



Town of Sturbridge

STURBRIDGE TOURIST ASSOCIATION

MEETING MINUTES

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19 OCTOBER 2016

REGULAR MEETING

2ND FLOOR TOWN HALL

MEMBERS PRESENT: BRIAN AMEDY (BA), JIM LEAMING (JL), SANDRA GIBSON-QUIGLY (SGQ)

MEMBERS ABSENT: TOM CHAMBERLAND (TC), KRISTIE GALONEK (KG)

STAFF PRESENT: KEVIN FILCHAK (KF)

OTHERS PRESENT: ALIX MCNITT (AM), JOE MCCANN (JM)

1. Call to Order – BA called the meeting to order at 6:30.
2. Approval of Minutes – 14 September 2016 Regular Meeting – BA made a correction to the minutes. Under “TC treasurers report and finance,” BA was misquoted as saying, “[...] the Chamber has been paying their bills.” The sentence should read, “[...] the Chamber has been submitting their bills in a timely manner.” **SGQ made a MOTION to approve the minutes with the correction, BA seconded. JL was absent for last meeting and abstained from the vote.**
3. Treasurers Report – KF provided the STA with the monthly budget report and the report produced by the Town Accountant. KF noted a small five dollar discrepancy, but otherwise everything else was in order. BA asked if the STA had received anything from Pintastic with regard to bills. KF said that no bills had been received other than Chamber bills. BA asked what the status of the Route 20 restrooms was. AM says that as of March Old Sturbridge Village (OSV) owns those facilities. AM was not aware of future plans for the whole parcel. BA will follow up with OSV. AM said that as of November 1st the Information Center will be closed, however she would like to be able to notify user that the restrooms will possibly close. As OSV has not indicated future plans she cannot notify patrons when that facility will close and she has requested notice from OSV. BA asked if KF could contact Jim Donahue at OSV and see what the current / future status of the facility is. KF said he will contact OSV. BA asked AM who’s currently maintain the property; AM described the maintenance and how that is supposed to transition to OSV.

KF finally noted that soon there will need to be discussion on the budget for FY18. BA said those discussions will usually happen in January. SGQ said that for that budget, she would like the committee to continue using the definitions that were detailed and agreed upon during the last budget cycle.

4. Economic Development / Tourism Coordinator (EDTC) Report – BA asked to hold discussion on item 4. This allowed our speakers for items 5 and 6 to go first. No objection.

(Following Agenda Items 5 & 6) KF reviewed the monthly update as was provided in STA packet. KF cited the completion of the trolley survey and the timeline for the trolley study. KF said that the Town is beginning to develop a Permitting Guidebook, the Town has been conducting outreach efforts and also been working on the two different Tax Increment Financing agreements in Town. KF explained the current status of the website updates, referencing an email exchange with Idea Agency that explained the different ways the STA website can be updated including its calendar, merchant's page and visibility. SGQ asked if there currently existed a link on the Town's website that connected to the STA website. KF said none currently exists, however with the new Town website currently under consideration, this may be a possibility. SGQ said it's important to have a presence on the website. KF cited current challenges with STA site visibility on Google. JL asked if sites such as Yelp ranked higher than the STA site. KF confirmed this. KF then talked about the new Event Newsletter currently in beta testing with Hoteliers. KF said BA was initially consulted on the idea. SGQ said the newsletter is crucial. BA suggested looking at businesses like Brush It Off. JL concurred with SGQ. KF moved on to recount his presentation to the Board of Selectmen; they expressed their hope that the STA begin to put on more events. BA explained the historical challenges for the STA to host events with a volunteer board. KF said the Board was looking more for themed, seasonal events. SGQ said that now with a Town staff, the organizing of such events may be easier, but she expressed challenges with events. SGQ suggested partnering with other organizations who may like to co-host an event. BA said that he partners with local maple sugar farm. JL said there is a great opportunity to partner at the Pan Mass challenge due to the large amount of empty time waiting for the event to start. SGQ concurred. BA also suggested Recreation Committee and JL and SGQ both mentioned the Rotary Club. KF suggested considered a number of groups and revisiting the topic next month to discuss possible partnerships.

5. Funding Request – Alix McNitt, Chamber of Central Mass South, Area Event Sign – AM said that the process initiated with a letter sent to the Board of Selectmen, the Town Administrator, Town Planner, Building Official, Public Works Director, the Rotary Club, BA and KF. This letter explained the reasoning and purpose of the Area Event sign from its current location at the Information Center on Route 20 to the intersection of Cedar Street and Route 20. AM attended the Board of Selectman's meeting in early October and received unanimous support from the Board for the move. The location at Cedar Street was chosen for several reasons. AM cites the fact that it is at a traffic light allowing for a guaranteed audience. She also said that it allowed for easy location to change the signs out and that being on Town property is avoided challenges related to getting permission from private property owners. AM said the request is for \$1100 for the moving of the sign and \$200 contingency. The concern is that since the property has changed over the past few years, there may be pavement underneath the dirt; the \$200 would pay for a jackhammer that could break through

that pavement. The \$1100 would go directly to Global Sign, the company performing the move. AM said the sign was initially set up out of the partnership between the Town, OSV and the Chamber. It is cost effective as they do not charge for its use and most users are repeat users. She says that long term the chamber may look at adapting the sign to match the current wayfinding program the Town is considering. For now the sign will remain in its current form. BA asked how far off the road would the sign be. AM said that decision would lie with Mass DOT, Town Public Works and Dig Safe. SGQ expressed that the chosen location would be a good place for the sign. AM says the positive feedback they receive makes the move worthwhile. **JL made MOTION to approve \$1100 to move sign, with a \$200 contingency available if needed. SGQ seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.**

AM provided the STA with an update on the Harvest Festival that occurred over the previous weekend and gave a revised budget statement (attached to these minutes). AM said this year the approvals from the Town came later than usual. For this reason volunteer hours was reduced. Normally AM said the Chamber would rent a large tent with restaurants and local nonprofits providing food options. This year there was a reduction in the number of applications with only three nonprofits and four restaurants agreeing to come. AM decided that the reduced interest in cooking could not justify the purchase of the large tent. SGQ asked if timing or costs was the reason for the reduced interest in cooking. AM said that the Health Department's regulations were the primary reasoning for many not wanting to participate. AM said the rest of the usual people who came to work these events were busy elsewhere. AM said to provide crafters with food she sought out and found five high quality food trucks. She did not charge them for coming but reserved the right to revisit that question in future years. AM dismissed the chefs and nonprofits who had agreed to come but offered them spots if they still wished to participate. On the overall budget, the total bill is likely under what was originally allotted by the STA. AM said that she received a better deal on advertisements, she rented fewer tables and chairs and a smaller tent and no bill had yet been received for the port-a-potty. The entertainment budget was two hundred dollars over, AM said the Chamber will absorb those costs. AM estimates the Chamber reduced the total bill by 22%. SGQ asked if this will carry over for next year's bill as well. AM said she will likely stick with the Food Trucks as it made for easier clean up and reduced costs. JL raised concern about lack of local vendors and was surprised by their lack of interest. AM said all restaurants were invited. JL said this would be a great opportunity to interface with new customers, which AM agreed with. BA asked if this was a new trend. AM says she is seeing this, and is concerned about how it might affect restaurant week as well. AM said that while her hours working on this project went up, the volunteer hours and total needed were reduced. Magicians and bands were both successful.

6. Event Funding Request – Joseph McCann, Sturbridge Antique Show – JM asked if we knew about the show. BA asked if something was done on New Year's Eve as has been done in the past. JM says that they used to do free hors d'oeuvres, but that people would take everything. He also said they used to go and pick up individual orders. JM said to BA's question, the show is open on New Year's Eve.

First year there were 1100 persons, second year there were 1300. BA asked for estimate on this year's attendance. JM said that momentum will likely increase that number this year. Said originally most attendees came from Town of Sturbridge and Connecticut. JM handed out printed flyers everywhere he could. SGQ asked for clarification on food. JM said free food became too complicated, now they will charge \$15 for food. JM said the focus for advertising would now be on digital; this provides better data on views. JM reviewed Hartford Courant data. He cited stated that last year they received about a thousand people per day visiting their site. JM went through the information packet provided and explained banner ads, coupons and the Facebook tools. Said their target audience for the show was women over thirty. JM reviewed the Digital recommendations put forward by the Hartford Courant. Last year the group spent \$3900 in the Hartford Courant, which provided at least a half million views. SGQ asked if Harford was the target audience. BA explained its part of a larger publisher and thus is viewed by a larger audience than the Hartford region. He said that the Courant has the capacity to target specific regions using the Weather Channel as an example. SGQ asked who is the target audience, citing Boston as an example. JM says that they have gotten visitors from as far away as New York. SGQ asked for clarification asking specifically is the Antique Show looking for visitors from southwestern Connecticut. JM says they are looking for anyone, says only competition comes from New Bedford. JM said they are going for the largest audience. BA cites the value of the Courants travel show. SGQ said that the Antiques Show is getting good visibility and that the printed cards will be picked up by many. She also said it is a good used of funds. BA asked what the room rates were for those staying in the hotel. JM says \$99 per night. BA says the Antiques Show is growing and SGQ said that the STA is happy to be a part of this event. **BA made a motion to approve \$5250 out of the Marketing and Advertising budget to support the Sturbridge Antiques Show. JL seconded the motion. No discussion. Motion approved unanimously.**

7. Old Business – No discussion.
8. New Business
9. Adjourn – BA asked STA about November meeting date. Consensus was to hold next meeting on 16 November 2016 at 6:30. **BA made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting at 7:50, SGQ seconded the motion. No discussion.**

Harvest Festival Budget Oct. 15 & 16, 2016

	Budget	Actual	Notes
Income			
Crafters (50)	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 10,080.00	63
Non-Profits (8)	\$ 600.00	\$ 300.00	4
Chefs of the Area	\$ 8,000.00	\$ -	
Beverage Sales	\$ 400.00	\$ 900.00	
Food Truck Sponsor		\$ 650.00	New/Replacement
Income TOTAL	\$ 17,000.00	\$ 11,280.00	
Expense			
Advertising	\$ 3,500.00	\$ 3,300.00	
Tents/Tables/Chairs	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 658.75	
PortaPotties/Hand Sinks	\$ 650.00	\$ 650.00	Not in yet
Entertainment	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,200.00	Chamber covering \$200
Electricity	\$ 800.00	\$ -	
Chefs Sales Return	\$ 6,240.00	\$ -	
Chefs Sales Tax	\$ 560.00	\$ -	
Beverage Purchases	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00	Not all in yet
Staff Time - ED (50 hr)	\$ 1,450.00	\$ 2,175.00	75 hrs
Staff Time - Finance/Admin (20 hr)	\$ 370.00	\$ 185.00	10 hrs
Staff Time - Communications (10 hr)	\$ 185.00	\$ 185.00	
Volunteer Time* - Planning & Tasks (10 hr)	\$ 230.70	\$ 92.28	4 hrs
Volunteer Time* - Event (105 hr)	\$ 2,422.35	\$ 1,661.04	72 hrs
Miscellaneous		\$ 19.07	
Expense TOTAL	\$ 21,408.05	\$ 12,326.14	

Highlighted items approved expenses by STA \$ 9,750.00 \$ 7,608.75

* Value of volunteer time is based on the National average of \$23.07 as measured by the Independent Sector. Note: the current rate in MA is \$27.82, second highest in the US and would represent an additional \$1,959 if used to represent value above

** The only expense not represented above is for the waste management services as they are donated to the Chamber