Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

 **Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, August 22, 2022 – 6:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Sandra Gibson-Quigley

Nick Salvadore
Chris Tieri

Pete Champagne

**Absent:**

Jasmine Bell

**Guests:**

Brian Amedy, Former Chair STA

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Nick opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Conversation with Brian Amedy, Former STA Chair**

Brian attended the meeting to share thoughts and suggestions for the STA going forward. Brian expressed his view that the new members of the STA all brought positive experience to the Board. He noted that Pete owned a successful town business and another out of state, Chris Tieri offered lengthy marketing experience and that Jasmine also managed a successful town business. Brian also opined that the lack of any direct hotel representation was fine based on the overall experience level on the STA.

STA Tourism Grants

Brian noted that Kevin Filchak had established a solid 2 step process for considering requests for local STA tourism grants and that one important consideration in awarding grants would be the generation of hotel rooms. Brian noted the high number of room nights from the Pintastic Pinball Show.

Web Site

Brian noted that the web site and calendar postings looks great but suggested that an App be embedded on the site for transferring onto visitor smart phones. This will be of value for hotel front desks in communicating with guests. It is important to identify activities and outlets for visitors. Brian expressed positive comments for the Sturbridge ads in Yankee Magazine and web site but noted that a photograph of a fisherman in a stream may not be the prime activity in Sturbridge. Chris and Brian discussed whether ad content should be presented to the STA ahead of time.

Advance Planning

Brian strongly encouraged advance planning for seasonal marketing efforts and campaigns based on ad results from earlier campaigns. Nick concurred that it was important to analyze outreach efforts. Brian and Peter discussed what percentage of his customers were local and Peter said about 60%. Pete noted the importance of offering live music.

**Discussion of Marketing Plan and Web Site**

Sandra noted that it would be worthwhile to review the Marketing Plan. Chris and Sandra suggested that there will be value In receiving monthly reports on the web site and that while the site is beautiful what is the site’s call to action? Is the site just a gorgeous brochure? Chris also asked if the site contained itineraries. Nick suggested the growing popularity of Tik Tok as another platform from which to reach audiences. Nick also noted that event filters on the web site are important to guide visitors to their preferred areas of interest. Nick also asked if there is web site data on numbers of visits to the Calendar section. Terry noted that after consulting Mike Sperling he was told that the web has an open entry tab where one can enter “Concerts” or “Music” to see those events appear.

**Web Site Update**

Chris Pappas of Open the Door updated the STA on the web site:

1. Updating the site has been ongoing
2. Events are posted every two weeks.
3. Social media handles are up
4. The seasonal Itineraries have been updated.
5. The consumer survey is being updated for imminent release
6. Design work is finishing up for a Constant Contact newsletter template.

Newsletter

There was general discussion about a newsletter. Sandra asked about frequency. Chris replied that quality was better then quantity so a bi-monthly edition would be good. Sandra asked about how content would be generated and Chris replied that she would collect content suggestions with Terry. Sandra asked when the newsletter would start and what would the process be for drafting and finalization. Chris replied that the creation of the newsletters would include input from the STA based on their level of interest and engagement. Brian noted that Kevin Filchak did issue a monthly newsletter on the town web site. Sandra asked to view the current template and that every STA member should be on the distribution list.

Web Site Reporting

Chris Tieri raised the potential of regular activity reporting for the web site. Chris Pappas said this can be arranged in consult with Mike Sperling at Sperling Interactive. Chris Tieri said it would be good to know figures on visitors, referrals and top page activity. Chris Pappas noted that there would be data on the current Sturbridge marketing campaign around mid September.

Photography

Chris Pappas recommended the retention of a professional photographer to comprehensively photograph all of Sturbridge. Peter suggested that there may be value in contacting a local photographer to complement these efforts and suggested Jim Hennessey.

**Tourism Grant Request: Herbfest**

There was continued discussion on a tourism grant for the Herbfest event in October.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | To grant Herbfest $1700 from the Community Support Fund FY23. |
|  | BY: S Gibson Quigley SECOND: C Tieri |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson-Quigley, Salvadore, Bell and Champagne  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

There was agreement that Sallie Greene should return to the STA in November to report on the attendance for the October event and this would help shape how much to grant the Spring 2023 event.

**Financial and Revenue Items**

Terry reported on the following items:

 State Legislature Marketing Grant

It was noted that Rep. Smola had mentioned this $50,000 grant during his recent visit to honor Brian and Tom. Sandra noted that this announcement was also reported in a local paper. Nick suggested that these funds could be applied to a continuation of the social media marketing efforts.

**Next Meeting**

Nick noted that the next meeting will be Thursday, September 15th at 6:30PM.

**Adjournment**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: P Champagne  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Gibson Quigley, Salvadore, Tieri, Champagne  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |