



Sturbridge Tourist Association

A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge

Regular Meeting

11 March 2020, 6:00pm

301 Main Street, Center Office Building, 2nd Floor Meeting Room

Members Present: Brian Amedy (BA), Chair; Jeff Ardis (JA); Nick Salvadore (NS); Dawn Merriman (DM)

Members Absent: Tom Chamberland, Vice-Chair (Excused)

Staff Present: Kevin Filchak (KF), Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator (EDTC)

Guests Present: Wendy Collins (WC); Ed Hood (EH); Amy Connery (AC)

1. **Call to Order** – BA called the meeting to order at 6:00pm, a quorum of members was present.
2. **Review of Previous Minutes – 12 February 2020** – *BA MOVED to accept the minutes as presented, DM seconded. APPROVED (3-0-1)*, NS abstained as he was absent from the previous minutes.
3. **Treasurers Report** – KF presented the March budget figures to members. *BA MOVED to accept the budget as presented, DM seconded. APPROVED (4-0)*.
4. **Old Business** –
 - a. **Funding Application – Second Review** –
 - i. **Opacum Land Trust** – AC and EH representing Opacum Land Trust (OLT). BA welcomed and gave a brief overview of the TourOpacum Event. AC provided a more specific overview of the program by explaining the organizational mission and scope of Opacum. AC explained that the goal of the TourOpacum event is to help fundraise for the OLT. She explained that thanks to the STA's funding in 2018, the participation for the event increased; however without the STA's funding participation did not increase in 2019. AC noted that the long term goal for this event is to hit one-thousand riders and to do that they need funding. The hope for the event is to advertise to the larger New England region and in doing so increase ridership for it. BA noted that the event now takes place in Brimfield, but that Sturbridge could still see some revenue benefits. BA explained how the STA receives its funding from the hotel/motel tax, and asked OLT that if the funding is approved, that they provide the STA with data showing what amount of riders are staying overnight in town. BA also said that it is important to know zip codes and email addresses so that the STA can see that in the post reports. EH said that while they moved the event to Brimfield, it was done so at the

recommendation of Rapscaillon as they had outgrown that site; EH also noted that Rapscaillon is still greatly involved in the planning of the event. NS asked how many repeat riders there were between 2018 and 2019, AC estimated that about half returned, noted that this year the timing of the event will be after the 4th of July holiday and as such should be higher. She also said that they are using the online program 'Bike Reg' which gives OLT better data on the riders. She continued that they do have same day registration and that data is not included in that 'Bike Reg' information. Members had a general discussion on recording ridership. NS asked about the 2020 rider and budget numbers presented, AC said that the numbers presented to the STA members are projected numbers. NS asked the members about the amount projected participants and comparing that to the amount requested by OLT. BA discussed the challenges of projected numbers for events and how they build events. BA asked if there are any anticipated problems with the timing of the event with the Brimfield Antique Show, AC said no and there have not been problems previously. DM asked about the professional bike repair, and asked Opacum had they asked this business about donating their time. Members had general discussion on the bike repair costs. JA noted that the request this year was lower than OLT's previous request which is a positive. JA also said that it was noticeable how little the event grew without STA funding support. JA said that paying to grow the event through marketing has a positive return, versus paying for event magnets. BA talked about the value of marketing versus paying for an event. BA emphasized that the more information that the STA gets about what the riders do in Town, especially if they spend money in Town. EH noted that a fair number of TourOpacum riders come from the metro-Boston area and that was thanked in key part to advertising. General discussion on data from events. NS asked if there is a post-evaluation for riders, AC said that they did that two years ago but not last year. AC said that they intend to bring the evaluation back in 2020. General discussion on FY 2020 budget. *BA MOVED to allocate \$5,112 from Marketing and \$1,372 from Community Support to fund the Opacum Land Trust's, 'Tour Opacum' event. DM seconded. APPROVED (4-0). AC and EH left.*

- ii. **Great New England Craft and Artisan Shows** – WC representing. BA gave a general overview of the event and that this event takes place in FY 2021; he explained that since the FY 2021 budget is not yet supported by either the STA or the Finance Committee/Board of Selectmen, the STA will hold off on approving funding (pending Town Meeting approval) until that support is received. WC explained that Jody Donahue [the applicant] has been holding similar shows in New Hampshire three times a year for the past several years. She explained that previously there had been a similar show in Sturbridge, but that it stopped a few years ago. It is Ms. Donahue's hope to bring the artisan show back to Sturbridge. BA noted that as this is a new event it is missing some of the common data that other applicants might have. WC estimated that about ninety-percent of the vendors will stay overnight for the event, for a minimum of twenty-four rooms with approximately \$119 per night. BA asked about

patrons/vendors eating at the venue, WC said that most eat elsewhere as food is not provided in any great quantities. BA asked if a survey could be done with the vendors to gain more information on the events participants, then asking if the patrons were expected to be locals or tourists. WC said some will come from Connecticut and New York so it is expected that many will attend from all over. WC said that the artisans who are coming to the event are nationally known and will draw crowds. BA asked about advertising, WC explained the various publications that the show advertises in. Additionally she said that the vendors are given show cards that they hand out at other national shows promoting the event. BA asked if there is a following for these types of events, WC said yes. NS asked for more clarification on the types of vendors at the show, WC explained the variety of vendors who will participate in the show. NS asked what the admission costs for the show will be, WC said \$6. WC said that the artists will donate a door prize for the show and through that the show could collect data on the patrons of the show. JA asked about the partnerships with community businesses and if that was done with the group's New Hampshire show, WC said yes. Members had a general discussion on partnering with local businesses. BA noted that the Host Hotel has been sold, leading to a general discussion on the Host Hotel and hosting shows in the region. BA said that this item will be placed on the May agenda for approval of funds. *BA MOVED to table this application until the May meeting. NS seconded. APPROVED (4-0).* WC left.

- b. **FY 2021 Budget Approval** – KF provided members with an overview of the proposed budget, and the updates to the budget definition. NS MOVED to adopt the fiscal year 2021 budget as presented and to submit said budget to the Finance Director and the Town Administrator for inclusion in the FY 2021 Town Meeting Warrant, and to accept the changes to the definitions as proposed, DM seconded. APPROVED (4-0).

JA asked a general question to KF about Open Meeting law, and how the STA reviews and debates funding applications. Members had a general discussion on how the STA talks about its review of applications. Members also discussed the position of the STA on funding nonprofit organizations. Members had a lengthy discussion concerning how to adequately discuss the value of each application.

- c. **Branding and Marketing Update** – KF provided members with an overview of the consultant's presented work. BA and KF both noted that they had mixed feelings about the presented taglines, noting similarities to other local organizations as well as their wordiness. General discussion on the value of the various taglines presented by consultant. NS liked 'Discover Sturbridge,' DM voiced support for 'In the heart of it all.' NS asked if it would be wrong to have a tagline that is similar to others; DM said that that could lead to cross messaging. Members talked generally about having the town become the 'hub and spoke' for the region. NS liked the idea of 'explore' or 'experience.' JA said that 'discover' is also important. BA suggested, 'Discover Sturbridge, at the center of it all.' General discussion on various taglines. 'Explore, enjoy, experience Sturbridge,' was suggested by a local business owner and members supported it. NS asked if the STA

could ask for more taglines, KF said yes. NS suggested, 'Sturbridge, explore the town next door.' Members agreed the presented taglines were too similar to others and that the business owners / NS's ideas were closer to what they were looking for.

KF gave overview of the logo. BA noted that TC's preferences were for logo options #3 and #1. DM noted concerns with logo option #4, BA noted challenges with logo option #5 being in cursive. Members had extensive discussion on the different fonts and background images. Members concurred with logo option #1 font. JA asked members if logo option #4 would be more favorable if the letters were more proportional. NS asked if the tagline would be superimposed over the picture or if the map would be included in any marketing pictures used. KF provided feedback from the Chamber of Commerce on the challenges of picking a logo without knowing the audience. Members had a general discussion on the AAA Travel Show. KF said he would share members feedback with the consultant.

- d. **Restaurant Week** – BA provided group with an overview of the efforts to promote this event. KF gave an overview of where the advertising has been placed locally and regionally.

5. **New Business** –

a. **Funding Application – First Review** –

- i. **Jaguar Association of New England** – BA gave overview of the event, noting that this event has been level funded for years. DM noted that this event collects no profits or revenues to support itself. DM also asked if the STA could just buy a tent for the event. General discussion on the impact of the event overall. BA noted that he would like to know what the room rate is for the event. DM asked if there are organizational membership dues and if those could be put towards the purchase of a tent. JA asked if the Association differentiated between revenues and profits. Members expressed support for the event but discussed lowering the funding. KF reviewed the questions with the members. Members concurred to review this application again in May.
- ii. **Herbfest** – BA provided an overview of Herbfest. BA asked what part of the funding for this event will be spent in the current fiscal year versus FY 2021. General discussion on the event budget. BA noted that the 2019 Herbfest was a successful event, but that the STA would like to know more about the patrons of the event. Members discussed available funding for the remainder of FY 2020. DM asked if the event is not expecting to make any revenues, but that the event is reinvesting any revenues from the show, what is being funding by those revenues. DM asked broadly how the STA should identify a tourism event versus a community event, BA said that the applicant must do a better job capturing that data. Members concurred to invite the applicant to the next meeting of the STA.

- iii. **Sturbridge Historical Society** – BA gave an overview of the Colonial Drill and Muster event. JA asked how many people come to this event. BA said that information is unknown but that they can ask the applicant. *JA MOVED to approve \$500 from the Community Support line item to fund the annual 1775 Colonial Drill and Muster event on the Town Common, BA seconded. APPROVED (4-0).*
- iv. **Weathervane Enterprises, Inc. (The Antique Collectibles Show)** – BA gave an overview of the application, noting that the request is for FY 2021. BA noted the increase in the request matched the increase in the size of the show, providing a history of the show. Members reviewed the post event evaluation for the 2020 show. DM asked if the revenues from the 2020 show are going to pay for the unfunded part of the Host Hotel fees, and asked where did the revenues from the 2020 show go; it was noted that vendors are also charged a registration fee. BA said that the fee information is missing. Members asked KF to ask the applicant what is the special room rate for the event, and where to the revenues from the vendors go.
6. **EDTC Report** – KF gave a broad overview of his report and members discussed.
7. **Next Meeting** – Members decided that the next meeting should take place on 8 April 2020 at 6pm.
8. **Adjourn** - *BA MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:15pm, DM seconded. APPROVED (4-0).*

Respectfully Submitted:

Kevin Filchak, M.P.A.