Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday, October 13, 2021 – 6:30 P.M.

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

Nick Salvadore

Sandra Gibson-Quigley

**Absent:**

Dawn Merriman

**Guests:**

In attendance by Zoom:

Mike Sperling, Sperling Interactive

Chris Pappas, Open the Door

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Chair Amedy opened the meeting at 6:31 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Minutes**

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| **Motion:** | Approve September 8, 2021 Minutes |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: D Merriman |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Amedy, Chamberland, Salvadore , Gibson-Quigley  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Tourism Web Site Update**

Mike Sperling and Chris Pappas offered a view of the web site. Some of the sections reviewed were:

* Guide page noting sub chapters
* Visit section with listing for attractions
* Featured Listings – This may be a revenue generator for advertising
* Itineraries – All seasons
* Events – With a calendar option
* Weddings
* About
* History of Sturbridge
* Contact

Mike commented that the site is moving along in terms of populating it with content and photographs. There was general discussion between Mike, Nick and Tom about offering promotional positions on the web site that could generate revenue. Tom commented that these revenues could be used to support and maintain the site. Mike suggested banner ads as a revenue potential. Sandra questioned what type of events could be posted on the site with consensus that tourism and community events would be appropriate but not residential or home based events.

It was agreed that Mike would return to the November 10th meeting and present the site again.

**Results of Summer 2021 Marketing Campaign**

Chris Pappas briefed the STA on the participatory and viewership rates for the ad campaign. Chris reviewed the specific results which are attached to these minutes. Tom commented that although his observation was not conclusive, he felt he has seen more cars with New York State plates. Brian commended the popular impact of Tree House Brewing.

Chris, Tom and Brian conversed on the best methods to steer viewers to the tourism web site once it is up and running. Chris said that there are some methods that can be costly and others more affordable.

**Sturbridge Trails Attendance**

Tom reported that 17,800 people walked the Sturbridge trails in June, July and August, an increase of 700 from the Summer of 2020.

**Bus Tours**

Brian opened some discussion about the different types bus tours such as day trip tours and over-night tours. Terry commented that Globus Tours was operating a 26 day program of 9 day New England bus tours in which Sturbridge was Day 8 and an overnight for each 9 day tour. Brian suggested that OSC be contacted for an update on their bus tour efforts with Break the Ice Media.

**OSV Discount**

Terry raised the prospect that perhaps OSV would agree to cross-market their ticketing to link with local shop owners with a 10% discount on purchases for meals, drinks or a specialty item. Brian encouraged a call to OSV to see if there was any initial reaction. Terry said he would speak to the Chamber and some local businesses to see if they see any value in this.

**Review and Analysis of State and Regional Tourism Funding**

There was general conversation surrounding a memo from Terry detailing the funding that the State and the Central Mass region spends. Analyzing this data will help shape future questions and conversations with Rep. Todd Smolla and DCM Director Monique Messier. Tom recommended that STA members continue to review the memo, draft up some questions and forward to Terry.

**Illustrated Walk Around Map**

Terry reported that he has been in contact with 4 artists who could draft an illustrated walking map. The next steps are to contact additional artists to find an attractive “folk art” style, ascertain some cost estimates and report back to the STA.

**Hotel Occupancy Data**

**Special Note:** The following data was not presented at this STA meeting but sent to the STA on Oct. 18th when the data arrived.

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| **Sturbridge Hotel Occupancy Rates 2019 - 2021** |
|  | **Jan** | **Feb** | **Mar** | **Apr** | **May** | **June** | **July** | **Aug** | **Sept** | **Oct** | **Nov** | **Dec** |
| **2019%** | +29% | -7% | +7% | -6% | 0% | +5% | +26% | +14% | +10% |  |  |  |
| **2020%** | -5% | -15% | +47% | +140% | +147% | +100% | +92% | +54% | +63% |  |  |  |
| **2021** | 40 | 44 | 47 | 48 | 57 | 64 | 73 | 71 | 67 |  |  |  |
| **2020** | 42 | 52 | 32 | 20 | 23 | 32 | 38 | 46 | 41 | 49 | 35 | 35 |
| **2019** | 31 | 41 | 44 | 51 | 57 | 61 | 58 | 62 | 61 | 64 | 47 | 38 |

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| **Table: Reporting and Non-Reporting Hotels** |
| **Reporting:**  | **Rooms** | **NOT Reporting:** | **Rooms** |
| **Total Rooms** | **490** | **Total Rooms** | **437** |
| LaQuinta  | 61 | Sturbridge Host  | 232 |
| Comfort Inn  | 77 | Publick House  | 100 |
| Econo Lodge  | 53 | Economy Lodge  | 48 |
| Hampton Inn | 84 |  |  |
| Super 8 | 55 | Green Acres | 16 |
| Days Inn | 83 | Hamilton Inn | 17 |
| Holiday Inn Express | 77 | Scottish Inn | 24 |

**Winter 2021 Events**

Tom discussed the potential of another ice sculpture event on the Trails. Brian, Sandra and Tom conversed that perhaps there could be some coordination with the Recreation Dept. Terry will contact Recreation.

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, November 10, 2021.at 6:30pm

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: SECOND:  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Amedy, Chamberland, Salvadore, Gibson Quigley  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |