Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday, April 12, 2023 – 5:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:   
Sandra Gibson-Quigley, Chair

Alex McConnon

Jasmine Bell

Peter Champagne

**Absent:**

Nick Salvadore

**Guests:**

Sarah Martin, Break the Ice Media (BTI) (Video)

Alex McNitt, Central Mass South Chamber

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Sandy Gibson Quigley opened the meeting at 5:30 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Update Briefing on Digital Marketing**

Sarah Martin offered the STA an update briefing on BTI’s current efforts. Sarah reported:

1. Posting has started in March
2. With a good level of interactions on Facebook
3. 6000 people on Facebook and 112 followers on Instagram
4. The transition process has started from Open Door to BTI.
5. One goal is to create a plan which will contain blogs, itineraries along with key markets
6. Audit web site pages in the first 6 to 8 weeks. Update photos. Then move to blogging.

**State Marketing Grant**

Terry briefed the STA on the size of the grant and its permitted uses which includes:

1. $25,000 for spending towards the total $50,000 ad campaign.
2. $25,000 towards web site development and improvements to its content, photos, and other features.

There was conversation about spending more than the allocated $50,000 but Sarah indicated that based on her appraisal this amount would suffice. There was discussion of implementing a traditional campaign using brick and mortar media sites versus a more focused digital campaign. Sarah felt that their efforts would be more digital using Google campaigns and other social media platforms. Sarah and Jasmine discussed the size of the overall ad budget and its mix of print and digital media. Sarah said the mix depended on the age group of the audience sought. Jasmine also noted that OSV possesses a short video that can be leveraged. Sarah also noted that digital can measure interactions while print cannot. Sandy mentioned the Antiques Roadshow in June of 2023.

**Introduction and Welcome – Alex McConnon**

The STA welcomed its new member Alex McConnon who is a current employee with Old Sturbridge Village and a former AA to the Sturbridge Town Administrator. It was felt by all that Alex’s wide experience will be a valuable asset to the STA.

**Request for STA Grant Assistance: Harvest Festival**

Alex McNitt of the CMS Chamber joined the STA meeting to discuss potential assistance for the Chamber’s annual Harvest Festival. There was general discussion about several related issues around the Harvests Festival which were:

Scare Crow Presentations

There was discussion about the Recreation Department’s plans to sponsor a scare crow event at the same time as Harvest Festival.

Potential Collaboration for New Events

There was conversation about the SEC, STA and Recreation working to collaborate on new events that could support the Harvest Festival or be new stand alone events. Terry noted that the SEC had just agreed to sponsor a new road race in July and in an earlier email Annie had said that Recreation was also working on new events which filled up their work capacity.

Chamber Assistance

Sandy and Alex discussed the interest of the STA in helping the Chamber add any new features to the Harvest Festival.

**STA Grant Request – Harvest Festival**

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| **Motion:** | To Allocate up to $5200 from Community Support FY 2024 to help underwrite the costs of the Harvest Festival. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**STA Advertising Request – Ad Placement I Chamber Brochure**

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| **Motion:** | To Allocate up to $1000 from Marketing and Advertising towards the cost of an ad promoting Sturbridge in the 2023 Chamber Tourism Map. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Business of the Year Awards (BOYA)**

Terry offered an update on the current voting.

BOYA Suggestions

Jasmine suggested that the next BOYA Contest offer a ballot of all businesses and that a limit be placed on voting so there can be no repetitive voting.

Increase Grant Award

There was consensus towards giving each award winner $1250 above the traditional $1000 so a membership in the regional tour agency could be purchased.

**STA Budget Request – Dream World Tourism Expo**

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| **Motion:** | To Allocate up to $600 from Marketing and Advertising FY23 to pay for admission to the Springfield MA Dream World Tourism Expo. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**STA Budget Request – Subscription Fees for Hotel Occupancy Reports**

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| **Motion:** | To Allocate up to $2580 to address the annual cost of a year subscription to STR for quarterly hotel occupancy reports. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**STA Grant Request – Concerts on the Common**

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| **Motion:** | To Allocate up to $1300 from Community Support to underwrite the Southern Voice Band for Concerts on the Common. |
|  | BY N Salvadore SECOND: J Bell |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Salvadore, Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**STA Budget Request – Advertising with Last Green Valley**

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| **Motion:** | To spend $405 in FY23 from Marketing Advertising to purchase an ad in the Last Green Valley Explorer Guide. This purchase is part of a 3 year advertising purchase. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Champagne, Bell, McConnon **Abstain:** Gibson Quigley |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Acceptance of STA Revenues and Budget Formula for FY 2024**

Terry briefed the Board on the STA FY24 financial figures as relayed from Finance Director Barry. They are as follows:

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| **Category** | **Amount** | **Per Cent** |
| Total STA Budget | $187,476 |  |
| Marketing/Advertising | $101,115 | 70% |
| Community Support | $43,235 | 30% |
| Salary | $33,326 |  |
| EE Benefits | $9,800 |  |

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| **Motion:** | To accept the financial figures from the Finance Department and to establish a 70% to 30% ratio between Marketing/Advertising and Community Support. See Table above. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Discussion of Recruiting Photographers**

There was discussion about working to hire photographers for two projects. One is to take photos of Sturbridge for the Tour Guide and the other to take photographs for the tourism web site which would include shots of attractions, shops, interiors, and seasonal photos of Sturbridge. Sandra noted that she had met the owners of a photography business called Seven Pair and that they were Sturbridge residents. Terry noted that he would work on creating an RFQ to collect quotes for the short term and long term photographic services.

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | To Adjourn |
|  | BY S Gibson Quigley SECOND: J Bell |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |