

## Community Feedback & Discussion Notes

### Community Forum on Events. 1/26/15 Lake Placid Conference Center

Dean opened the Forum with an overview of the goals of the Lake Placid/North Elba Community Development Commission. He shared a brief history of comprehensive plans and how they have addressed events in the past. The 2014 comprehensive plan manages events in three categories; showcase events such as World Cups and Goodwill Games, participatory events such as Ironman, hockey tournaments, and marathons, and Festival type events like Songs of the Lake, and the BBQ festival. There is consideration in the plan focused on the quality of life for our residents. Some of the other goals on events are to reconstitute the ORDA advisory committee or create another entity that evaluates past events and sets criteria for future events. The plan also sets a goal to develop more local community events. After this introduction, the committee opened the floor to forum.

- What happened to the events committee?
  - o The general consensus was that the committee fizzled out. There was no official dissolving of it, it just lost some momentum and stopped meeting
  - o The committee consisted of representatives from ORDA, town of North Elba, village of Lake Placid, ROOST, local schools and folks involved in infrastructure
  - o They had a checklist with which they evaluated events after completion.
  
- Feedback from the events committee was very valuable when Songs of the Lake was a growing organization.
  - o We need a similar committee to help guide new and foster new organizations and initiatives.
  - o Community events would be most helped by having a place for idea development and germination. Experienced community members that can steer and help in the development of smaller scale events.
  - o Small groups are looking for both guidance and encouragement.
  
- The sports council used to fulfill some of that mission?
  - o The ORDA community advisory council should consist of 5 reps from ORDA and 10 from the community.
  - o It is in the very early stages of reformation. Joe Lamb was the president, but just resigned so they need to regroup a bit. One of their primary goals is to promote international events, but they are also looking to bring people together from the community.
  
- The event industry has changed dramatically in the last ten years.
  - o It is no longer the case that you can pick an event and get it
  - o There is a competitive element to attracting events. Often several communities will be vying for the same events.
  - o Events are asking: What is the town or village willing to do for the event?
  - o Events are looking for incentives.
  - o Similar challenges are present with procurement of conventions.
  
- We have significant challenges to face when attracting events.
  - o We are at a disadvantage with our distance to transportation hubs and availability of corporate sponsors
  - o We often can't afford to offer the housing and infrastructure other communities can offer events.

- Some of this “disadvantages” are also what makes Lake Placid what it is and allows us to maintain our small town feel and close link to the environment.
- Should we be looking at smaller events?
  - It may not be the size, but the kind of event we need to consider attracting. Many of our discussions focus on attracting sporting events.
  - We need to work on creating a full menu of events that includes the arts, food and restaurant events, and community based events.
    - We do have a new event: EAT ADK coming May 13-22! Initiative created by Paul Smith’s College Students in cooperation with area restaurants.
- We need to focus on long range planning to stay competitive, including considerations of transportation, rooms and infrastructure.
  - It is becoming common practice for large events to be planned 5-7 out.
  - Younger, urban demographics are not travelling by car or coming long distances
  - We need to consider what we need in 2020 to stay competitive.
- Once an event is procured, how do we manage the community and environmental impact?
  - Do we need some kind of formal process to evaluate and not impact on economy, population and the environment?
  - Many other communities have mission statements of environmental accountability, such as being carbon neutral. Some have standards or expectations they set out to incoming events.
  - Do or can these expectations lay out guidelines to cover traffic, police force usage, etc..
  - There is an amazing diversity of these standards from community to community throughout North America.
- We haven’t talked about our amazing volunteer base as a marketable asset.
  - Community has a unique history of volunteerism.
  - Community is willing/able to come together at short notice such as this holiday season when we struggled with unpleasant weather. The community found a way to welcome engage visitors despite the lack of snow.
- Many of our area surveys note that a majority of our visitors are here for the surrounding environment. Do we need to focus on attracting visitors for those reasons as opposed to events?
- We are an event driven community.
  - Many people don’t realize we host events at least 40 weekends a year.
  - Hockey tournaments take place 23 weeks a year.
  - These events are providing an economic boon that our surrounding communities don’t benefit from despite having a similarly beautiful environment.
  - These events are what set us apart and keep us alive economically.

- We need to appreciate and encourage our current grassroots events those still developing.
  - Songs of the Lake is a great example of this
  - Mt. Bike groups are starting to make LP a mountain bike destination and continue to expand area trails.
  
- We also need to look at these matters regionally. What surrounding communities can be partnered with to develop events that utilize a broader footprint.
  
- New members to our community noted they are generally impressed with the diversity of events we do have.
  - It is a great asset to have 2-3 different events on any given weekend. So, if one family member is here for hockey, the rest of the family might be engaged in another event or festival.
  - Often is difficult to keep track and know what's going on outside of the local paper.
  
- The community news concept could solve our communication/marketing challenges.
  - Many people don't look at the local paper, especially visitors.
  - We need a user-friendly outlet to promote both large and small events.
  - The community news model is one of the commission's projects – we are still looking for the right people to spearhead & develop it.
  
- We need to be prepared and ahead of the issues related to climate change and how they will affect our ability to be competitive in the events market.
  - This holiday season was a good example of this
  - While many of our more robust events take place in the summer, our identity is still strongly linked with winter sports.
  
- We need to be willing to make significant investments to stay competitive in international winter sports.
  - We upgraded the luge and bobsled tracks
  - We spent \$300, 000 in a short period of time to make new lacrosse fields and that event has grown substantially.
  
- The ski jumps are the next investment we need to make.
  - We need a new jump to host many international events, including youth games
  - Need to have Nordic tracks in the same venue as the jumps. Many competitions are going to smaller loops. Trails need to be promoted at the jumps.
  - 1K to 1.5K loops are spectator friendly and becoming the norm.
  - Innsbruck invested in a jump and attracts large competitions and has a restaurant venue on top
    - That venue is mostly used only for one comp a year because they truck in the snow... We have the advantage of a higher attitude
    - We do have a rental space there that is used much more than people realize for parties, weddings, etc.
    - We need to advertise these options better, such as using the luge-bobrun for events, etc...

- The oval is another place we could make significant investment to have the facilities to make it a hub or centerpiece of the community and utilized more often.
- Do we ever say “NO” to events?
  - ORDA says we refuse events all the time. Many events that pitch for our facilities are just not a match.
- What does the Development Commission hope to get out of this forum?
  - In this point of the discussion we already have some actionable items:
    - Event committee needs to happen, especially because we don’t have a very locally oriented chamber of commerce.
    - Community blast/email or better, centralized marketing for all the events we do have is a priority. Maybe we need to consider an App to engage younger audiences, but the idea of the information coming directly to the subscribers email is appealing.
- How do we mitigate some of the problems we do have?
  - Resident feedback on what events they do want/what their issues are
  - Clear expectations on details like crossing guards for busy oval events
- Many communities face event fatigue – how do we manage that?
  - Preservation of event diversity
  - Preservation of some quieter weekends
  - Promotion of arts and food events
  - Promotion of community events
- Community needs to realize that while we are a winter sports town, the winter events are not the money makers.
  - World Cup and International events cost us money, but we get international coverage in return. We need this ongoing promotion.
  - Sometimes we have to create our events, but these are risky, we are gambling on drawing an audience and it doesn’t always happen.
  - Events that come with their own audience are low risk, like conventions.
  - Pay to Play type events are becoming a more viable option. This year’s Empire State Games raised the cost to participate, but has grown.
- Community needs to be mindful that some of these events create an audience for life. A family may initially come for Can Am, but then continue to visit long after their association with hockey.
- We need to engage a younger volunteer and organizational base.
  - The young professionals group is a good example, but we need to encourage task-oriented involvement.
- A recent NY Times article discussed the advantages of hosting smaller feeder type events around larger events. Food events around an existing sports events, etc...

- We need to do a better job of educating visitors as to who we are and what are goals and priorities are.
  - More educational interfaces between visitors and residents
  - People should understand and appreciate the place they are visiting.
  - It is the responsibility of the community to reach out. Many of our athletes and NGBs are not necessarily grounded or based here.