Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Monthly Meeting**

Wednesday, May 10, 2023 – 5:30 P.M.

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

Alex McConnon

Peter Champagne

**Absent:**

Nick Salvadore

Jasmine Bell

**Guests:**

Alex McNitt, Ex Director ,Central Mass South Chamber

Chris Tieri, CMO, OSV

Sallie Greene, Herbfest

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

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

**Approval April 12 Minutes**

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| **Motion:** | To approve the Minutes for the April 12th STA Meeting. |
|  | BY J Bell SECOND: P Champagne |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Discussion of Potential Chamber HQ and Tourism Information Center**

Alex McNitt, ED of the Central South MA Chamber spoke to the STA about potential financial support for a tourism information center as part of the Chamber’s exploration of moving to a vacant building on 1 River Road. Alex noted the location of 1 River Road would be an ideal location for visitors to stop by given that the building is steps from I-84, and at the cross roads of the new Pine Lake RV Resort. Publick House is a 2 minute drive down Haynes Street and access to OSV and the Sturbridge Leadmine and Arbutus Trails is through the River Road bridge across I-84.

Cost Estimates

Alex also noted that the Town and STA had once financially supported a tourism visitor location on Route 20 in concert with the Chamber and OSV. Alex reviewed the current cost estimates for renovating the 1 River Road location which would include costs for a tourism center such as brochure racks, signage, and furnishings. The Chamber HQ would be open to visitors for information and then there would be an outdoor weather resistant display on the front porch as well. Alex cited a total cost estimate of $38,370 for renovating this dormant building.

Pete offered strong support for the tourism center concept and touted the proximity to I-84. Alex McConnon asked whether the Center would offer materials and brochures to which Alex said it would. Sandra also offered positive support and praised the location. Sandra also noted the history of the Route 20 Center where the STA and Town contributed to the rest rooms.

There was continued conversation about how much the STA could contribute and for what permitted uses and purposes. Terry was asked to consult with TA Grimm about the guidelines for giving the Chamber a tourism grant in terms of the amount and for what uses. After further conversation the following motion was approved:

**STA Grant Request – Sturbridge Visitor Information Center.**

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| **Motion:** | To Appropriate $22,000 from Marketing and Advertising to support the creation of a tourism visitor center at 1 River Road. $11,000 from FY23 and $11,000 from FY24 STA Budgets. . |
|  | BY P Champagne SECOND: A McConnon |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

There was consensus that Terry would consult with TA Grimm to ascertain what the permitted uses and amounts would be for this desired grant award.

**Discussion with OSV About Promotional Support**

Chris Tieri appeared before the STA to offer several advertising potentials that the STA could help fund and support. Some of these included;

Digital Highway Billboards

Spending up to $30,000 on digital highway signs in many different regions of Central and Eastern MA.

“True New England Getaway” Ad

Spending up to $11,000 in running this OSV ad on You Tube and Facebook platforms.

Epic Summer Sweepstakes

This OSV sponsored promotional event will be placed into media markets across New England. The goal is to grow email lists, social media views and visual branding.

Sandra expressed support for assisting OSV and Pete and Alex concurred. There was consensus to continue the conversation at the next STA meeting on May 31st and that $10,000 towards the billboard campaign was of interest.

**STA Grant Request – Herbfest**

Sallie Greene appeared before the STA and received the following grant below. .

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| **Motion:** | To grant up to $1800 from Marketing and Advertising FY 23 to support the Annual Herbfest. And $1000 in FY 24. |
|  | BY S Gibson Quigley SECOND: A McConnon |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Champagne, Bell, McConnon |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**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 |