Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday, January 10, 2024 – 5:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair

Peter Champagne

Alex McConnon

**Absent:**

Nick Salvadore

Jasmine Bell

**Guests:**

Irene and Joe Peterson, Zaza Ink

Linda Cocalis, Town Resident and Sturbridge Board of Health Chair

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

The meeting was opened at 5:35 pm by Chair Quigley

**Approval of STA Minutes**

**Approval of September 13, 2023 Minutes**

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|  **Motion:** | To approve STA Minutes for September 13, 2023  |
|  | BY P Champagne SECOND: S Gibson-Quigley |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Champagne, McConnon, Gibson-Quigley |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

 **Approval of October 13, 2023 Minutes**

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|  **Motion:** | To approve STA Minutes for October 13 2023 |
|  | BY: A McConnon SECOND: S Gibson-Quigley |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Approval of December 13, 2023 Minutes**

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|  **Motion:** | To approve STA Minutes for December 13, 2023 |
|  | BY: P Champagne SECOND: A McConnon |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**STA Tourism Grants**

Zaza Ink Tattoo Festival

Joe and Irene Peterson spoke with the STA about their interest in obtaining some grant assistance for their annual tattoo event. Their events have hosted 200 artists with attendance ranging from 3000 to 5000 people. Their event is also a hotel room generator with some staying 3 to 4 nights. Their interest in receiving grant support is partly due to increased exhibit fees. Joe noted that most attendees visit from Connecticut and Worcester. In response to a question Joe and Irene noted that there are several forms of advertising. Radio has not been far reaching but billboards have had good reach along with digital ads. Linda Cocalis, town resident and Chair of the Sturbridge Health Board praised the festival and noted that it generates $12,500 in fees. Pete Champagne also praised the quality and foot traffic from the festival.

 **Approval of Tourism Grant**

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|  **Motion:** | To award the ZaZa Ink Tattoo Festival $5,000 to support their advertising expenses from the Marketing Advertising Account FY24 |
|  | BY: P Champagne SECOND: A McConnon |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Discussion About Marketing Goals for 2024**

Sarah Martin of BTI spoke with the STA about what goals Sturbridge should have for marketing and promotion into 2024. Sarah framed the conversation as a “Customer Journey” with a process defined as “Dream…Plan…Book….Experience and Sharing”. A strategy for Sturbridge was identified as a goal in these discussions.

Pete offered a list of his views on Sturbridge:

1. OSV is the Town’s main attraction.
2. Food and beverage is a major asset for the Town.
3. Day trippers are a large segment.
4. Business travelers as well.
5. The visitor base is primarily a 1 to 3 hour car ride from Sturbridge.
6. The Brimfield shows are positive.
7. Trails are an attraction.

Sandy noted that the Brimfield Shows, weddings are a large attraction and those who travel and use Sturbridge as a mid-point destination to stay over or meet friends and family. Alex noted the value of bakeries such as the Publick House bakery and that the Worcester market had audience value and was close to Sturbridge.

Sarah raised the standard that goals should be “metric driven”. As an example, there were 34,000 visits to the ExStur web site in 2023. Sandy and Pete asked the question of what percentage of locals visited the web site versus visitors from the Hartford, Albany and Berkshire regions? After more general conversation there was agreement to continue the discussion at the February 28, 2024 meeting.

**Next Meeting and Adjournment**

 Wednesday, February 28, 2024

 5:30PM

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|  **Motion:** | To Adjourn at 7:00  |
|  | BY P Champagne SECOND: S Gibson Quigley |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |