Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

 **Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, July 13,2022 – 6:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Sandra Gibson-Quigley

Nick Salvadore

Pete Champagne

Jasmine Bell

Chris Tieri

**Guest:**

Sallie Greene, Owner Alternatives for Health

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Sandy opened the meeting at 6:45 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**New Member Introductions**

The meeting began with the three new members of the STA introducing themselves. Nick said he was happy to welcome two successful business owners to the STA along with Old Sturbridge Village. Jasmine Bell introduced herself as the owner of Sadie Green’s and referenced her deep interest in the Town’s welfare. Peter Champagne noted that he was a 19 year resident and an owner of Saw Dust for 2.5 years. Chris Tieri noted that she is a native of Sturbridge, 24 years experience with her own marketing business and is currently the CMO of OSV. Sandy welcomed everyone and noted that they will bring new ideas and new dynamism.

**General Discussion About Sturbridge Tourism Strengths and Weaknesses**

There was general discussion about Sturbridge with Nick opining about what the major tourism drivers are for Sturbridge. He asked about the correlation between hotel stays and general visitorship. And whether STA should receive shared revenues from the Meals Tax because much commerce in Sturbridge is food and beverage. Sandy asked how can STA bring people to Sturbridge whether it is events or other reasons. Do visitors stay or are the one day trippers? Jasmine opined that Sturbridge is perceived as the home of OSV which attracts thousands of visitors. But that the Town’s road layout of Route 20 and Route 131 are not conducive to walkability. .

Pete pointed out that Sturbridge lacks the volume of small shops that other towns have and that there is no central walkable downtown. Pete went on to note that Sturbridge does have OSV and a popular restaurant cluster with trails. Jasmine lamented that some annual Sturbridge events have dwindled in attendance and curriculum offerings.

**Restaurant Week**

There was conversation about hosting a Restaurant Week. Chris noted that these events can be a challenge. Terry commented that based on a suggestion from Brian Amedy, there will be an effort to organize a Restaurant Week in the Winter. Nick and Chris talked about other events such as Maple Days or Chowder and Chili offerings. Peter said it was important to tie this all to the restaurants and that it is important for restaurants to work together.

**STA Local Tourism Grant Application – Alternatives for Health**

Sallie Greene, the owner appeared before the STA to discuss her request for STA assistance for a October 1st Herbfest. Sallie said that the Herbfest will be on the Common with up to 40 vendors. The last event attracted over 100 people. Sallie noted that she is interested in partnering with OSV and their horticultural department to expand the offerings of the Herbfest. Sallie praised the cooperation of the Comfort Inn.

 Next Step for Alternatives for Health

 The STA agreed to further consider Sallie’s request and asked that a more detailed event budget be submitted for the October 2022 event and a planned Spring 2023 event.

**Suggestions for Considering STA Local Grant Applications**

Nick suggested that the STA resume the use of structured forms that can define and measure the consideration of requests for financial assistance. Requests for less than $2500 would be freely considered. It was also suggested that any prior grant awards be cited.

**Discussion of FY 2023 Funding for Digital Website Administration**

Sandy and Chris discussed the STA’s June 2022 allocation of $15,000 for Open the Door Media to continue its web site digital management services.

**Status of Pending State Legislature Marketing Grant**

Terry offered an update on the pending potential of the STA’s interest in gaining a $50,000 tourism grant from the State Legislature through Rep. Smola. Sandy suggested that while Tom Chamberland had been the principal communicator with Rep. Smola his departure would make it practical for Terry to work with Rep. Smola.

**Last Green Valley (LGV)**

There was general discussion of ongoing efforts to work with Last Green Valley on some advertising pursuits that will promote Sturbridge but also support LGV and its important work. Sandy noted that LGV has several publications issued throughout the year that Sturbridge can purchase. Terry noted that he has been in touch with Kyle Gregoire and that Kyle will be attending a future meeting either in August or September.

**Selecting Best Meeting Times**

Nick asked for some input on the best time for the STA to meet. There was general consensus that continuing on Wednesdays would be good.

**Selection of STA Chair and Vice Chair**

Sandy and Nick discussed how these seats could be filled and it was agreed to either alternate or flip a coin.

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, August 24, 2022 at 6:30pm

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: Sandy Gibson- Quigley  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Gibson Quigley, Salvadore, Bell, Tieri, Champagne |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 5-0 |