Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

Regular Meeting

# 6 May 2020, 6:00pm

Remote Meeting – Go to Meeting

**Members Present**:   
Brian Amedy, Chair  
Tom Chamberland, Vice-Chair  
Nick Salvador  
Dawn Merriman  
Jeff Ardis

**Staff Present**:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

**Chair Amedy went over the agenda items.**

**Mr. Bridges read the following statement:** \*Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting law, G.L. c. 30A Section 18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Sturbridge Tourist Association will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.  Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation can be found on the Town’s website at <https://www.sturbridge.gov/town-administrator/pages/how-access-virtual-meeting>.  For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen and or watch the meeting either online via the Town’s on demand video broadcast, on cable television on channel 191, or dial into the meeting at 774-304-1455, enter 1428# for the meeting number and 12345 for the access code.  (This phone number is only active for the public during public meetings).  No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means.  In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post of the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes from March 11 2020 meeting**

**Motion: To approve the minutes from March 11, 2020 By: Chair Amedy  
2nd: Jeff Ardis  
Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: OBSTAINED   
Vote 4-0-1 (Tom Chamberland Abstained)**

**Treasurers Report**

Chair Amedy explained that without Kevin Filchak being an employee of the Town any longer, it is the responsibility of the Sturbridge Tourist Association to populate the Treasures report. Chair Amedy explained that Vice Chair, Tom Chamberland, helped out a lot with the report. Vice Chair Chamberland went over the report with the Sturbridge Tourist Association by sharing his screen, and going through the line items. The committee discussed the report and the bills that had been paid by Kevin Filchak prior to him leaving.

**Motion: To approve the budget as of May 1, 2020 By: Dawn Merriman  
2nd: Nick Salvadore  
Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: YES**

**All in Favor 5-0**

**Geo Fest Funding Request – Alix McNitt**

Alix McNitt was invited to the meeting, however she has been furloughed and Chair Amedy has reached out to Paulette Hughes, a staff member at the Chamber, to advise there would be a meeting to discuss this item. Chair Amedy explained that the amount Alix McNitt is looking for is $2,850.00. He mentioned that this event does not make money for the Town, so he would like to know what the committee wants to do about it. Nick Salvadore wondered if the money was being funded back to the Chamber. Chair Amedy stated that the money would be given back to the Chamber. Vice Chair Chamberland stated that he is not sure they will be able to hold this event considering it most likely would have upwards to 500 people, and with the current circumstances and social distancing the event would be difficult and he doesn’t know if the event can go on. Dawn Merriman stated that they would have to eliminate the large group portion of the event and if they did they could still continue to hold the event, and in her opinion, even if the event isn’t making the Town money, it would still be bringing people into Town, even virtually, and likely making the local businesses money. Chair Amedy mentioned that they had already given $1,300.00 to Alix McNitt and he wondered if that would be enough for her to hold the event. Dawn Merriman stated that she is not sure how much it costs to hold a virtual event, but the $1,300.00 may be just what she needs. Jeff Ardis stated that he doesn’t think that this event is going to happen, he thinks the money they have already allocated is fine, but he does not believe they should allocate more money for a watered down event that likely will not happen.

**Motion: To deny the application for additional funds for the Geo Fest in July By: Vice Chair Chamberland**

**2nd: Jeff Ardis**

**Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: YES**

**All in Favor 5-0**

**Update on Visitor Guide**

Chair Amedy informed the committee that the deadline was extended until May 15th. He stated the responses have been slow and people have been hard to get a hold of. He said he will circle back around June 1st and keep on top of this item.

**Update on Discover Central Mass**

Chair Amedy informed the committee that there was a change at Discover Central Mass, stating that Stephanie Ramey is no longer there, and she is now the president of the Worcester Railers. Chair Amedy has reached out to Monique Messier, who is temporarily filling in, about the money left unspent but he has not yet heard back. He said the Sturbridge Tourist Association has $3,500.00 of money left to spend. Chair Amedy said most of the money is spent on marketing. He stated that this money may remain unspent.

**Business of the Year- Discussion on Marketing Extension**

Chair Amedy stated that Jeff Bridges received an email from the Comfort Inn asking if the money for marketing could be extended past June 30th. He stated that everything else is being extended, so they should probably extend it for them.

Vice Chair Chamberland stated that at their next meeting they should vote to encumber any outstanding balances.

**Approval of Invoice for STR Report**

Chair Amedy mentioned that for fiscal year 2021 they should create a line item for this.

**Motion: To pay the STR report for the amount of $1,650.00 out of community support By: Vice Chair Chamberland**

**2nd: Jeff Ardis**

**Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: YES**

**All in Favor 5-0**

**FY21 Budget & Economic Development / Tourism Position – Jeff Bridges**

Jeff Bridges informed the committee that he proposed to the Board of Selectmen the position of Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator be increased to full time. He proposed to the Chair of the Sturbridge Tourism Association that the difference in cost for salary be paid from the STA budget out of hotel money. He stated that the difference is $17,000.00 between benefits and payroll. The position would now be 37.5 hours per week.

Estimated budget for FY21 is:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Community Support | $ 30,000.00 |
| Marketing | $ 95,948.00 |
| Salaries/Wages | $ 33,350.00 |
| Employee Benefits | $ 17,066.00 |
| Total | $ 176,364.00 |

**Motion: To accept the new STA budget as presented by the Town Administrator By: Vice Chair Chamberland**

**2nd: Dawn Merriman**

**Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: YES**

**All in Favor 5-0**

**Open the Door- Discussion on Marketing & Branding Draft**

The committee discussed the Marketing and Branding Draft. They agreed that a digital aspect is import, especially given the current circumstances with the virus going on. They mentioned that they will have to continue with other channels because not all of the community will be up to speed digitally. Chair Amedy stated that they have to make a decision on the tag line and how they want to go on the branding end of things. The committee discussed if the person hired for the Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator will be responsible for the website and social media. They decided once they hire the individual they will see what qualifications they hold and what they are able to complete.

**Next Meeting Date**

The committee agreed to hold their next meeting on Wednesday May 20th at 6:30pm.

Jeff Bridges informed the committee that a survey went out to local businesses. The survey was to see how business have been affected by COVID-19. He stated that he received 40 survey’s back. He went over the responses with the committee. Overall, 87.5% of the businesses have been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Adjourn**

**Motion: To adjourn at 7:45pm By: Vice Chair Chamberland**

**2nd: Dawn Merriman**

**Roll Call Vote: Brian Amedy: YES, Dawn Merriman: YES, Nick Salvadore: YES, Jeff Ardis: YES, Tom Chamberland: YES**

**All in Favor 5-0**

**Minutes Prepared By: Andrea Mensen**

**Clerk of the Board: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**