I. CALL TO ORDER

Ms. Lattimer called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

II. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: APPROVING THE MINUTES OF THE AUGUST 4, 2021, MEETING MADE BY MRS. LANDO, SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

III. DEPARTMENTAL REQUESTS

A. Planning

1. Bid Award – CDBG Grant Administration – Mr. Sousa informed the committee that they put out an RFP for CDBG Grant Administration for the Woodlands Community project and three responses were received. He recommended awarding to the low bidder, Labella. He noted Labella is more than qualified for this project and they did the grant administration for Round 1 of this project and the Woodlands Community has their engineer on retainer.

MOTION: AWARDING THE RFP FOR CDBG GRANT ADMINISTRATION FOR THE WOODLANDS COMMUNITY PROJECT TO THE LOW BIDDER, LABELLA MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MRS. FERRATELLA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

2. Designation of Certifying Officer for CDBG Grants – Mr. Sousa stated we need to designate a certifying officer, which would be him, for two CDBG grant projects for the purposes of environmental review. The two projects are the Woodlands Community Development project and the well and septic project.

3. Proposed Re-Allocation of CDBG Funds – Mr. Sousa requested authorization to re-allocate a portion of CDBG funds to assist homeowners affected by the recent flooding. We have $264,600 remaining in the line item for mobile home replacement and he requested authorization to re-allocate $100,000 from that into the rehabilitation line item. These funds will go directly to individuals that have been affected by the flooding and help with the rehabilitation work to their homes. He stated he spoke with Mr. Marshall about this.

Mr. Van Etten asked how will people know where to apply? Mr. Sousa stated Mr. Marshall will send the information to Catholic Charities and he is also in touch with Arbor. Mr. Wheeler explained we direct people to the 2-1-1 helpline and then they will funnel them to the appropriate agency.

Mr. Sousa explained we will still have $260,000 in the mobile home rehabilitation line. We have a wait list and there will be a new round of funding coming up in the future.

MOTION: AUTHORIZING THE PLANNING DIRECTOR TO RE-ALLOCATE $100,000 FROM THE CDBG MOBILE HOME REPLACEMENT LINE ITEM TO THE CDBG REHABILITATION LINE ITEM TO ASSIST INDIVIDUALS AFFECTED BY THE RECENT FLOODING MADE BY MRS. FERRATELLA. SECONDED BY MRS. LANDO. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

IV. OUTSIDE AGENCIES
A. Finger Lakes Tourism Alliance
   1. 2022 Budget Presentation – Ms. Kimble stated they did produce a documentary about the Finger Lakes Region which was aired on WXXI and was paid for by I Love New York funds. The documentary was aired in August 2020. Early this year we learned that when they held the NYS Broadcasting awards, our documentary is being nominated for a NYS Emmy. If that wins, then we will go to California for the national honor. This particular documentary was released across all PBS stations nationwide. Ms. Kimble stated that with regard to requests to have travel guides mailed, I can tell you the stations where the documentary was aired. Right now the documentary is being aired in the Minnesota area and last week we received 98 requests for our travel guide from that area. This does have an impact on what people are thinking about.

Ms. Kimble stated another project we have been working on is the Finger Lakes being designated as a National Heritage Area and I want to thank you for your support. Across the 14-county region, all of our State and Federal lawmakers have issued a letter of support for this project. Those letters of support went to the National Park Service. We have done everything we can to provide the National Park Service with everything they need to make us worthy of this designation. The National Park Service will make their final recommendation later this year. Come December 31st, when the recommendation occurs, our process will not be done. They will push their recommendation to Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. and we will need our representatives to carry forth the bill. It then has to become law. We have our representatives lined up and we hope this bill will get passed. President Biden is very familiar with the Finger Lakes region. This process will take another year to two years. We started this process in 2014. I would like to thank all of my committees and you, for the support and help.

Ms. Kimble stated our website, www.fingerlakes.org, as of June 30, 2021, had 637,000 page views. Our visitations are on track to outpace 2020. We produced our travel guide and had distributed 93,000 by June 30th. We have 440 guides left. We will start collecting requests for next year and will be looking at increasing the number we produce. Our guide is also available digitally. We did send printed guides to the New York State Fair and those ran out yesterday.
Ms. Kimble stated we did attend trade shows. We attended a virtual trade show with the American Bus Association. The International PowWow was attended in person. For any trade show we attend, we also include the Steuben County Conference & Visitors’ Bureau guide. She commented the RV and camping market is doing well.

Ms. Kimble stated with our Book A Room feature on our website, there were 2,700 referrals to Steuben County properties. Our website lists every single county property and we do not charge for that.

Ms. Kimble stated the pandemic changed how people are traveling and for 2022 we will continue to be nimble. We will continue to work cooperatively with Finger Lakes Wine Country and will work hard to avoid duplication of effort. For the region, as of June 30th, we are not yet back to our pre-pandemic numbers. Based on trending numbers, consumer confidence, fuel prices and pent up demand for travel, I think tourism will continue to rebound in 2022 and will be a huge economic driver. Fuel prices are a key component. As the fuel price goes up, visitation to our region goes up. We are in close proximity to millions of people that may forgo long distance travel. When fuel prices decrease, we do see a decrease in travel. We will continue to focus on our website. We will also continue to work on the National Heritage Area Designation and secure support at the Federal level to keep that moving forward. Ms. Kimble stated the way people are shopping and vacationing has changed. We are working to attract our Canadian visitors; that was a huge miss in 2020 and 2021, to not have them here. We are also applying for grants to go after the Israeli and German markets. These markets have been targeted because of their vaccination rates as well as what they are looking to do. We also have submitted an application to just target the Washington, D.C. area and this will allow us to go into the Washington, D.C. area to track our return on investment.

Ms. Kimble stated the funding you provide us is used to produce the travel guide. It is also used for the Book A Room widget which has very high traffic and includes the Steuben County Conference & Visitors’ Bureau information as well as a group travel planner. The Conference & Visitors’ Bureau has their own page on our website and one of the most visited pages is the events page where they can post events with no fee. We make that option available to the Conference & Visitors’ Bureau as part of the investment. We have also included Steuben County in our social media efforts. This funding helps us leverage grants.

Mr. Van Etten stated your request is for $19,500. What is your budget? Ms. Kimble replied our budget without grants is $500,000. With grants it is $1 million. Mrs. Lando asked how many staff do you have? Ms. Kimble replied we have 2.5 and are looking to bring on one more person, but at this point cannot get any applicants.

B. Finger Lakes Wine Country
   1. 2022 Budget Request – Mrs. Ward stated I would like to thank Mr. Wheeler and Mrs. Smith as they have done a yeoman’s duty reporting back to us on COVID and recommendations. I used a lot of that information for our #MaskUpFLX campaign and our #VaxUpFLX campaign; both of which were picked up by the CDC in Washington, D.C., and they mimicked ours for their national campaign. Anything we can do to help motivate vaccinations, please contact me. You might ask why we got involved with these campaigns and that is because we are the brand for the 5-county region. Steuben is the key county and the largest in Finger Lakes Wine Country with Keuka Lake, Corning, Hornell, Hammondsport, etc.

Mrs. Ward stated I submitted my request and provided a digital copy of our annual report. This morning I have handed out our printed version. I would encourage you to use that as your decision making tool for funding. Pages 40 and 45 talk about the Finger Lakes. It is important that our communities know and understand that they are part of Finger Lakes Wine Country and their backyard is amazing and is a place that people from all over the world come to visit. We have earned and owned media and we are trying to convince individuals to make the decision to come here. She stated we have bloggers tell us their own stories and those stories are significant. We have 13,000 followers on Instagram, 76,000 followers on Facebook and 11,000 followers on Twitter. We have the largest social media presence of any winery in the United States.
Mrs. Ward stated for 2022, we are requesting a return to the $95,000 funding that we asked for in 2021. From 2014 to 2020 the County had generously granted Finger Lakes Wine Country $105,000 each year. The key to the money that comes from the County is that every single penny is matched dollar for dollar by Corning Enterprises. So, if you give $100,000 it is actually $200,000. Any reduction in the request is doubled and any increase in the request is doubled. Our 2022 budget draft is $770,600. Approximately 78 percent of revenues received go directly into marketing to our paid media in Philadelphia, New Jersey, Buffalo, Scranton, etc. We are looking into new marketing efforts; looking at where our travelers are coming from, what they are doing and how they are doing it. We do a marketing plan quarterly now and change them monthly because of the rapid changes in tourism and travel sentiment. Everything comes down to the reach and frequency. With our advertising campaigns, most have enough reach. That is the main reason we are here today. Without the revenues granted to us by the County, that reach and frequency is challenged. Our request is for a $95,000 investment for 2022.

Mrs. Lando asked are all five counties contributing to your budget? Mrs. Ward replied yes. We are able to work with I Love New York and get matching funds. Chemung County is having a difficult time making the dollars work and they received matching funds from I Love New York. They are using some of their ARPA funds to make us whole for 2020. All five counties are supporting us. She stated with staffing, there are two of us that do what we do for Finger Lakes Wine Country.

C. Steuben County Conference & Visitors’ Bureau

1. 2022 Budget Request – Mr. Costello stated today he has two requests; one for the 2022 budget and the second for ARPA funds. Last year we submitted a request at a very conservative level which was 42 percent less than the previous year, knowing the negative impact COVID would have. In 2019 sales tax collections were $1 million and in 2020 they were $614,000. The impact was two-fold. In order for the county to balance the budget, we pulled $360,000 out of our reserves to balance the room tax and that left $250,000 in our reserve. I am asking for $350,000 which is a decrease for this fiscal year. Now that there is an opportunity for rescue funds, we could use some to rebalance our reserves to account for the $360,000 that was used as our rainy day fund for us and the other organizations. I am asking to use that funding to bring our reserve back to where it was pre-COVID. This will allow us to balance our budget from last year where we had self-imposed a 42 percent decrease. We would propose using that funding to resource our fund balance and we would do that over two fiscal periods. We would use $150,000 in the current fiscal year to bring in more people to stay. We would do that using a digital campaign and also to hire a PR firm for a 12-month period. We would invest in photography and videography and additionally use the funds to offset costs for our contract with the research firm Zartico. Mr. Costello stated we would add the ARPA money into our request to keep another conservative request year. We know with the Delta variant there may be a downturn and we are asking for $685,000 from room tax dollars. We feel this is a conservative ask and it will allow us to put money back into our reserve fund. The room tax collections are exceeding what was budgeted for this current year. Mr. Costello stated according to Smith Travel Research, last July we exceeded 60 percent occupancy and the average daily rate was above $110 per room and that is sales tax money. The expectation is next year will not be on par with 2019, but be about 10 percent off.

Ms. Lattimer asked are you asking for $350,000 to go back to your reserve? Mr. Costello replied yes, to be paid over a two year cycle with $150,000 for the current year and $200,000 for the next fiscal year. The numbers quoted are from Mrs. Hurd-Harvey at the Finance Office in terms of collections you have received at the County level.

Mrs. Lando asked can you provide us with a quick summary of your activities? Mr. Costello replied we continue to contract with Zartico and they are collecting data on a daily basis. We also have a contract with UberMedia which is a mobile phone tracking software. We can see how our advertising campaign is matching up with where people are coming from. Last year the short-term rental industry did a lot of business. This year, there are fewer reservations and I think that is because the average daily rates increased from $200 per night to $325 per night. We are looking at our research and working hard with our digital advertising and website. With our visit widget we have produced a digital trip planner and app and we are moving away from the traditional printed product. We are steering people to download the app. We also have our Craft Your Adventure app. Mr. Costello stated we are partnering with other organizations like the Gaffer District. He stated he is regularly working with the 11

Agriculture, Industry & Planning
Wednesday, September 1, 2021
counties in the Southern Tier on a water trail project. We received a grant from the National Park Service and they are helping us to write a plan to connect access points for canoes and kayaks. There will be an application for an EDA or ARC grant to create the water trail. Finger Lakes Farm Country has partnered with Finger Lakes Wine Country and Steuben County Cooperative Extension to get a grant to create an agri-tourism trail. We will be using our visitor app to roll that out in anticipation of the fall season.

Mr. Van Etten stated in your draft budget you are requesting funds to go from $412,500 back up to $685,000 from room tax. Mr. Costello stated yes. Mr. Van Etten stated you are requesting $200,000 to go into your budget from ARPA funding. Mr. Costello stated that is correct. Mr. Van Etten asked what if the ARPA funding does not happen? Mr. Costello replied we would be shortchanging ourselves about $200,000. Mr. Van Etten stated in budget year 2021 we gave $412,500 but you show a miscellaneous income of $183,000 that isn’t in the previous year or next year. Where did that miscellaneous income come from? Mr. Costello replied that is a carryover from 2020 that we didn’t spend. We did submit two requests for Payroll Protection funds and did receive a grant from the State in the amount of $40,000 for the last two quarters of this fiscal year. Mr. Van Etten asked at the end of 2021, do you anticipate a carryover? Mr. Costello replied we still haven’t gotten our PPP forgiveness year and have not received the money from the State. Potentially, yes.

Ms. Lattimer thanked all of the agencies for their requests.

MOTION: TO ADJOURN MADE BY MRS. LANDO. SECONDED BY MR. HANNA. ALL BEING IN FAVOR. MOTION CARRIES 5-0.

Respectfully Submitted by

Amanda L. Chapman
Deputy Clerk
Steuben County Legislature

**NEXT MEETING SCHEDULED FOR**
Wednesday, October 6, 2021
9:00 a.m.

Please send agenda items to the Clerk of the Legislature’s Office
NO LATER THAN NOON
Wednesday, September 29, 2021