

SULLIVAN COUNTY VISITORS ASSOCIATION MINUTES
BOARD RETREAT NOTES
March 27, 2018

Present: Paul Carlucci, Paul Ciliberto, Stacy Cohen, Sims Foster, Elaine Giguere, Jennifer Grimes, Tanya Hahn, Abhay Jain, Rick Lander, Alan Rosenblatt, Franklin Trapp, Phil Vallone, Donna Hemmer, Ira Steingart, Luis Alvarez, Keith Pomakoy, Anne Dubrovsky, Danielle Gaebel, Roberta Byron-Lockwood, Herb Clark, Holly Gassler, Lori Solomon

Absent: Charlie Degliomini, Randy Resnick, Diane Riegal

Excused: Shannon McSweeney, Brian Rourke

AGENDA

Introductions:

Roberta called the meeting to order at 9:35am starting with introductions. She welcomed Lori Solomon as our new Director of Business Development. She also thanked Jennifer Grimes for securing Land's End for the day and extended gratitude to Alan Rosenblatt, SCVA co-chair, to once again lead and facilitate the retreat. The group participated in an "Acronym Game"

A Little Bit of Context:

Alan presented historical information highlighting room tax collected over the last ten years. Additional information was presented showing how Sullivan County compared to 10 other NY Counties regarding room tax rates, collections, relationships with the county and visitor centers.

Financial:

Tanya & Herb reviewed future room tax projections. It was concluded that they be revised to maintain the average room rate at \$150 but lower the occupancy rate from 60% to 40%. Tanya recommended that SCVA should look in to establishing a Line of Credit anticipating unexpected cash flow requirements in pursuit of a new Visitors Center. Tanya will obtain quotes and provide a status report at the next Board Meeting. Financial procedures and processes will continue as is for the upcoming year.

Human Resources:

Alan recommended that a specific HR Committee is no longer necessary. The majority of HR structures, procedures and process have been implemented. Office staff & the executive committee will address future HR requirements.

Board of Directors:

Alan emphasized the importance of the Board Committees. (Current Committee members attached.) He noted that with the projected future growth in room tax, board members would be called upon to be increasingly involved our organization. We will continue to ensure the board is comprised of members with the requisite skill sets, business and geographical representation.

Elaine indicated that the By-Laws would be finalized shortly. With some fine-tuning and an overview by SCVA's attorney they should be completed by the next board meeting. The County legislature will be updated regarding changes as appropriate.

Contract with The County:

Alan noted that with the projected increases in room tax collections, it is critical we maintain an informative and transparent relationship with the county. In person contact, both at meetings and one on one settings, will be key to ensure a sound relationship.

Members:

Together with SUNY Sullivan and SC BOCES, SCVA will seek an additional summer intern for the sole purpose of bringing in membership. It is important that the individual in this position has goals and meets or exceeds them. All Board Members were on board with asking Sal Scancarello of Scancarello & Son's to join the membership committee as he has expressed interest. Roberta emphasized the importance of continuing the steady rise of the memberships. Procedurally, everything will remain as is for the upcoming year.

Relationships:

Guest, Danielle Gaebel spoke about Hospitality Training that SCVA, together with outside knowledgeable resources, will be rolling out along with several upcoming social media workshops. This supports the importance of relationships with our members and the community as well as the importance of front-line staff to focus on the customer journey and customer experience. SCVA will be rolling out the Hospitality Training at its annual Literature Exchange. SCVA will be offering trainers to conduct on-site sessions for members. Non-Members will be offered the training, for a fee.

SUNY Sullivan Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, Keith Pomakoy, Ph.D. arrived and spoke regarding the important partnership between SUNY Sullivan & SCVA. SUNY Sullivan will be rolling out "Sullivan Hospitality Institute" this fall.

Facilities:

SCVA is looking into other areas for the new visitor's center in the Town of Thompson and at Exit 106. SCVA has approached homeowners at exit 106 to purchase their house. Next steps include an appraisal & a perk test at the exit 106 house location. Ira Steingart & Luis Alvarez joined the group in the afternoon. They reinforced The County's desire to support a visitor's center and hoped it would be completed as soon as possible.

Marketing:

Sims' stated SCVA's marketing strategy was to build on the "momentum" of the many accomplishments over the last several years such as the new website, new branding and expansion on a variety social media platforms. In addition, Sims suggested we want visitors to have an emotional connection to the Sullivan Catskills that would create a multigenerational desire to eat, stay & play here for years to come.

Anne Dubrovsky of Fisher Mears Associates presented the Board Members with "Sullivan Catskills: Carrying the Brand Forward" incorporating a bolder approach utilizing stronger colors in our ad's as well as the new banners. Fisher Mears & SCVA are already working on the 2019 Travel Guide.

SCVA has extended their advertising contract with Bold Gold Media Group, which covers New York, Pennsylvania & Connecticut. General Manager, Paul Ciliberto encouraged all Board Members to come in and record a commercial for the "Sullivan Catskills Proud" campaign that is now going into its second year.

SCVA has contracted with a Videographer. Nick Piatek will be creating an “Authentic Sullivan Catskills Experience” with 30, 60 & 90-second videos of Art & Culture, Adventure In & Out and Dining. SCVA has also contracted with a Photographer. Jerry Cohen will take more seasonal photos of the Sullivan Catskills. These will be uploaded to SCVA’s pixie set account.

Danielle Gaebel manages SCVAs’ social media; she has kicked off “Facebook Live” which covered Livingston Manor Ice Carnival, Roscoe Beer’s Annual Beer Fest, The Dancing Cat Saloon & The Sugar Houses. The response has been very positive. On Instagram, SCVA has approximately 5000 followers, all-organic.

Next Meeting: April 24, 2018

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 4:03pm with a motion by Stacy Cohen and a second by Paul Ciliberto, all in favor. Motion carries.

Respectfully Submitted,
Holly Gassler