Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Meeting**

April 14, 2021 - 6:30pm

Remote Meeting – Go to Meeting

**Members Present**:   
Brian Amedy, Chair  
Tom Chamberland, Vice Chair

Nick Salvadore

Dawn Merriman  
Jeff Ardis

**Staff Present**:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Guests:**

Sarah Greene, Sturbridge Herbfest

Wendy Collins, Doll, Bear and Miniature Show

**Meeting Open**

Chair Amedy opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. by reading the disclaimer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

\*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 10, 2021 Meeting**

DM noted that the Minutes should change New England Seafood to Sturbridge Seafood.

**Motion:** To approve March 10, 2021 Minutes

**By:** T. Chamberland **Second**: D. Merriman

**Call Vote: Yes:** Brian Amedy, Dawn Merriman, Jeff Ardis

**Vote:**  Approved 5-0-1

**Treasurer’s Report**

TM opened his report by reviewing the Excel STA Report.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Account** | **Avail 03/08/21** |
| Community Support | 30,000.00 |
| Marketing/Advertising | 45,494.00 |
| Benefits | 14,609.40 |
| Salaries/Wages | 20,170.27 |
| **Totals:** | **110,273.67** |
| **FY20 Encumbered** | **1,146.00** |

TM reported the status of the following financial items:

* Payment Processed and Paid: $5,900 from OSV for final payment to Break the Ice Media.
* Pending: $1,000 BOY Award to Sturbridge Seafood
* Future Expense: $1650 ($1800 Budgeted) for STR subscription & $250 annual membership to DCM.

There was some conversation about the $1,000 marketing award to Escape the Pike which has remained on the STA budget reports with an unexpended grant balance of $142.50. TM noted that he has left a phone message with the owner in early April.

**Treasurer’s Report Approval**

TC moved that the February 2021 Treasurer’s Report be approved.

**Motion By:**  Vice Chair Chamberland **Second:** Nick Salvadore

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Ardis, Chamberland, Salvadore

**Vote:** Approved 5-0

**Approval Annual Membership to Discover Central Massachusetts (DCM)**

**Motion By:** TC moved to expend $250 from Community Support to DCM **Second:** Dawn Merriman

**Call Vote:**  Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman, Salvadore and Ardis

**Vote:** Approved 5-0

TM noted that a payment of $1650 would be processed to STR for their quarterly hotel occupancy reports.

**Discussion of STA Assistance Grants**

The STA members reviewed the following applications:

Herbfest October 2, 2021

Sally Greene attended the meeting on behalf of Herbfest. BA noted that the Herbfest event will be in October which is in the next fiscal year (FY) but some expenses will be incurred this FY 2021. BA and JB conversed about when actual funding balances will be known for the FY 2022 budget. JB said that May may be a good time. BA asked Sally to embed the STA logo and the new Experience Sturbridge brand logo along with a disclaimer on all Herbfest advertising. Sally said she would comply with this request but up until now she had no knowledge of this. BA also noted that STA funding for events was based on hotel tax revenues so hotel room generation was an important criterion for grants.

**Grant Award to Herbfest –** (FY 2021 Budget)

TC moved that $869.00 be debited from Marketing and Advertising to pay for (3) ads In the amounts of:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Amount** | **FY** |
| Ad – Wisdom | $219 | 2021 |
| Ad – Stonebridge Press | $400 | 2021 |
| Ad- Misc Ads | $250 | 2021 |
|  |  |  |

And that these ads possess the STA logo, disclaimer and Experience Sturbridge brand

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| --- | --- |
| **Motion By** | Vice Chair Chamberland |
| **Second:** | Dawn Merriman |
| **Call Vote** | Yes: BA TC JA DM NS |
| **Vote:** | 5-0 |

BA opened the conversation by noting that there would be 3 to 4 more applications arriving and that there should be an awareness that there are less dollars to grant these events. BA also noted that there should be a broader game plan that balances the funds available with the expenses for the web site, a potential purchase of the Visit Widget app, general advertising proposals and concerts on the Common. TC affirmed this message and noted the value of advance discussion. NS also agreed and suggested the value of assigning budgetary percentages to each spending category. DM also agreed noting that there could be unanticipated costs with the web site construction, yearly maintenance and hosting fees. TC mentioned the importance of selecting events to support that are generating hotel stays which offer more consumer spending than a day tripper would.

**Discussion of STA Assistance Grants**

Doll and Bear Show June 27, 2021

Wendy Collins appeared before the STA to respond to questions about her application for $4000 in event assistance. BA and DM spoke with Wendy about the value of hotel room generation. Wendy responded that she had booked 10 rooms with the Host and there would be 26 vendors. DM and BA asked questions about the policies of the Host towards requiring that rooms set aside must be paid for regardless if the event is held. Wendy noted that there was a 30 day grace period. TC asked about the request for $4000 when the deficit for the event was $1000. Wendy replied that because the year 2021 will be so uncertain she has to plan conservatively or defensively. TC raised the proposal to spend $1415 on post cards and $2080 on local advertising. He asked where these ads would appear and would they attract visitors from inside or outside of 50 miles? Wendy replied that the ads would beam into Albany, Hartford, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. BA commented that the goals of the STA were to attract regional or distant visitors and not locals. Wendy replied that her show was the only show of its type in New England. BA responded by saying that some of the ads do not generate hotel stays and that it is necessary for the STA to know the details of hotel generation. TC affirmed his support for aiding the cost of the ads and for funding post cards addressed out of state. TC asked that the $2080 in advertising be categorized into out of state outreaches. Wendy responded that ads would be placed with Dolls Magazine and Patch in Albany and Boston. Two ads would be placed with Yankee Press. Wendy also noted that she posts ads on Facebook as well. TC noted the importance of placing the Sturbridge logo on advertising.

**Grant Award to Doll and Bear Show – June 27, 2021**

TC moved to appropriate $2000 to be applied to the following amounts:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Amount** | **FY** |
| Ads – Doll Magazine | Total below |  |
| Ads- Patch | Total below |  |
| Ads- Yankee Press | $1600 Total (3 Ads) | 2021 |
| Mail - Postcards | $400 | 2021 |

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|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion By** | Vice Chair Chamberland |
| **Second:** | Chair Amedy |
| **Call Vote** | Yes: BA TC JA DM NS |
| **Vote:** | 5-0 |

**Discussion of STA Assistance Grants**

Artisans Craft Show – Oct. 30 – 31 – First Review

BA opened the conversation by explaining the importance of distance advertising. BA asked for details on advertising spending. Local ads have no value. BA would like to see out of region ads. TC noted that the STA was seeking visitors outside of 50 miles. Wendy replied that there was hope that the closing of a Hartford artisans show would attract visitors to Sturbridge. BA noted that the STA will know about its funding levels in May and a final budget number once Town Meeting is held in June.

Harvest Festival – Oct. 16-17, 2021- First Review

BA commented about the use of funds from the Community Support budget line for events sponsored or suggested by the Special Events Committee (SEC). TC noted that one day events are worthy pursuits but the STA is not funded to support these. JB noted that the SEC can only suggest events as it has not direct dedicated funding. DM commented that the STA focus is on tourism and not community events

BA summarized the feelings of DM and TC by saying that the STA should support events that attract visitors beyond 50 miles.

Antiques Collectible Show – Jan. 1, 2022 – First Review

BA commented that it would be good to know what amount of hotel room generation would this event attract? BA also asked for more details on the $2000 advertising request.

**New Marketing Efforts**

TC recommended that TM speak with Chris Pappas about how $10,000 could best be leveraged for a Summer and Fall marketing campaign. TC suggested that this topic be discussed at the May STA meeting.

* BA recommended that STA save the rights to the “Visit Sturbridge” URL. At this writing TM has relayed this request to Sperling.

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting of the STA would be Wednesday, May 12, 2021 at 6:30pm.

**Adjournment**

**Motion By:**  Tom Chamberland  **Second:** Jeff Ardis

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Chamberland, Salvadore. Ardis

**Vote:** Approved 5-0