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Memorandum

To: ENRP Co-Chairs Sean O'Connor & Barry Weinstein, MD

From: Tourism & Culture Chair Robert Blanchard

Re: November 2003 meeting

Date: December 5, 2003

The Erie-Niagara Regional Partnership's Tourism & Culture Subcommittee met November 13 at the Buffalo Niagara CVB. Present for the meeting were subcommittee members Blanchard, Lawson, Geiger (proxy), and Rosenwasser.

Tourist Signage

At the June 6 general meeting approval was granted to offer the ENRP's services to the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative to act as the implementer of a comprehensive attraction sign program for Erie and Niagara Counties. Efforts to that end should commence after the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative's final report comes out at the end of the year.

In the meantime, a pilot project for the City of Buffalo has been ongoing this year. We were at the point where signs could be produced and installed, but then the city decided to take another look at engineering issues on which they were previously silent. Their new report should have been completed by the September general meeting, but they were non-responsive until early November, at which point they said they needed more time for the re-engineering to be done. We will actively pursue the completion of their work, as it is this work that needs to be done in order to commence the re-design of the signs to their specifications.

Subcommittee chair Blanchard spoke with the Niagara Falls Hotel Association, and they are eager to see the results of the pilot project.

For the comprehensive project, we will need to secure the support of the local delegation to the New York State Legislature in order to get the signs placed on state highways and roads. Likewise, we'll need support from municipalities for signs on their roads.

The subcommittee will work in conjunction with an effort for wayfinding signs being conducted by the Buffalo-Niagara CVB.

Buffalo Niagara Cultural Tourism Initiative

Following last year's issuance of the report, "Cultural Tourism in The Buffalo-Niagara Region: Developing A Comprehensive Plan Phase 1: Inventory of Cultural Tourism Planning Initiatives, Recommendations for Pursuing a Comprehensive Plan," the UB Institute for Local Governance and Regional Growth, through funding from the John R. Oishei Foundation and Erie County, has begun the next phase of the Regional Cultural Tourism Initiative.

Work is being done by three subcommittees – capacity building, marketing, and implementation. Subcommittee Chair Blanchard is also chairing the Initiative's implementation subcommittee; ENRP Administrator Tod A. Kniazuk is acting as the group's representative, and several ENRP members are present to represent their various organizations. The project has moved into a strategy phase, and is on track to have a set of recommendations – in the form of a comprehensive plan for cultural tourism – ready by the end of the year for implementation in 2004. The aforementioned tourist signage project will be one of those recommendations.

The draft report will be released at a meeting on December 4. We will update the membership on this report at the December general meeting.

Buffalo-Niagara Tourist Transportation

Following approval from the general membership to offer ENRP's support to the BNCVB in the creation of a tourist transportation link between Buffalo and Niagara Falls, it was conveyed to the BNCVB that we would like to be involved. We are awaiting the first meeting of their task group on the issue.

In the meantime, possible stops, routes, and funding sources were discussed. It would seem logical to make the Niagara Falls stop the casino, which could also be a potential source of funding. The Market Arcade was suggested for the Buffalo stop, but alternatives to this location are desired.

Other Issues

Other issues discussed included proposed New York State "Culture Zone" legislation, and the three-year Route 290 construction project.