



Tourism Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

"Draft – Subject to Board Approval"

Date: Wednesday, November 18, 2015

Location: Empire State Convention Center

Attendance:

TAC Members

Albany: Cristyne Nicholas, Peter Carafano, Jan Chesterton, Nancy Elder, Dan Fuller, Gail Grimmett, Spike Herzig, Tom Mulroy, Thurman Thomas
Phone: Barbaralee Diamonstein-Spielvogel

ESD / NYS Staff

Albany: Howard Zemsky, ESD President & CEO; Lindsey Boylan, ESD Chief of Staff; Rich Newman, EVP State Marketing and Strategy; Gavin Landry, Executive Director of Tourism; Ross Levi, Vice President of Marketing Initiatives; Lisa Soto, Project Manager - Tourism Marketing and Partnerships; Jamin Clemente, Tourism Executive Assistant; Rowena Sahulee, Director of Tourism Marketing, Licensing & PR; Lizete Montiero, Sr. Director of Event Marketing; Ken Wong, Director of Special Events; Tom Regan, ESD Associate Counsel; Betty Enriquez, Director - New York State Office of Trade and Tourism

TAC Guests

Albany: Linda Ayares, Finn Partners; Natasha Caputo, Westchester County Tourism; Lori Van Buren, Times Union; Nellie DiMont, T-Rex Capital Group; Albert Ruiz, jetBlue Airways; George Lence, Nicholas & Lence; Alan Steel, Javits Center; Danielle Roman, Corning & the Southern Finger Lakes (Steuben County); Josiah Brown, NY Welcomes You; Rosemary Lategano, Assemblywoman Markey's office; Sandi Sloane, Senator Little's office

I. Approval of minutes - Cristyne Nicholas

- Motion to approve by Peter Carafano
- Minutes approved with a second by Tom Mulroy

II. Chairman's Report - Cristyne Nicholas

A. Welcome

- We recognize that your time is valuable, therefore we scheduled this meeting on the same day and location as our tourism summit and I hope that you have enjoyed the summit so far.
- Also in the interest of time, this meeting will not be as robust as we are accustomed to, but we will still plan to hear updates from the hard work of our subcommittees and inform you of some of the Fall tourism activities.
- We have to break at 1:05 in order to be back to the summit by 1:15.

B. Winter Media Night

- This year it took place last week at Celsius located in Bryant Park. It was the first time there - a perfect setting, complete with an ice skating rink.
- It was a collaborative effort between I LOVE NY, Ski Association of NY (SANY), and the Olympic Regional Development Association (ORDA).
- There were 12 ski area participants including: Belleayre, Whiteface, Hunter, Bristol, Plattekill, West, Gore, Windham, Catamount, Greek Peak, Thunder Ridge and Mt. Peter
- Reps from 9 regions and cities complemented the ski resorts, including: Adirondacks, Capital-Saratoga, Catskills, Finger Lakes, NYC, Hudson Valley, Buffalo, Rochester, and Syracuse
- A total of 55 media attended including: Frommer's, NBC News, The Huffington Post, Boston Globe, AAA New York, Budget Travel, Examiner, Sports Illustrated, BizBash, and Passport
- Announcements by SANY and ORDA:
 - Guinness World Record Event: January 18, 2016 - world's largest ski & snowboard lesson
 - Winter Jam: Central Park, January 23, 2016
 - Discover NY Ski Day: January 28, 2016
 - I SKI For Free: Third and Fourth Grade program throughout January
- New partnerships between REI and the ILNY Bus:
 - Starting the end of January, new weekday and weekend day trips will take skiers to reoccurring mountains each week - Fridays to Hunter, Saturdays to Plattekill & Sundays to Belleayre -- and an overnight trip will be available to Whiteface Mountain/Lake Placid



**Empire State
Development**

- REI will promote the ILNY bus to their members and customers through in-store promotions, email offers and ski visit information on their website.
- Olympic Bronze medalist, Jamie Greubel Poser attended the event and there was a display of a bobsled and Buffalo ice bike that generated interest and social media coverage
- At the end of the night we had 132 attendees and everyone did a great job
- C. Ride the Catskills - On October 23, the governor led a motorcycle ride through the Catskills, which ended with a press conference announcing a series of initiatives to promote the Catskill region. Announcements included:
 - The first Annual Catskill Challenge to be held in Summer 2016 modeled after the Adirondack Challenge to promote tourism and showcase all of the recreational opportunities the region has to offer, including fly fishing, paddling, hiking and mountain biking.
 - \$5 Million Catskill Region Tourism Ad Campaign to promote all the Catskills region offers to visitors from around the world. The campaign will feature TV ads, expanded service for the I LOVE NY bus, a Catskills concierge program with New York City hotels and extensive marketing to tour operators and travel agents in key markets including China, Australia, UK, Germany and Canada.
 - \$7.3 Million project to transform Minnewaska State Park that will include:
 - A new 6,000 square-foot visitor center with exhibit space, classroom space, public bathrooms, and park offices.
 - A new 50-person capacity warming hut/pavilion
 - Improved parking areas and a redesigned main entrance
 - A new “Ride the Catskills” tourism website that features a series of itineraries and trips for visitors to enjoy the pristine beauty of the Catskill Mountain region by motorcycle, car and bike as well as through other outdoor adventures.
 - It connects scenic locations and outdoor recreation activities with dining, shopping and lodging opportunities in the region.

III. Executive Director Report - Gavin Landry

- A. Puerto Rico office opening
 - We recently opened an office in Puerto Rico with the hard work of Lizete Monteiro, Patrick Drake, Betty Enrique who will head up the office, and others
 - Our team worked with the Department of Agriculture and Markets to establish our presence there and we are all excited about how we can work together to help NYS and Puerto Rico
- B. WTM London
 - We had a tremendous showing in London a couple of weeks ago with a delegation of about 60 people at the World Travel Mart – one of the largest trade shows of its type.
 - We met with travel agencies, tour operators and media, and hosted a lunch with 40 people
 - One of the learnings from WTM is that the online travel agencies are now starting to think about allocating room inventory to tour operators and working with them, which has been difficult because of commission structures, etc.
 - This is an encouraging development for us because of the way that the foreign, independent travelers are unbundling and becoming more independent and not group based.
 - The rise of self-driving and independent transportation is the reason that you heard the focus this morning on transportation in NYS and why it is so important
- C. Industry Conferences
 - Ross and I gave updates at the Campground Owners of NY conference last week and at the Tourism Industry Association Conference last month.
 - Our focus was to provide updates and garner support from the industry on what we are working on as well as collaborating with them on ideas and finding out what they feel are important issues moving forward, such as infrastructure and transportation.
- D. Assembly Tourism Hearing
 - Ross and I testified at the Assembly Tourism hearing last week in NYC at the request of Assemblywoman Markey.
 - We received good feedback and broad support for the work that we are all doing here.

- The governor has changed the game for our efforts and our ability to go out there and let people know about the things we are working on that make a difference.

IV. Remarks from ESD Commissioner Howard Zemsky

- I wanted to thank all of you. I know you put a lot of time and effort in and it's extremely helpful and we use your input in terms of developing policies.
- Tourism is hugely impactful in NYS and we all want to grow this industry
- NYS leads in tourism, foreign direct investment, and international students and that is not a coincidence because they are all interconnected
- The governor is extremely focused on this and I want to thank you for helping to advance his agenda to grow the upstate economy through tourism
- I am also proud of our ESD team who has no bigger priority than to continue to work collaboratively with the industry to drive upstate tourism
- You have a well-established track record and brand. The governor is behind you, ESD is behind you and we look forward to continuing to work together.

V. Subcommittee Updates

A. Hospitality and Infrastructure - Jan Chesterton

- We now have edited and consolidated down our draft report to about nine pages with six pages of attachments
- It looks at the need surrounding lodging investments and infrastructure. Our goal was to think about how initiatives, funds, partnerships, and other support that the state could provide would encourage investors and developers to improve and increase development in areas of need.
- The report focuses on four areas:
 - An examination of the REDC process and awards, and how it could be best utilized to increase lodging
 - Discussions with hotel executives on their experiences and observations on lodging development and needs, including the role of as smaller chain luxury hotel brands and limited service hotels
 - Success stories such as the Syracuse Inner Harbor Hotel project
 - The obstacles encountered at the local and state level that range from securing finances, to getting through local ordinances, to municipal rules and regulations
- Ideas:
 - A state facilitator / liaison position to assist in navigating the development process
 - The state could develop, implement, and facilitate tax credits, public /private partnerships, or other incentives

B. Aviation and Transportation - Gail Grimmett

- The committee is finishing the data collection of the top origins of where people travel in NYS, the number of available seats to each of the top destinations, scheduled service, frequencies, etc. in order to understand the needs of each region.
- A statewide survey is being drafted with pre-populated information about air service, rail, access roads, and road infrastructure needs, which will be sent out to the regions. They will be asked to identify up to three transportation or infrastructure needs that they feel are necessary to address.
- Once we receive the surveys back in the first quarter of 2016, we will compile into a report with recommendations based on the data and surveys.

C. Sports and Special Events - Thurman Thomas

- Since our last update, we have followed up with the sports commissions on some of their deliverables as well as some of our own.
- One of our tasks was to engage SUNY to see if there was a way to work with them to utilize their facilities more effectively and competitively. We have sent a letter to SUNY Chancellor Zimpher requesting a meeting to discuss how we can overcome some of the obstacles encountered by the sports commissions as they go through the bidding process. We also wanted to talk about ways to collaborate that can be mutually beneficial to SUNY, tourism in NY and the entire state.
- The sports commission group has been expanded to include representation from the North Country, Central NY and Hudson Valley.

- The sports commissions have sent us information on the site selection process and it is being compiled into a presentation that we hope to share with you at the next meeting.
- We are also compiling a statewide inventory of sports venues in order to determine the types and sizes of events to pursue in each region.
- The sports commissions have shared a study with us that looks at sports commissions in other states that they will use to develop a proposed structure for a statewide alliance.
- Other items that we are still working towards are assistance with the CFA process and specific FAM tours for sports and event venue search committees to familiarize them with the venues and supporting assets in NYS. Both of these require a little more thought and planning in terms of how to implement.

CHAIRWOMAN NICHOLAS:

- The subcommittee process is an ongoing one, and at the next meeting, it will be good to look at the subcommittees' work in light of issues and developments brought up at the Summit.
- One of the things that came up this morning is the need for a funding stream for applications, so let's hope that we hear more about that today or at the next summit.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

CHAIRWOMAN NICHOLAS:

- Your packets contain a list of all of the meetings for 2016

TOM MULROY:

- Media nights have been great and very well received. Everyone should go.

Meeting adjourned: 1:00pm