Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

**Regular Meeting**

February 10, 2021 - 6:30pm

Remote Meeting – Go to Meeting

**Members Present**:   
Brian Amedy, Chair  
Tom Chamberland, Vice Chair

Nick Salvadore – Arrived at 6:45 pm  
Dawn Merriman  
Jeff Ardis

**Guests:**

Maxine Carter-Lome – Your Local Hometown Shopper

Jeff Lome – Your Local Hometown Shopper

Kelly Tourtellotte, Global Design and Publishing

**Staff Present**:

Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Chair Amedy opened the meeting at 6:35 p.m. by reading the disclaimer and welcomed everyone to the meeting.

\*Pursuant to Governor Baker’s March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting law, G.L. c. 30A Section 18, and the Governor’s March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitations on the number people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Sturbridge Tourist Association will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible.  Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation can be found on the Town’s website at <https://www.sturbridge.gov/town-administrator/pages/how-access-virtual-meeting>.  For this meeting, members of the public who wish to listen and or watch the meeting either online via the Town’s on demand video broadcast, on cable television on channel 191, or dial into the meeting at 774-304-1455, enter 1428# for the meeting number and 12345 for the access code.  (This phone number is only active for the public during public meetings).  No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means.  In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post of the Town’s website an audio or video recording, transcript, or other comprehensive record of the proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

**Approval of Minutes from January 13, 2021 Meeting**

**Motion:** To approve Jan. 13, 2021 minutes

**By:** B.Amedy **Second**: D. Merriman

**Call Vote: Yes:** Brian Amedy, Dawn Merriman, Jeff Ardis

**Note:** Nick Salvadore arrived after this vote

**Vote:**  Approved 4-0-1

**Treasurer’s Report**

TM opened his report by reviewing the Excel STA Report.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Account** | **Avail 12/31/20** |
| Community Support | 30,000.00 |
| Marketing/Advertising | 45,494.00 |
| Benefits | 15,837.00 |
| Salaries/Wages | 23,649.31 |
| **Totals:** | **114,981.01** |
| **FY20 Encumbered** | **1,146.00** |

TM reported the status of the following financial items:

* Payment Processed: $5,900 from OSV for final payment to Break the Ice Media.
* Pending: $1,000 BOY Award to New England Seafood
* Future Expense: $1800 for STR annual subscription

There was some conversation about the $1,000 marketing award to Escape the Pike which has remained on the STA budget reports with an unexpended grant balance of $142.50. TM and TC discussed this. TM noted that he had reached out to the owner of Escape the Pike who said payments have been made in full. BA and TC suggested that TM contact New England Seafood to resolve their unredeemed $1,000 marketing grant.

**Treasurer’s Report Approval**

TC moved that the January 2021 Treasurer’s Report be approved.

**Motion By:**  Vice Chair Chamberland **Second:** Dawn Merriman

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Ardis, Chamberland **Note:** Nick Salvadore arrived after this vote

**Vote:** Approved 4-0

**Hometown Shopper Ad**

Maxine Carter Lome and Jeff Carter appeared before the committee to discuss a full page ad in their monthly circular. During the conversation Maxine raised the potential of creating a restaurant week for take out food. BA said he was not sure if a take out restaurant week would succeed and TC commented that restaurants are very busy now with take out orders. BA said he had interest in supporting an advertisement but not for a restaurant take out week. DM expressed interest in this idea and suggested that the current ad under consideration include restaurants that offer take out. BA suggested that the ad include the Sturbridge marketing tag line “Visit Sturbridge Like a Local”.

**2021 Visit Sturbridge Guide**

Kelly Tourtellotte of Global Design/Publishing joined the meeting to discuss the creation of the 2021 Sturbridge Tour Guide. Delivery of the guide is scheduled for May 2021. Kelly reviewed a background memo updated by Terry that details the price points, ad costs and printing costs for the guide. BA suggested that the:

1. Cover headline be changed to Experience Sturbridge.
2. Delete: “wonderful” from the back cover ad.
3. Insert: “Experience Sturbridge Like A Local”

There was continued conversation about the guide’s format, content and pricing. TC summed up the topics and made the following motion:

**2021 Visit Sturbridge Guide**

Motion by Tom Chamberland:

1. Expend $3,050.00 towards the costs of the Guide
2. Expend $950.00 for a back page advertisement
3. Agree to offer a 40% advertising subsidy. 50% for first time advertisers.
4. Receive 500 copies of the Guide for $800 with no cost over-run.
5. Have 5,000 copies distributed to the business community.
6. Fund these costs from the Marketing and Advertising line in the STA budget

BA recommended that the last line on the back page ad of the Guide: “at the many wonderful merchants of Sturbridge” be removed and replaced with the new marketing tag line “Experience Sturbridge Like A Local”.

**Motion By:**  Vice Chair Chamberland **Second:** Dawn Merriman

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Ardis, Chamberland ,Salvadore

**Vote:** Approved 5-0

TC suggested that TM work on a letter of support for Kelly’s efforts to procure advertising for the guide and to email the letter to businesses.

**EDTC Activity Report**

Terry briefed the members on development and tourism activity for January and early February.

**Advertisement with Discover Central MA (DCM)**

BA and TC discussed the request to place an advertisement into the Spring/Summer 2021 Visitor’s Guide and suggested that this ad include the “Experience Sturbridge” brand logo. NS supported the use of the logo and the value of regional promotion. NS noted that Downtown Worcester is busy with visitors which shows that people are looking to get out of their homes and explore. DM also agreed and mentioned the importance of promoting the Sturbridge tag line regionally while also helping DCM financially.

DM moved that the STA purchase a

**Motion By:**  Dawn Merriman to purchase a ½ page ad in the DCM Spring 2021 Visitor Guide for $775.00.  **Second:** Vice Chair Chamberland

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Ardis, Chamberland ,Salvadore

**Vote:** Approved 5-0

**Discussion of Various Topics**

Jaguar Club and HerbFest Events

BA noted that the Jaguar Club had contacted the STA for potential assistance for an event later in 2021. And that Sally Greene with the HerbFest would also be applying. BA cautioned that all assistance requests would be considered with the reduced revenue levels due to the Covid impacts on the hotel tax.

Visit Widget

DM commented that she sees positive value in the Visit Widget app which offers travelers a wide variety of data in trip planning.

Rovezzi Building

BA and TC discussed potential ownership changes at the Rovezzi building which has been on the market. JB commented that there is a RFP for 8 Brookfield Road near the Rovezzi Building.

Sturbridge Hiking Trails

TC reported that four of the Sturbridge trails were equipped with visitor counters. Annual attendance is estimated to be around 50,000. An ice sculpture contest is also being hosted on the trails.

**STA Budget FY 2022**

JB reported that work was underway with draft figures for the STA budget and that the numbers are not horrible. BA commented that it is important to be careful and cautious with the spending on the tourism web site. TC asked if funds from FY21 could be carried over to FY22. JB replied that this may be hard to do and transfers would have to be specific to a project. TC asked how the STA can soften the revenue declines for FY22? JB replied that there will be limited encumbrance ability

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting of the STA would be Wednesday, March 10th at 6:30pm.

**Adjournment**

**Motion By:**  Dawn Merriman to adjourn.  **Second:** Vice Chair Chamberland

**Call Vote: Yes**: Amedy, Merriman, Chamberland Salvadore. Jeff Ardis left at 7:30pm

**Vote:** Approved 4-0