

ERIE-NIAGARA REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP

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MEMORANDUM

To: Co-Chairs Clyde Burmaster & Barry Weinstein, MD

From: Tourism & Culture Chair David Lacki

Re: January 2007 Meeting

Date: February 2, 2007

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met January 5, 2007 at the Buffalo Niagara Convention & Visitors Bureau (BNCVB). Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Lacki, Lawson, Praetzel, and Percy, as well as Arts & Economic Prosperity Steering Group member David Granville, and NYS Music Fund Steering Group members Denise Botticelli-Ambrusko and David Marzo.

February 2 General Meeting Agenda:

As was decided at the December 2006 general meeting, each general meeting will now focus on one of the four main foci of ENRP. Tourism and culture will kick things off for 2007, and as such the subcommittee was asked to help form the agenda for the meeting. The Niagara University College of Hospitality and Tourism Management will host the meeting, and the keynote speaker will be Mr. Eddie Friel, currently in residence at the college. The subcommittee finalized their portion of the agenda and sent it on to the co-chairs for approval.

Arts and Economic Prosperity Project:

The survey of organizations was completed. Through our efforts we reached a completion rate of 33 percent, which is in line with other participating communities.

A full court press has been on throughout the holiday season to collect audience surveys, the final part of our efforts on this project. The goal here is 800 surveys, with no more than 50 coming from any one venue. At least 13 venues will be visited by volunteers from the BNCVB, NTCC, Niagara University, and AmeriCorps during January and early February. That said, reaching the target of 800 will be very difficult. We are collecting fewer per venue than expected, which is indicative of a troubling trend – audiences are

down in most of the venues we are visiting. We will continue our efforts and attempt to get as close as possible to the goal. Even if we fall a little short, the subcommittee is comfortable that the surveys collected offer an accurate representation of the region's venues in terms of diversity of size, discipline, and geography.

Outreach continues with other similar efforts. The project formerly known as the Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative – now called the Advancing the Arts Initiative – is being funded by the Oishei Foundation and largely being conducted by NU. We are sharing information with this effort. An executive director for the AAI will soon be hired, and the subcommittee will reach out to that person for collaboration.

New York State Music Fund

We got the grant! We were notified in late December that the BNCVB (lead applicant and fiscal agent for the project), ENRP, and the Music Is Art Foundation (Robbie Takac's group) received a \$90,000 grant through the New York State Music Fund. The fund was created by Attorney General Eliot Spitzer from the payola settlement with record companies and radio stations.

Our successful project is entitled "Bringing the Big Easy to Buffalo-Niagara." It will be a series of events, beginning in April 2007 to coincide with the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival and concluding on or around February 5, 2008 – Mardi Gras Day. For each event in the series, a New Orleans or Louisiana musician or band will be brought in to conduct a music education program at a local school. This will mainly occur in Buffalo and Niagara Falls public schools, but not exclusively so. We will then try to do some community event or performance with the artist. In the evening there will be a ticketed concert with the artist. Since the grant and sponsorships are paying their fee, all revenue would be profit. That profit would be used to purchase instruments for donation to the Buffalo and Niagara Falls public schools.

There are four distinct benefits to the project: the music education component; the instrument donation; the exposure of this community to a culture and music under-represented; and the employment of musicians still adversely affected by Katrina.

The grant was written by ENRP and submitted on September 12 in the amount of \$109,000 (of a total budget of \$437,180; the remainder being in-kind and sponsorships). As the actual award was \$19,000 less than that submitted, the subcommittee approved several changes to the grant budget. Most notably, there will now be 9 events as opposed to the original plan of 11. The two being cut are July and August, as those months would have been the most

difficult for the education component. The revenue piece for the BNCVB, ENRP, and Music Is Art has been retained, though at slightly lower levels. As to the revenue, the subcommittee voted to release the administrative payments quarterly to the three parties, beginning upon receipt of the grant. Further, for the ENRP revenue, the subcommittee voted to allocate this revenue as an additional staff payment, above and beyond the base hours for the executive director. This payment will be made as a flat rate payment as opposed to hourly, as the executive director is expected to put in as much time as necessary to achieve success on the project.

The subcommittee continues to work diligently on many aspects of the project, especially on sponsorships. Cash sponsorships are needed for each of the concerts, and in-kind sponsorships are needed for hotel, media, ground and air transportation, catering, printing, etc. Please see the attached sponsor profile, and please feel free to give it to anyone who might be interested.

At a late January work session a tentative schedule of artists and venues was distributed. This will be shared when it is finalized. The subcommittee set a target date of March 20 to announce the series.

The subcommittee can use all the help they can get on this project, so please let the executive director or subcommittee chair know if you would like to assist in any way.

Other Topics:

Other topics discussed included the March 22 Arts Council arts awards.