our facilitator.

A packet including the Agenda, Review of Last Years Strategies & Tactics, Prospective 2016 Budget and Current Bylaws along with suggested changes/additions.

Roberta reviewed the key developments impacting tourism during the last year:

1) SCVA has had a very successful year and our website, social media, advertising and travel guide have all been well received and resulted in increased interest in the Sullivan County Catskills. We attended, with co-op partners, over 30 shows and hosted many travel writers throughout 2015. The bed tax rose by over 17.6% over the previous year resulting in the highest amount collected in five years. There is less room inventory but a higher collection rate. We will continue to attend IPW and promotions in Brand USA and other publications. Question: What is IPW? It is an international stateside marketplace hosting 68-70 countries. We attend as part of I Love NY and track its success through I Love NY and Brand USA. Attendees are Conventions & Visitors Bureaus and Tourism Promotion Agencies.

2) Z Living (Veria) broke ground at the Kutsher's site. Their soft opening is projected for fall of this year with the full service in 2017.

3) Empire Resorts has received the license in December. Work at the site has been ongoing with a projected opening of March 2018.

4) Adelaar is progressing as well and will be adding a new attraction: Field Station Dinosaur.

5) The Catskill Film Commission is moving forward. There's lots of talent in our own back yard.

6) We have been working with the treasurer to sign up Air B&B properties. This is part of the reason for an increase in last year's bed tax receipts.

7) Hospitality and workforce training – Tourism workers in all areas of public interaction need to be knowledgeable about what the area offers as well as possessing a positive personality.

8) Tourism Action Day is scheduled for March 1 in Albany. Appointments will be held with state elected officials to discuss NYS & Sullivan County tourism issues. Some of those issues were reviewed.

Implications for SCVA:

With the future increase in tourism “inventory”, the SCVA will need to increase all levels of promotion and work toward providing a balance of new tourism businesses working with those currently established businesses.

1) Visitors Center/Experiential Center – We did not win the URI grant. However, we are trying to secure funding through state and federal sources. A rendition of the prospective layout for the Center was distributed. It will have many layers including a Visitors Center and our offices.

2) As we move forward, there will be a need to retain a lawyer for the organizational

3) There will be a need for increased interaction and input from the Board of Directors as well as the members.

4) Additional staff members will be needed.

5) We will need to increase the number of consumer, trade and international (Australia, Germany & China) shows that are attended.

6) There will be a need for a larger PR firm offering a broader range of options.

7) Contracting Agencies

a) Media Solstice has not lived up to expectations and will be let go. We need to put together a short RFP so that we can compare “apples to apples” from prospective agencies.

b) Large Media – There was talk about keeping them on for now. Our Instagram page needs help. It needs more/better content; not just events. We need more input from members. The Marketing Committee will need to meet with the PR firm to let them know the areas that need to be marketed on Instagram, etc.

SCVA Governance (Board Members) - The objective and strategy were reviewed:

Objective: Ensure SCVA maximizes the use of Board members' talents and contributions, the bed tax funding, and terms and length of the SCVA contract with the county.

Strategy: Increase the involvement of Board members within established protocols to ensure effectiveness, address the impact of tourism growth on the bed tax and proactively pursue contract terms.

- 1) Evaluate number of Board members & needed talent pool - The Board of Directors is on track. We have added one additional Board member with two more new members voted in during the election process.
- 2) Review & enforce attendance requirements – Each Board member was given their attendance records over the past year. The prospective bylaws change regarding attendance suggests that Board members must attend 80% of the scheduled meetings (8 of 11). Of these 8 meetings, at least 5 of them must be attended in person while the others may be attended via call-in. Failure to follow these guidelines would result in automatic dismissal. At least two Board members have conflicts with the scheduled day/time: One has to leave prior to 9:30 a.m. and the other has a meeting that occurs on the same day & time. A third Board member would not be able to attend Tuesday meetings during the summer months but Mondays would work better. Discussion ensued about whether to change the day, time (earlier in the morning or later in the day, etc.) The final decision was tabled for further discussion.
- 3) Board members and the Executive Committee will continue to report periodically to the Board.
- 4) The Executive Committee drew up and distributed Board Roles & Responsibilities last year. These will be redistributed to all Board members.
- 5) Board Committees need to be reviewed with appropriate changes to be made to the bylaws. Another option would be to call them “teams” until we have the opportunity to amend the bylaws.
- 6) Franklin Trapp & Elaine Giguere volunteered for the Bylaws Committee.
- 7) There was growth in the bed tax receipts in 2015. It is projected that it will grow to \$1.18 million in 2018 (current is \$693,000).
- 8) Executive Board has been and will continue meeting with the County Treasurer regarding the bed tax collection. Some accommodations (Air B&B, Homeaway.com) have not been collecting the tax and have not registered with the Treasurer. Our summer help worked on contacting the various businesses and many of them then signed up with the Treasurer's office.

9) There was a meeting held with county legislators regarding the SCVA's contract and the possibility of another RFP, etc. We have a good relationship with the county at this time.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

1) Essential functions include:

- a) Financial – We have a part time bookkeeper but may need to expand on the duties/time allotment as the association grows.
- b) Legal – We need to retain an attorney as we move forward with the visitors center and grants. We are currently researching this matter.
- c) Facilities Management – Our needs for a new facility are at least 2,000 square feet of office space, conference room and storage. Our current location is OK for now.

2) Membership Development:

- a) Board of Directors business cards were printed & distributed last year for the Board to use when contacting prospective new members. Business cards will be made for the new Board members. The Board is encouraged to visit their local tourism businesses to encourage SCVA membership.
- b) Jennifer Grimes and Stacy Cohen volunteered to be on the Membership Committee.
- c) We need more member involvement.
- d) Send Constant Contact email at least every two weeks (in addition to the weekly event eblast) with association updates.
- e) Should we have another social media seminar? Perhaps we should poll the membership to obtain their input regarding interest, dates, times, etc. or piggyback on other events (literature exchange, etc.)
- f) We should have several short Sullivan County tourism videos for various uses.
- g) Should we increase membership fee? No, not at this time.

3) Staffing – Job descriptions for current and future employees was distributed. The Executive Board will review the job descriptions.

- a) Number one additional person that we need is a sales person preferably by the end of the summer.

b) The second additional person would be an administrative assistant @ \$30,000 to start.

c) Sims believes that a director of social & digital media is the most important to fill first. Darlene and Richard will send in their job descriptions for this position. Eliminating our outside contractors currently doing our social media would pay for this new position.

4) Committees – The 2015 committees didn't meet and thus were unsuccessful. The most important committees are: Marketing, Strategic Planning, Membership and Finance. Each Chairman will provide the purpose of their committee as it will be stated within the bylaws.

a) Strategic Planning Committee: Elaine Fettig (Chair), Darlene, Sims, Alan

b) Finance Committee: Richard (Chair), Rick, Anna Milucky, Nancy Buck

c) Membership Committee: Jennifer (Chair), Stacy

d) Marketing Committee: Sims (Chair), Paul, Jennifer, Franklin, Danielle

5) SCVA Interface

a) Infrastructure has been on hold till the Casino designations were known. We have done and continue to do everything to secure a new Visitors Center at exit 106. Would we own or lease/rent the new facility? This is still under consideration/discussion. It will be central to the county, close to the highway and the only full service rest area until western part of Rte. 17/86. It will be accessible from both the east and west bound traffic. There will be paid brochure distribution for non-Sullivan County entities (members will be free) as well as paid video display, digital board, and office space rental.

Transportation is an issue but should we spearhead the effort? It is not our job but we should advocate it to the county. In the past they have been more interested in transportation issues regarding seniors and veterans. Perhaps we should meet with Shortline. We need to market more to millennials. Perhaps we could facilitate a jitney (funded by businesses) to transport between villages when there are major events on the same weekend. This would be the job of local chambers to organize this. Was the Eagle Express successful last summer? There were not many users. Problems included drop-off points, pick up issues, signs on the bus made identifying it difficult.

b) Other Organizations

Disney Hospitality Training was completed by Roberta. She is currently outlining a pamphlet to use when training our businesses. We should also get member participation. Should we hold a hospitality seminar at the Literature Exchange? Yes. We should eventually consider hiring someone to go to various chamber meetings to talk

about customer service, sign up businesses for a seminar, etc. This would be a limited time employee.

Proud To Be Sullivan is still going with customer service: “choosing your attitude”. It is made up of volunteers and should be overseen by an organization but not necessarily a chamber.

Mid-Hudson Catskills Regional Economic Council: We did not get the CFA grant but we are still working toward acquiring funding.

Regional Tourism Roundtable: We are moving forward as the Catskill Region which has a website and videos. They meet every couple of months.

Catskill Challenge: Trying to get as much of it as possible to be located in Sullivan County. No date has been set yet (end of June/beginning of July). It would spend one day here to include the Delaware River, Catskill Fly Fishing Center, Bethel Woods for a media/food event.

Sullivan United: We banded together with the IDA, Sullivan Chamber, and Partnership to promote the siting of the casino in Sullivan County.

Trip Advisor: Should we do it? The cost is \$9,000 for our own page plus another \$9,000 in advertising. Too expensive. The Catskill Region did it and it is not drawing what was expected.

Legislative issues were reviewed for next week’s Legislative Action Day in Albany.

Luis Alvarez, Chairman of the Legislature, and Josh Potosek, County Manager, arrived and reviewed the day’s activities/discussions.