



STURBRIDGE TOURIST ASSOCIATION

A COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN OF STURBRIDGE

MINUTES – 12 DECEMBER 2018 – TOWN HALL – 6PM

MEMBERS PRESENT | Brian Amedy (BA), Chair; Tom Chamberland (TC), Vice Chair; Jeff Ardis (JA); Nick Salvador (NS).

GUESTS PRESENT | Lisa Beaudin (LB); Mary Dowling (MD); Annie Roscioli (AR); Sandra Nasto (SN); Kerry Carey (KC); Gabe D'Annunzio (GD).

STAFF PRESENT | Kevin Filchak (KF), Economic Development & Tourism Coordinator

- (1) CALL TO ORDER – BA called the meeting to order at 6:02pm with a quorum being present.
- (2) REVIEW OF PREVIOUS MINUTES – 24 OCTOBER 2018 – TC MOVED to approve the minutes as presented. BA seconded. APPROVED 3-0-1. BA noted that the Christmas by Candlelight program was featured in the Chronicle.
- (3) TREASURERS REPORT – KF provided update for the months of October and November. BA asked about allocations and KF providing the total available remaining funds for Community Support and Marketing. TC asked how unused funding was allocated and KF provided an explanation. TC MOVED to accept the treasurers report as presented. JA seconded. APPROVED 4-0-0.
- (4) NEW BUSINESS -
 - a. JOINT MEETING WITH THE SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE – BA provided introductions for the STA and noted that the memo provided by the Special Events Committee (SEC) was helpful. MD explained that the SEC is a new committee to the town and noted that this came about thanks to the vision of the former Town Administrator to bring more community events to Sturbridge. MD highlighted previous events from the SEC including the farmers market, the half-marathon and the community bonfire. MD noted that a previous survey of visitors/residents had been conducted that show interest in several other community events, but explained that the group does not have a large funding source save a small allocation from Betterment. BA noted that he was pleased to see a farmers market in Sturbridge and asked about the SEC's 2019 plans, specifically whether or not the SEC would seek STA dollars as budget season is approaching. MD expressed an interest for a small earmark to support special events. AR said that the committee was hoping to do another community bonfire in the spring; she went on to explain that three events in the first year of the committee was a

good start. MD said that there are no planned events but that it would be helpful to have funds earmarked for that. General discussion on winter events in Sturbridge. BA asked about the focus of the SEC being community events or tourism. LB said that it is both as community events give visitors reasons to come back. General discussion on the former town event First Night. TC noted that it was great to have a SEC to communicate and plan events, but that the STA has limited funding. TC continued noting that the goal of the STA is to support events that put heads in beds as their focus; he suggested that a portion of the meals tax could be allocated for special events. Discussion on funding nonprofit programs and fundraisers. TC noted that the STA cannot sustain funding for half day events as they don't have the same return on investment as overnight events. MD said that the hotel/motel tax is a symbiotic relationship, and went on to explain the old SATA and how businesses wanted to see more community events. She noted that there should be space in the budget for smaller events; she cited the Shuttle as a non-overnight event as a community event. MD gave an overview of the September half marathon; original intent was not as a fundraiser even if that was the eventual outcome. KF suggested that the discussion at hand be held another night and that the focus of the discussion should be on supporting community events in the spring of 2019. JA raised the question of how promotion of these events occurs. Brief discussion about 2019 spring events and possible funding amounts. MD discussed possibly requesting \$2,500 for supporting events. **TC MOVED to allocate \$1,500 out of Community Support for the Special Events Committee. BA seconded. APPROVED 4-0-0.** A brief discussion on the FY2020 budget followed by a general discussion on how to get hotels to promote any events planned. NS asked if it was possible to incentivized hoteliers to promote events. KC talked about marketing conceptually, noting that word of mouth is still best method of sharing information, the value of email and list serves. Noted that it may be worth inquiring with hotels to see if they could promote the newsletters on their mailing lists. Brief discussion on newsletters. JA talked about having quarterly meetings between the two committees. There was general agreement to have quarterly cooperative meetings going forward. Members of the SEC left at 7:00pm.

- b. **FUNDING APPLICATION – PINTASTIC - \$8,000 REQUEST – GD representing.** BA thanked GD for answering questions about his application. GD explained the planning process for Pintastic. BA asked if the 454 room nights sold by Pintastic included staff rooms, GD said no. BA asked about complementary rooms, GD said that there are twenty-four complementary rooms. TC asked about the corporate sponsorship levels, GD explained that the highest level is \$10,000, next is \$5,000 and then continues decreasing. TC asked if the STA provides the sponsorship level that the STA receive that sponsorship recognition corresponding to the corporate sponsorship level. KF recommended to the STA that it sponsor up to only \$3,000 for Pintastic as that was the amount that was allocated in the previous fiscal year. JA asked if Pintastic would consider moving to another hotel, GD said that other hotels are interested in having the event move there. JA expressed his feeling that the STA should not feel obligated to pay

to keep an event in town. GD explained that he had hoped for a slower decrease in funding rather than that which was experienced with last year's allocation. NS noted that this is a good event but that the funding for it should decrease with time. BA expressed his thought to keep the funding at \$3,000, noting that the STA is receiving more requests and that means that there is less funding to give. GD again noted his hope to see a slower decrease in funding from previous allocations. **BA MOVED to allocate \$3,000 from the Marketing Line Item to support social media promotions for the 2019 Pintastic Event. NS seconded. TC stated that he would like to see more funding for Pintastic, noting the event has grown over the years and the success of the event. Vote 3-1-0. APPROVED.** Brief discussion about alternate funding sources and promotion.

c. Advertising Opportunities –

- i. The Last Green Valley (TLGV) – Business Partnership Renewal – JA asked about the return on investment (ROI) and KF said that he cannot say what the ROI is for the advert. JA expressed support for the purchase of ads with TLGV. TC talked about the Explore Guides and other adverts. Members talked at length which categories the STA should be listed in. **TC MOVED to purchase the partnership for \$680 for The Last Green Valley out of the marketing line item. JA seconded. APPROVED (4-0).**
- ii. Winter Putnam Traveler – Advert – The STA determined that they would not pursue this advert at this time.

d. 2019 STA Goals & Initial Budget Discussions – Members discussed this item during the EDTC update.

(5) Old Business

(6) Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator

- a. 2019 EDTC Goals
- b. Board of Selectmen – 2018 Update
- c. Farmers Market
- d. First Impressions
- e. Newsletters
- f. Ribbon Cutting – Publick House
- g. *Sturbridge Express*
- h. *Worcester Magazine* Articles
- i. Updated Reimbursement Request Form

KF talked about his 2019 goals and his focus for the upcoming year to focus on economic development projects. He stated that the town will need to consider investing more in this office as economic development does not fall under the STA's mandate. General discussion about the breakdown of economic development vs. tourism and members discuss next steps. KF goes through the 2019 goals and its major themes; he discussed his conversations with the Chamber and Planning department. Members talked about promoting the town more; TC asked about the budget and how can hotel front desk staff be engaged better. NS suggested including restaurants in those discussions. JA suggested that the incentives programs that NS mentioned earlier should be pursued. TC moved the discussion to nonprofit funding, noting that the STA cannot be their funding source. BA suggested that this same consideration may apply to the Chamber of Commerce. TC suggested a goal of partnership arrangements with the Chamber of Commerce as well as budgeting ideas. TC asked about bringing back restaurant week. JA mentioned the idea for creating an ambassador program and talked about how it could work. KF moved on to overview the rest of his update.

- (7) Correspondence – KF presented STA with a letter from Hamilton Rod and Gun Club thanking STA for their support.
- (8) Next Meeting – Proposed 9 January 2019 – TC mentioned that the Chronicle did do a spot for Christmas by Candlelight.
- (9) Adjourn – **BA MOVED and TC seconded to close the meeting at approximately 8:00pm. APPROVED (4-0).**