Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

 **Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, January 11, 2023– 6:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Sandra Gibson Quigley
Chris Tieri

Nick Salvadore

**Absent:**

Jasmine Bell

Pete Champagne

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Sandra opened the meeting at 6:38 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes : December 14, 2022**

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| **Motion:** | Approve: December 14, 2022 STA Minutes |
|  | BY: C Tieri SECOND: N Salvadore |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Tieri, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Discussion of Selecting A Vice Chair**

There was discussion of selecting a Vice Chair but the consensus was to continue the conversation into the February meeting.

**Selection of a Firm to Provide Short Term Digital Media Services**

Terry reviewed the bids received to temporarily administer digital media services for STA web site. The results were:

* Rhyme Digital - $2100 per month
* Exsel Media - $1083 per month
* Break the Ice Media (BTI) - $1050 per month

BTI was the low bidder and will be contacted to start working on social media messaging and digital marketing from February through the later Spring months until a more permanent firm is selected.

**Photographer – Wally Hersey**

Sandy suggested that Wally Hersey, a long time local photographer be considered for contacting to see if his impressive photographs can be embedded onto the tourism web site.

**Discussion with Weathervane Publishing and Chamber**

Maxine Carter Lome (Weathervane) and Alex McNitt (Chamber) conversed with the STA about the potentials of writing and publishing the annual tour guide and perhaps another publication that can promote the events, attractions and tourism related businesses in Sturbridge. Some of the topics discussed were:

 New Chamber Brochures

 Maxine and Alex presented their new regional magazine “Enjoy!” and the Sturbridge Townships Map.

 Tour Guide

Maxine reviewed some ideas she had about a new guide along with Terry’s suggestion that the Sturbridge Guide be 4x9 similar to the Williamstown Guide so that it can be mailed easily, racked better and carried conveniently by tourists.

Regional Promotion Materials

Chris offered a conversational question to discuss ways to partner with publications that promote Sturbridge and the region’s attractions. Maxine replied that this was worth further discussion. Chris and Maxine suggested a quarterly magazine. Sandra suggested that the content could be interviews with tourism drivers in Sturbridge. Sandra asked Maxine to continue her work and return with some ideas.

Distribution Concerns About Display Capacity, Channels of Distribution and Quantity of Brochures

Terry raised the challenges of there being up to 9 existing tourism, chamber and trails materials already and that there is no broad and verifiable distribution network for these materials now. As an example he cited the Library which has said their presentation space is limited and that perhaps some can be placed into sleeves alongside some shelves.

Terry raised the questions of:

1. Should brochures be centralized or merged to promote trails tourism and regional attractions together?
2. Should STA offer racks or kiosks for key visitor meccas such as hotels and shops?

Outcome and Next Steps

There was consensus to ask Maxine to continue her visioning of a regional and Sturbridge promotional magazine that would promote local and regional attractions and offer content that highlights tourism events, attractions and stakeholders. Maxine noted that she would work to return a proposal in time for the February STA meeting.

**Discussion of Host Hotel**

There was general discussion between STA members, Maxine and Alex about how the Host is doing with the new ownership that assumed operations in 2020. Feedback included positive reviews from the recent municipal Trails Conference in January and for other shows that have returned to post Covid gatherings. There was also conversation about the decision by Pintastic to move their bi-annual 3 day Pinball Show from the Host to Marlborough. And another perennial show voiced concerns about large price increases. Sandra and Chris suggested that the STA send a letter to the Board of Selectman expressing concerns about the Host.

**Business of the Year Award 2023**

There was conversation about starting the 2023 Business of the Year Award program with further discussion at the Februaary STA meeting.

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: C Tieri SECOND: N Salvadore  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Tieri, Gibson Quigley, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |