Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday, October 12, 2022 – 6:00 P.M.

**Members Present**:   
Sandra Gibson Quigley

Chris Tieri

Jasmine Bell

Peter Champagne

**Absent:**

Nick Salvadore

**Guests:**

Mary Dowling, Member, Board of Selectman and Special Events Committee (SEC)

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Sandra opened the meeting at 6:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Minutes for Previous Meetings**

Due to the number of unapproved minutes, it was agreed to vote on all in one motion. These minutes have been posted on the Town Web site as Draft versions for several months.

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| **Motion:** | To Approve:  June 8th Minutes  July 13th Minutes  August 24th Minutes  September 15th Minutes |
|  | BY: C Tieri SECOND: J Bell |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** S Gibson Quigley, C Tieri, J Bell, P Champagne **Absent:** N Salvadore |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Request for STA Tourism Grant-** Home of the Brave Race

Mary Dowling appeared before the Board to discuss the SEC request for financial support for the November 12th Home of the Brave Race. Mary offered a history of the race before 2021 and noted that the 2021 race raised $6,000 for the local Sturbridge Veterans Assistance Fund. The reason for the request is due to the decision that the Town will not continue to ask donors to help with the costs of running the race and instead all donor funds will go to the Veteran’s Support Fund. Terry pointed out that the costs of the 2021 race created a very small deficit of $156.00 over what the SEC had budgeted. But with the cessation of donor solicitation, it would be good to use the Community Support budget for any deficits and that there was also a desire to have a band perform at the race. Mary noted that the race attracted 116 runners in 2021 along with over 100 spectators. Sandra asked several questions about the structure of the race’s organization including what role the SEC takes and the office of the Veteran’s Agent.

Motion to Tender a Grant for the HOTB Race

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| **Motion:** | To offer up to $1,000 from the Community Support Fund for the November 12, 2022 HOTB Race. |
|  | BY: S Gibson Quigley SECOND: C Tieri |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Tieri, Bell and Champagne |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Discussion on the Long Term Marketing and Promotion of Sturbridge**

The STA devoted the remainder of the meeting to discussing how best to market and promote Sturbridge in the year ahead. Some of the major suggestions and observations are as follows:

Web Site

1. There was consensus that the continuous cultivation of the web site would be served well by generating photographs, narrative stories, contests and other forms of content.
2. That the web site should contain “calls for action” to engage visitors and readers.
3. Jasmine noted that the web site does not rank high on Google searches.
4. A quarterly newsletter would have value in informing readers and leveraging the web site. Chris suggested a simple basic newsletter now with a more detailed one later. Pete suggested emails that are geared to the taste of readers.
5. Chris suggested asking objective outsiders to view the web site for suggestions.
6. Overall, it was decided to focus on stocking the web site with photos, content and stories, email engagement through newsletters, contests and other forms of engagement (surveys).

Business Definition and Promotion

1. Jasmine suggested that every Sturbridge business should be contacted with a form so they can cite what content they would like the web site to contain generally and for their business.
2. Peter suggested that the form be sent or delivered with an understanding that once completed it would be picked up within a set time frame.

Hospitality Summit

1. There was general discussion about the value of communicating with local businesses.
2. Chris suggested a Sturbridge Hospitality Summit.
3. Chris also suggested that one topic to discuss would be how bus tours can benefit local businesses.

Marketing Consultant

There was consensus that there would be value in undertaking a new RFQ process to see what services could be retained to help promote Sturbridge in the year ahead or longer.

1. Chris suggested that a Draft RFQ be reviewed at the November meeting.
2. Issue the RFQ in December, interviews and considerations in February and March. Selection in April.

Asundry and Supporting Tasks

Terry identified several pending goals that support the overall efforts to promote Sturbridge and the web site. They are as follows:

1. Planning out marketing efforts for every season based on available funding and budget resources
2. A digital/hard copy hybrid map of Sturbridge tourism attractions and businesses. The map will be used for compilation into the 2023 Tour Guide, adding on to the web site and for hard copy display at store and hotel counters.
3. A layman’s locational map of Sturbridge Trails – either stand alone or within the Tourism Map.
4. Photographs of Sturbridge attractions and businesses with some to be seasonal for timed posting.
5. Photographs of store and hotel interiors along with photos of patrons enjoying the food and beverage businesses.
6. A 2023 Tour Guide that is 3x9 possessing a map and new photographs from OSV Photo Share and a newly hired photographer.
7. Creating and purchasing a tourism hand out for shows, exhibits and general distribution.

**Discussion of Work Tasks for Open the Door**

There was consensus about asking Open the Door to write a Christmas/New Year’s Itinerary to add to the seasonal ones on the web site. And also to request advance social media posts for the months of November, December and January with a frequency of 2 to 3 per week

**Discussion of Advertising with Turley Publications**

There was consensus to defer taking any advertising with Turley’s regional Holiday issue. But there was agreement to consider ads in the future with Turley.

**Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 8:35PM.