Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Meeting**

July 21, 2021 - 6:30pm

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

Dawn Merriman

Sandra Gibson-Quigley

**Absent:**

Nick Salvadore

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Guests:**

Gabe Dinunzio, Principal, Pintastic

**Meeting Open**

Chair Amedy opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes**

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| **Motion:** | Approve June 9 2021 Minutes |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: B Amedy |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Abstain: Gibson-Quigley, Merriman |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 2-0 |

**Nominations**

Based on the absence of Nick Salvadore, it was agreed to defer the nominations of Chair and Vice Chair until the August meeting.

**Data Presentation on Current Meals and Hotel Spending**

TM offered the meeting a power point presentation of the latest meals and hotel spending in Sturbridge through the end of June. The central highlights are listed below:

**Meals Spending**

* Meals spending for Spring 2021 is on par with previous quarters in 2019-2017
* Meals spending for 2017 to 2019 was consistent, averaging $63M
* Meals spending for 2020 was $46M – a 27% decline
* 2021 Estimate: $56M…based on $15M for Q3 and Q4
* Meals sales dropped 50% in Spring 2020 and 42% for Summer 2020

**Hotel Spending**

* Winter and Spring are 40% to 50% below Summer and Fall for 2017 to 2019
* Hotel revenues for Fall 2020 and Winter 2021 were $1M or $350,000 per month
* Spring 2020 was $800,000 for 3 months
* Spring 2021 hotel revenues up to $2M which is 75% of previous quarterly averages
* Hotel spending was a consistent annual $17M for 2017 to 2019
* $8.8M for 2020 which is a 47% decline

**STA Grant Request – Pintastic**

Gabe opened his comments by explaining that despite years of occupancy, Pintastic left the Sturbridge Host due to the aging of the facility and Covid. Gabe was happy to relay that he has met with the new owner of the Host, Yogi Patel and has been impressed with the new renovations and upgrades to the Host which include new HVAC, carpeting, lighting, painting and refurbished rooms.

BA noted that the STA would have less to grant in FY 2022. Gabe noted that he planned to stage a November 2021 and June 2022 show. TC observed that due to funding limitations, the STA may not be able to grant two events in FY 2022. SGQ suggested that Pintastic tout both events in their advertising. The meeting experienced conversation about the funding of special events. DM noted that with lower funding available the focus will be on supporting advertising and not special events. TC concurred but noted that the Pintastic event still generated a large amount of hotel stays with families attending so contributing to supporting activities at the Pintastic event had some merit.

**Tourism Grant Award: $2,000 from Community Support:**

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| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** BY T Chamberland | To expend $2,000 from Community Support for activities at the November 2021 Pintastic Show |
| **Second:** D Merriman |  |
| **Vote:** Approved – 4-0 | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman, Gibson-Quigley |
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**Tourism Grant Award $6,000 from Marketing and Advertising (M&A)**

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| **Motion:** BY D Merriman | To expend $6,000 from M&A to assist Pintastic in promoting their November and June events. Eligible spending to be on social media, billboard, mail costs, outside of a 50 mile range. |
| **Second:** T Chamberland |  |
| **Vote:** Approved – 4-0 | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman, Gibson-Quigley |
|  |  |

BA and DM noted to Gabe the new upcoming Sturbridge Tourism web site will be able to promote events. BA discussed some thoughts about the pending tourism grant application from Wendy Davis for an October Doll and Bear show and an Artisans Craft Show in October as well. BA asked that Wendy be requested to detail actual hotel room generation. BA and TM discussed how to identify the Southbridge Conference Center as a regional attraction without harming local inns and hotels. TC raised the idea of a Revolving Fund to support various tourism efforts based on potential ad revenues from the new tourism web site.

**Tourism Grant Award: $300 from Community Support:**

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| **Motion:** BY T Chamberland | To expend $300 to Last Green Valley to pay for a fundraiser in Sturbridge promoting open space and trails. This event will be one part of similar events in 8 regional town. |
| **Second:** D Merriman |  |
| **Vote:** Approved 3-0 | **Yes:** Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman,  **Abstain:** Gibson-Quigley |

**Tourism Grant Award: $1,200 from Marketing and Advertising**

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| **Motion:** BY T Chamberland | To expend $1200 from Marketing and Advertising to pay for a one day photographic shoot of the Town for use in the new tourism web site. |
| **Second:** D Merriman |  |
| **Vote:** Approved – 4-0 | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman, Gibson-Quigley |

**Summary of Spending Approvals**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Fund** | **Amount** | **Grantee** | **FY** |
| Marketing/Advertising: | $6000 | Pintastic | 2022 |
|  | $1200 | Sperling Web Site Photos | 2022 |
| Community Support: | $2000 | Pintastic | 2022 |
|  | $300 | Last Green Valley | 2022 |
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**General Discussion**

TC noted that OSV was working on a 75th Anniversary video. TC also suggested the value of researching the price points for photographic drones that could film Sturbridge events. DM inquired about what factors drive the placement of retail tenants such as the rumored Planet Fitness into the JC Penney space. SQ responded that the Town cannot limit specific tenants into retail properties. TC noted that the Ravezzi’s space was under active consideration for tenancy.

**Future Planning Discussions**

TC suggested that the meetings in July and August include conversation on future planning along with priorities based on available revenues. BA raised the prospect of resuming quarterly business breakfasts and business visits.

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, August 11, 2021.at 6:30pm

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: D Merriman |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Merriman, Gibson-Quigley |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 5-0 |