Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Meeting**

June 9, 2021 - 6:30pm

Remote Meeting – Go to Meeting

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

Nick Salvadore

Jeff Ardis

**Absent:**

Thomas Chamberland

**Staff Present**:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Guests:**

Chris Pappas, Open the Door

Maxine Carter Lome, Weathervane Publishing

**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 May 12, 2021 Meeting**

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

**By**: B. Amedy **Second**: N. Salvadore

**Call Vote: Yes:** Brian Amedy, N Salvadore Abstention: D Merriman

**Vote:**  Approved 2-0-1

**Chris Pappas – Open the Door Inc.**

Chris Pappas attended the meeting to discuss and take questions relative to the following:

Travel Itineraries

Chris commented that her new itineraries were similar to the Fall 2020 which centered on a 3 day visit highlighting eating and shopping. DM commented that the Days Inn had closed and that OSV was engaged in a phased opening. NS complimented the itineraries including the attributions for Stone N Sparrow.

Summer Marketing Options

Chris reviewed the media outlets she has been analyzing. Which included: Nat Geo , RV Magazine, Yankee Magazine, Boston.com, Albany Times Union, Chris’s analysis was as follows:

+ Albany Times Union had no strong digital presence

+ RV Magazine had a small social media presence

+ Yankee Magazine – This outlet has been a good platform for Sturbridge.

+ Hartford Courant – Has a big travel section

+ WCVB – Stay N Play Ads

+ Boston.com – Positive prior experiences with EM, Newsletter and SM

Chris noted that AARP has a $10,000 ad minimum. RV Magazine did not have a good web site. WCVB was a good venue but their $9700 cost is high. The Courant may not be worth it. There was continued conversation about all of the media outlets under consideration. BA noted that it was important to position some marketing now and then further assessments can be made later in the year. CP said that guerilla marketing can be an effective way to message with a lower budget. DM agreed with BA that the present was the best time to market with building momentum for the Fall. BA felt that with a message now was the time to act.

**Summer 21 Marketing Campaign Recommendation - $30,000**

BA recommended that CP should provide TM with a list of media buys to be voted on in the July STA meeting. BA also noted that a discussion about marketing for the Fall Winter could be held later.

**STA Tourism Grant Applications**

Weathervane Publishing – Maxine Carter Lome

Maxine Carter Lome appeared before the STA and offered background on her January 1 2022 Antiques Show. Maxine noted that the 2019 show had 700 attendees with 40 vendors and that this event had a spill over spending effect with other shops in Sturbridge. Maxine also noted that this event will be on a weekend which will hopefully spur overnight stays. There was general conversation about the importance of advertising beyond a 50 mile range in order to attract potential hotel stays. Maxine noted that she had negotiated a $99 room rate with the Host Hotel.

**\*\*\* Grant Award to Weathervane Publishing - $5,000 (FY22)**

Dawn Merriman moved that $5,000 be granted to Weathervane in the amount of $5,000 to be deducted from Marketing and Advertising FY 2022 budget.

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| **Motion By** | Dawn Merriman |
| **Second** | Brian Amedy |
| **Call Vote** | Yes: BA DM NS Absent: TC |
| **Vote** | 3-0 |

Note: Jeff Ardis arrived to the meeting at 7:25 after this vote

Pintastic

Gabe Dinunzio of Pintastic was unable to appear to represent his tourism grant application.

Old Sturbridge Village

Chris Tieri appeared before the STA board with several grant requests which are detailed below along with a summary table of all requests.

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| **Item** | **Amount** | **Background** |
| ***Total Amount Requested:*** | ***$36,077.50*** |  |
| OSV 75th Ann Pole Banners | $6,127.50 | 50% shared cost - $12,255 |
| TV Media Campaign | $15,000 | Shared cost with OSV |
| Bus Tour Consultant | $14,950 | 50% shared cost - $29,900 |
|  |  |  |

OSV is asking the STA to pay $6,127.50 or 50% of the total cost of $12,500 to install commemorative utility pole banners celebrating OSV’s 75th anniversary. Chris noted that the poles will be a part of a larger media campaign to promote OSV and Sturbridge. BA suggested that the STA logo be placed on the bottom of the banners so taxpayers will recognize that the funding for this effort was not the Town. Jeff Bridges noted that Verizon is cooperating with efforts to approve the banner placements. BA asked if there were any questions from the board. NS said that the plans seemed pretty straight forward and JA offered his support.

**\*\*\* Grant Award to Old Sturbridge Village - $6,127.50 (FY21) – Utility Poll Banners**

Brian Amedy moved that $6,127.50 be granted to OSV from the Marketing and Advertising account from the FY 2021 budget for the installation of utility pole banners for the OSV 75th anniversary.

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| **Motion By** | Brian Amedy |
| **Second** | Nick Salvadore |
| **Call Vote** | Yes: BA JA NS Absent: TC Abstain: DM |
| **Vote** | 3-0 |

Old Sturbridge Village – TV Media Campaign Summer 2021 - cont’d

Chris briefed the STA on the benefits of a new media program from the Massachusetts Office of Tourism which will feature OSV and local restaurants and inns such as Table 3 and Publick House. The marketing effort will be called “Come and Stay”. Chris noted that the total media buy would be $61,000 running through Labor Day. OSV would be contributing $30,000 with the hope that the STA could offer $15,000 to keep the campaign going until the Labor Day weekend. Jeff Ardis offered his interest in seeing that local businesses are collaboratively promoted. BA commented that he would like to take more time to consider this partnership. NS expressed an interest in learning more. Chris responded that the campaign is geared toward the Boston to Concord region with Facebook ads positioned 2 hours away. The ad campaign would start June 21st and run through Labor Day.

Old Sturbridge Village – Bus Tour Recruitment Effort

Chris was joined by Rhonda Vaccarro with Break the Ice Media to talk about continuing efforts for another year of working with bus tour operators and bus tour companies. Rhonda reviewed her continuous efforts to meet and speak those who manage bus tours of book trips. Break the Ice sponsored a virtual tour last April. Chris noted that the total annual cost of this consultancy will be $30,000. BA asked if Break the Ice handled actual bus tour requests and was told yes. Rhonda noted that a recent bust tour booked 48 rooms at the Hampton Inn. NS offered some questions about working during the pandemic year of 2020. BA noted that the total 3 year cost for this bust tour effort would be $80,000 and that continuing this program after FY 2022 would be a challenge. Chris responded that there might be a time to de-escalate but only if there is a “foothold” on the bus tour market. Rhonda urged continuation because “we are still in the rebuild stage”. BA commented that he felt the STA had a limited financial reach so it would be possible to fund from FY21 dollars but no FY22.

**\*\*\* Grant Award to Old Sturbridge Village - $14,950 (FY21) – Bus Tour Consultant**

Brian Amedy moved that $14,950 be granted to OSV from the Marketing and Advertising account for FY 2021 budget.

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| **Motion By** | Brian Amedy |
| **Second** | Nick Salvadore |
| **Call Vote** | Yes: BA JA NS Absent: TC Abstain: DM |
| **Vote** | 3-0 |

**\*\* Transfer of Funds Request \*\***

BA moved that $12,000 be transferred from Community Support over to Marketing and Advertising

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Transfer From:** | **Transfer To:** | **Amount** |
| Comm Support: 24400-56552 | Marketing/Ad: 24400-56551 | $12,000 |

**Motion by:** B Amedy **Second:** N Salvadore

Yes: Amedy, Salvadaore and Ardis Abstain: Merriman

**General Discussion**

BA suggested that Gabe Dinunzio be contacted for possible attendance at the July meeting. And Wendy Davis offer data on her advertising spending for the events she is sponsoring in 2021.

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, July14, 2021.at 6:30pm

**Adjournment**

**Motion to Adjourn**: Nick Salvadore Second: Jeff Ardis

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

**Vote:** Approved 4-0