



Sturbridge Tourist Association

A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge

Regular Meeting

11 September 2019, 6:00pm

Center Office Building, 301 Main Street, Second Floor Meeting Room

Members Present: Brian Amedy (BA), Chair; Tom Chamberland (TC), Vice-Chair; Jeff Ardis (JA); Nick Salvador (NS); Dawn Merriam (DM)

Staff Present: Kevin Filchak (KF), EDTC

1. **Call to Order** | BA called the meeting to order at 6:12pm with a full quorum being present.
2. **Review of Previous Minutes – 14 August 2019** | **BA MOVED to approve minutes as presented. DM seconded. APPROVED 5 – 0.**
3. **Treasurer's Report** | KF provided members with an update of the STA's budget through August. KF noted that the STA had inadvertently purchased a full page advert in Discover Central MA's fall visitor guide and needed the STA to authorize payment to make up the difference. General discussion on the cost of the advert. **TC MOVED to authorize up to \$500 to cover the full page ad costs. NS seconded. APPROVED. 5 – 0. TC MOVED to accept the Treasurers Report and presented. BA seconded. APPROVED 5 – 0.**
4. **Old Business**
 - a. **Request for Proposal – Branding and Marketing Study**
 - i. **Ranking of Technical Proposals**
 - ii. **Review of Price Proposals**
 - iii. **Ranking of Price Proposals**
 - iv. **Ranking of Overall Proposals**

Editor Notes:

(1) Please review the attached excel sheet detailing the scores given to each applicant, the prices submitted which round the applicant made it to and the overall selected candidate. (2) Prior to the start meeting KF had uploaded all scores from the member's review of the technical proposals only. (3) The base prices were primary considerations, but additional options were recorded and considered in later rounds of consideration.

BA gave overview of the RFP process to date, noting challenges with scheduling the review of applications; noted that the goal of the evening was to have a thorough discussion of the proposals, but hoped not to extend the decision another month. JA

noted the desire to not have to alter the proposed project calendars. KF explained the review process for each proposal. JA stated that the qualitative discussion should be the primary review, explained how he did now wish to restrict the discussion to those proposals ranked highest and proposed a method of review. KF explained the process required to be compliant under M.G.L. Chapter 30B. BA opened each price proposal with KF recorded and updating the master scoring sheet. Once all prices were recorded, members had a general discussion on grading the proposals. TC recommended having each member take a few minutes to score the price proposals individually. Members each silently recorded their scores and shared with KF to update the master score sheet. DM asked if the base price should be considered or if the additional fees should also be considered. KF recommended going with the base price to keep it equitable.

[Round 1] BA noted that DCI had the most overall points according to the STA master score sheet, he then highlighted the next top ranked proposals. JA noted that with the addition of the price proposals, there was little change between the qualitative scores and the qualitative and price scores combined. There was general discussion on how best to remove the lower ranked proposals from the discussion. Members began to remove the lower ranked proposals from consideration based on their low numerical scores. Those with lower scores were removed from further consideration as they were deemed to not be advantageous by members. This included: Blue Seed Solutions, Contrast and Company, Direggio, Field Goals US, Hub Collective LTD, Mass Live Media and Sperling Interactive. JA asked that Stebbings be kept in the discussion. The members removed Hemsworth as they deemed it was not advantageous due to the price. TA noted that Stebbings was ranked at 19 but Hemsworth was 18 and compared scores across different categories to determine if both should be removed. JA noted that Hemsworth was young and upcoming, but that there are options so would not object were they to be removed from consideration. TA asked what makes Stebbings worth keeping over Hemsworth. JA stated that that was his preference; TC noted his was the opposite. JA ranked some of the positives of Stebbings based on their resume. NS said if JA were ok with passing on Stebbings that they would be willing to pass on Hemsworth. Members agreed to remove Hemsworth but keep Stebbings. BA noted that he was uncomfortable with add on fees associated with Artyfact, members concurred. DM and JA noted support of Overit to keep for the next round. NS noted concerns with their base price and the additional retainer fees. BA voiced concerns with their timeline of completing all work within one to three months. JA asked if there should be another consideration, TC suggested holding Overit for the second round of discussion. General discussion on Overit's proposal and timeline; determined it will make it to round two. BA noted that Avant has advantages and because it had worked with Colonial Williamsburg and other community based clients, but did note concern that its plan may be too aggressive. JA expressed concern with overreliance on email and no New England experience. TC suggested keeping the remaining top six candidates for discussion in round two. Members agreed with suggestion.

[Round 2] Members began the second round of reviews with those being kept for consideration highlighted in salmon. Members started with those lowest ranked

proposals. TC recommended dropping Overit due to the price to which BA concurred. JA asked about the proposals timeline; KF noted that the application met the brief during the first three months, but did not do so with the rollout. Committee removed Overit from consideration. Committee voted to remove Stebbings. Committee considered Avant, Innovate and O'Neil. Members shared their individual ranking of these equally ranked proposals. NS said that based on the price, since all are ranked the same, Avant has the lowest price. JA voiced concerns about Avant as they have no New England experience which BA concurred with. JA said he has some experience with an Innovate partner agency and they have a positive agency and community with a regional focus. NS concurred with regional focus, but not much else regarding their application. JA noted that he did not rank O'Neil highly because their scope made it appear that the town would have to recruit for focus groups. NS said that O'Neil's scope was restricted to regional focus versus a more national one. TC noted that O'Neil was one of this top rated because of their location connections and awareness of the Commonwealth's legislature. DM brought up Innovate's limited discussion of social media in their application. General discussion on the three applications. O'Neil and Innovate kept in consideration. JA again noted concerns with limited New England experience with Avant, and NS noting that there was not a positive measure of evaluation in their application. BA said he'd be in favor of removing them from consideration, members concurred. The committee moved on to consider Engage to which JA noted that it had good opportunity to connect with groups and discuss some of their positive qualities. TC noted it was one of the top ranked, suggested moving them along in discussion but was cautious of the add on fees. JA noted some of the highlights for Guide and their rebranding positives, including the development of a project website. BA noted that Guide's application needed a steering committee with multiple meetings which may prove difficult. TC and NS noted that this was not a ranked proposal and the group decided to remove Guide from consideration. BA noted Open the Door's knowledge of the area including some experience with Sturbridge businesses, and JA noted that the director used to run MassPort. NS highlighted how research could be broken down by age group. TC noted he was positive towards Chandlerthinks, DM concurred noting that the group wanted to familiarize themselves with the community. JA highlighted their recognition. Strategic was not ranked highly for JA, TC and NS. TC was not impressed with the social media aspects of their proposal and DM concurred saying that it needed to be a large component. Acclimation to keep DCI in consideration. TC explained that now consideration comes down to price.

[Round Three] NS noted that Chandlerthinks experience was in the southern US, to which BA said Open the Door is better as it has local experience. General discussion on Chandlerthinks at the end of which TC recommended removing them from consideration. Group agreed. JA suggested, and group agreed, to next review those outlier prices. TC concurred but for the purposes of discussion suggested adding to their proposal Engage's add on fees for consideration, bringing total to \$63,050. TC said that Engage would not be his top rated but it would be third, BA concurred. DM said she had DCI ranked above that proposal. TC asked if it was worth consideration DCI first, JA said no. General discussion on ability to negotiate prices with applicants, KF explained limited

ability under M.G.L. leading to a general discussion of M.G.L. Chapter 30B. TC said that DCI had the best proposal but the least advantageous price leading to a general discussion on their price proposal and their removal from consideration. BA noted that qualitatively the remaining four (O'Neil, Innovate, Engage and Open the Door) were between scores of 22 and 23. JA asked for feelings on O'Neil, again raising concerns about the focus group leading to a general discussion on that type of data collection. BA suggested removing them from consideration. DM asked if this were something that O'Neil could clarify, TC noted that the applicant left the focus group vague as a *may* conduct it with NS adding that they would check feasibility of it first. JA asked if it were not feasible would it remove a key element from consideration. General discussion on applicant's methodology. NS noted that Open the Door explains their methodology while O'Neil requires members to speculate. NS said he's not willing to support Innovate given price tag, members concurred removed from consideration. NS asked KF for his opinion on remaining two: Engage and Open the Door. KF noted his top ranked proposal was Open the Door and that Engage did not rank for him.

TC MOVED to select Open the Door for the Marketing and Branding project based on their overall proposal and price considerations. NS seconded. TC explained his disagreement with Engage's proposal, with DM supporting by saying that they had a shorter timeline for completing the project. JA noted that Engage said ten month review while Open the Door said four month review. BA suggested that with their existing knowledge of the town, it may be why Open the Door's timeline is shorter and DM concurred. JA asked about reference checks leading to general discussion on checks. TC suggested that KF consult with the Town Administrator about questions for references. **TC amended his previous motion, adding the following to the end, "...pending reference checks done in coordination with the Town Administrator. APPROVED (5 – 0).**

- b. **Funding Request – Old Sturbridge Village** | BA provided some feedback he had received from C. Tieri regarding the staffing considerations in OSV's proposal. General discussion amongst members with how funding would work between the fiscal years as per OSV's proposal. BA yielded Chair to TC as he is a former employee of OSV. **DM MOVED to allocate \$12,500 for Old Sturbridge Village and Break the Ice Media's initiative to solicit bus tour operators to Sturbridge from the Marketing line item. JA seconded.** JA ask if the STA was obligated, by the nature of their motion, to paying for the next fiscal year's component; KF said no. **APPROVED 4 – 0 – 1.** BA asked that if there are meetings held by OSV or BTI on this to ensure that the STA is invited to said meetings. TC yielded chair back to BA.
- c. **Funding Request – Gatehouse Media** | KF showed members the data received from Gatehouse on the previous campaign. **TC MOVED to allocate from the Marketing line item \$1,500 for the month of October, November and December. BA seconded. APPROVED 5 – 0.**

5. New Business

- a. **Discover Central MA – Pagio Invoice** | Item discussed under agenda item 3.
- 6. **EDTC Report** | KF provided brief report. Members discussed the recent Business Breakfast.
- 7. **Next Meeting** | Members selected October 9th as their next meeting date.
- 8. **Adjourn** | **BA MOVED to adjourn the meeting at 8:56pm. TC seconded. APPROVED 5 – 0.**

Sturbridge Tourist Association - RFP Review Matrix

Vendor	Proposed Methodology					Social Media					Research Capabilities					Sum Total	Price					Price Total	Total	Price Proposal	Additional Add Ons	
	BA	TC	JA	NS	DM	BA	TC	JA	NS	DM	BA	TC	JA	NS	DM		BA	TC	JA	NS	DM					
Artyfact	2	1	2	2	2	2	0	1	0	0	2	1	1	2	2	20	1	0	0	1	1	3	23	\$ 76,230.00	\$ 14,160.00	\$ 90,390.00
Avant Marketing	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	2	1	24	2	2	1	0	0	5	29	\$ 42,104.00	\$ -	\$ -
Blue Seed Solutions	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	11	0	1	0	1	0	2	13	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Chandlerthinks	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	2	0	0	2	2	1	2	23	1	2	2	1	2	8	31	\$ 74,015.00	\$ -	\$ -
Contrast and Company	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	2	0	2	1	1	1	16	0	0	1	0	0	1	17	\$ 103,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
DCI	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	30	0	1	2	1	1	5	35	\$ 92,580.00	\$ -	\$ -
Direggio	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	\$ 43,424.00	\$ -	\$ -
Engage Strategies	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	23	1	2	2	1	1	7	30	\$ 63,050.00	\$ 3,600.00	\$ 10,000.00
Field Goals US	1	1	0	1	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	14	1	1	1	1	1	5	19	\$ 47,350.00	\$ -	\$ -
Guide	1	2	2	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	24	0	1	2	2	2	7	31	\$ 52,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Hemsworth Communications	1	2	2	1	1	1	2	1	2	0	1	1	1	1	1	18	1	0	2	2	1	6	24	\$ 38,250.00	\$ -	\$ -
Hub Collective LTD	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	0	1	0	1	2	1	1	1	15	0	1	0	0	1	2	17	\$ 96,500.00	\$ -	\$ -
Innovative Planning	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	2	1	22	2	1	2	1	1	7	29	\$ 78,375.00	\$ -	\$ -
Mass Live Media	1	0	0	2	0	1	1	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	0	9	0	0	0	0	0	0	9	\$ 67,500.00	**	\$ -
O'Neill and Associates	2	2	1	1	2	2	2	0	1	2	2	2	0	1	2	22	2	2	1	0	2	7	29	\$ 73,400.00	\$ -	\$ -
Open the Door	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	1	23	2	2	1	2	1	8	31	\$ 59,200.00	\$ -	\$ -
Overit	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	23	0	1	2	0	1	4	27	\$ 75,000.00	\$ 130,000.00	\$ -
Sperling Interactive	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	18	0	0	1	0	0	1	19	\$ 119,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Stebbins Partners	2	1	2	1	1	1	0	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	19	1	0	2	0	1	4	23	\$ 75,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Strategic and Creative Mkting	2	2	0	2	2	2	1	1	2	1	2	2	1	1	2	23	2	2	1	2	2	9	32	\$ 58,750.00	\$ -	\$ -

Highest Possible Score = 40 points

**Range given and potential for additional costs not accounted for.

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Top 5 highest scores/\$	Selected Proposal	Lowester 15 scores/\$