



STURBRIDGE TOURIST ASSOCIATION

A COMMITTEE OF THE TOWN OF STURBRIDGE

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES – 05/22/2019

MEMBERS PRESENT

Brian Amedy (BA), Chair; Tom Chamberland (TC); Nick Salvador (NS); Jeff Ardis (JA)

STAFF PRESENT

Kevin Filchak (KF), Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator

MINUTES

1. Call to Order – BA called the meeting to order at 6:01pm
2. Review of Previous Minutes – 17 April 2019 – **TC MOVED to approve** [the minutes] **as printed. BA seconded (3-0-1).** JA abstained as he was absent from the previous meeting.
3. Treasurers Report – KF provided update noting that he had omitted from the budget the \$3,000 Pintastic line item approved at the December meeting; KF checked and that was only error. He noted that though money had been over allocated, it should not adversely affect the budget as the allocated funds are not always completely spent. JA asked about Tourism line item and KF gave basic overview. BA asked that KF look into the purpose of the Tourism line item again and provide explanation. General discussion on flagging on Route 20. KF also noted that there is a discrepancy with the Grant Report from the Town Accountant. BA noted that TC and KF had a productive meeting with Finance Committee. JA asked questions about allocations leading to a lengthy discussion on the budget. BA asked if the Special Events Committee would be spending their allocation, KF said he anticipated they would. NS asked if the SEC could work with the Cedar Lake Boat Association, KF said it was possible. KF also noted that there was also a small discrepancy in the Grant and Special Revenue reconciliation, but that the budget reconciliation was correct; he is working with Town Accountant to identify the discrepancy. **BA MOVED to accept report as written, TC seconded. APPROVED. 4-0.**
4. New Business
 - a. Funding Request - Chamber of Central MA South – First Meeting

- i. GeoFest – BA gave overview of the event. BA asked when the event is being held, KF explained that it appears that the Chamber is asking for the money in advance of their 2020 event to pay for marketing and gear. General discussion on the timeframe for ordering items for events in advance of a fiscal year. JA asked about the Chamber’s \$1800 - \$2000 of revenues that they are receiving. TC noted that two of GeoFest’s events for this year are being held outside of Sturbridge, events that were previously held at Sturbridge businesses. BA question how it was known how many people are staying for the event. General discussion on overnight stays. TC suggested that the Chamber be brought in for additional discussions on data for the 2019 event. KF will inquire about a breakdown for the \$4,300 request, and an explanation of data for overnight stays at the event. General discussion on events. JA asked if for events where the STA is providing a majority of the funding, does the STA provide require budget. KF said no but the new application being reviewed later in the evening would require that. Members reviewed GeoFest’s budget. TC noted that the Chamber, based on the budget, appears that they are operating at a loss. General questions about the budget leading to members asking that the Chamber better define their budget. General discussion about how to support any event over a period of years, raising questions amongst members of sponsoring nonprofit organizations for purposes of fundraising. KF summarized questions for Chamber; TC asked that the Chamber also provide a summary of where the participants are coming from.
- ii. Harvest Festival – BA provided summary and noted the budget and the chamber’s potential for a second sponsor. BA asked who the potential second sponsor is. TC asked about the 10% out of state participants and the overnight stays generated from that. Members questioned whether vendors and/or participants utilize the hotels. TC noted the loss from the festival of the taste of Sturbridge. BA noted that if this should draw patrons from outside of the region, it should be marketed. JA asked for the difference between generating positive events for the community versus supporting fundraisers. Members reviewed the budget supplied. TC noted that the Chamber does not note the STA’s annual contributions to them in their annual report or their budgets. General discussion on the value of the event. BA discussed potential ways to get feedback from hotels regarding STA ad campaigns that support events such as this, KF supported the idea and the members discussed how that could work and the value of the data. JA suggested that the STA should consider reducing funding year after year, regardless of the data received from hotels. TC asked how should the STA define that level of support year on year. JA asked if there was a percentage drop and how the funding could occur. TC suggested that there should be hotel room data that should use to determine funding levels. KF noted that some of that data is being suggested for the application update. JA

noted that STA won't have that data from the harvest fest, suggested that for events like this event organizers use intent to stay instead. General discussion on Chamber marketing. KF reviewed questions; JA asked if trend lines could be provided for several years for harvest fest.

iii. Post Event Evaluations (GeoFest, Harvest Festival & Fall Marketing) – No discussion.

- b. Funding Request - IAATO – First Meeting – KF provided background for the group. Members questioned value of sponsoring a conference, noting that it is not an open to the public and are concerned that it is not going to provide a value to the town. TC noted that the only thing that may be able to be funded would be speaker, but otherwise was not keen to support the event. **TC MOVED to not invite IAATO as the event is a closed event as it doesn't fit the funding profile. BA seconded. APPROVED (4-0).**
- c. Discussion of Branding and Marketing RFP's – KF explained the reasoning for the posting and then removal of RFP's. General discussion on Chapter 30B and posting requirements and quote solicitation. JA spoke about different ways to solicit quotes. NS supported the idea. Extensive discussion on how best to post and solicit quotes and/or RFPs. **BA MOVED To transfer \$100 from Community Support to Marketing to properly post the RFP, JA seconded. APPROVED (4-0). TC MOVED to authorize KF and BA to develop and post the RFP. BA seconded APPROVED (4-0).** JA asked about timeframe leading to general discussion.
- d. Discussion on Business Recognition Program – KF provided broad overview of the program. JA asked about how job creation might tie in with tourism and if that falls under their mandate. He moved on to say that this type of award is usually managed by the Chamber. General discussion on how to award to various industries. TC asked about funding leading to general question of funding non-tourist businesses. General discussion on how to fund the event and possibly seeking Board of Selectmen support at a special town meeting to help fund the program. TC discussed categories for awards and JA suggested various options for consideration such as restaurant and food, entrepreneur, business concept, employer of the year, suggested looking at other chambers. KF will report back in June following conversations with BoS.

5. Old Business

- a. Visitsturbridge.org domain renewal – **TC MOVED to allocate \$93.44 out of Marketing for the purpose of domain renewal. NS seconded. APPROVED. 4-0.**

- b. STA Application Revisions – KF gave overview. TC raised question about terminology, and how this event might be open to the public. KF said the question can be added, TC suggested adding this to question 12 and how will this engage the public. General discussion on that question and adding language to bring people. Consensus to make edits and upload. TC suggested the addition that within 60 days the follow up report. JA suggested not having any punitive actions in the application if the report is not provided.
- 6. EDTC Report – KF provided thorough updated. TC asked question about Pilot station leading to general discussion. Members had a discussion on the STR report. TC asked about Brimfield Fair leading to general discussion on fair. JA asked about STA’s sponsorship of the concerts on the commons.
- 7. Correspondence
- 8. Adjourn – Next meeting June 12th. **BA MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:15. JA seconded. APPROVED (4-0).**