



Sturbridge Tourist Association

A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge

Regular Meeting

29 January 2020, 6:00pm

301 Main Street, Center Office Building, 2nd Floor Meeting Room

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

Members Absent: Jeff Ardis (excused)

Staff Present: Kevin Filchak (KF), Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator

Guests Present: Annie Roscioli (AR), Special Events Chair; Lisa Beaudin (LB), Special Events Committee; Kerry Carey (KC), Special Events Committee; Kelly Tourtellotte (KT), Special Events Committee

1. **Call to Order** – BA called the meeting to order at 6:00pm. A quorum was present.
2. **Review of Previous Minutes** – KF noted that on page three of the minutes, in the motion under Section d., the word “APPROVED” was misspelled. *TC MOVED to approve the minutes as written with KF’s edit. BA seconded. APPROVED (3-0-1, DM abstained as she was not at previous meeting).*
3. **Treasurers Report** – KF provided finance report to members. KF highlighted the large expenses with Open the Door in January, as well as noting difficulties he has had with the Worcester Magazine campaign invoices; suggested caution if using Worcester Magazine again in the future. TC asked if the town was not paying a portion of each Open the Door invoice as a way to ensure work is completed. KF said that the Town was not doing that nor was the contract written as such, but did not that such considerations could be adopted in the future. BA updated members regarding Old Sturbridge Village’s bus tours program; noted that their consultant had established many positive connections at the national convention. *TC MOVED to accept the Treasurers Report as presented. NS seconded. APPROVED (4-0).*
4. **New Business**
 - a. **2020 Visitor Guide – Global Design and Publishing** – KT provided overview of the previous versions of the Sturbridge Visitor Guide, explaining how the STA co-sponsors the advertisements in said guide. She explained that five-thousand are printed, with an additional 1,500 printed and delivered to the STA for further distribution. KT asked members if there were additional photos that she could use in the guide. DM noted that the guides are very popular at the hotels and are a good resource. BA referenced the packet where updates to last year’s guide were noted, leading to a general discussion on updates to said guide. In reference to KT’s previous question, KF said that photos and

contact information to new businesses can be provided. TC asked about the prices proposed by KT, to which KT explained the price breakdown. Members held a general conversation about local events in Town. KF asked KT and members if they wished to continue the 50% match for first time advertisers and 40% for returning, which had been done the previous year. Members had brief discussion about providing the business of the year award winners with said discount. *TC MOVED that for the four Business of the Year winners, that the STA pay for fifty percent of a half page ad, if they so choose.* TC briefly explained the award to KT. *BA seconded. APPROVED (3-0-1).* Members had a general discussion on the number of copies that should be printed. *TC MOVED to increase the STA's additional print run to 2,000. NS seconded. APPROVED (4-0).* Members had a general discussion on how to determine the proper amount to allocate. They agreed that KT should revise the contract and resubmit to the STA, with members taking the matter up at the next meeting.

KF explained that he had been contacted by both Berkshire Brochures and CTM Media group; they both manage brochure racks in the region and asked if the STA wanted to get their guides in their circulation. Members discussed the value of having their guides in greater circulation. DM noted that the STA is currently considering the branding/marketing study and it may be better to wait until the results are published. BA asked KF to get some price points and distribution ranges for both organizations. TC asked if the STA could utilize the Town's Senior Worker program to check and manage the brochures in the Town's hotels/restaurants. Members had a general discussion on such a program and explored possibly partnering with the Recreation Department to get said program started. KF said that he will do some additional research for the next meeting.

- b. **Joint Meeting & Discussion with the Special Events Committee** – AR, KC and LB introduced themselves to the STA members and visa-versa. LB began the discussion by talking about the Special Events Committee's (SEC) farmers market program; she raised the valuable data that the farmers market has collected from their social media platforms which provides excellent benchmarking data points. LB noted that people are coming to the farmers market from the Publick House which is helping to spread knowledge of the market to those visitors to the community. LB noted that the SEC recently hired a market manager to help manage the daily operations of the market, leading to a general discussion on the market. BA explained the STA's ongoing efforts to develop a town brand and market strategy, leading to a lengthy discussion on marketing events in Town, tying it to the farmers market and the impact of social media marketing. KF said that he will make social media marketing an agenda item on the next STA meeting agenda. TC asked the SEC members if they had a schedule of events, AR provided a general overview of the SEC's existing events: the fall/spring bonfire, the farmers market (summer) and the Home of the Brave 5k (November). KF explained the value of the events the Special Events Committee host in Sturbridge. Members of both committees had a broad discussion about how a potential First Night event could occur in Sturbridge. LB returned to the farmers market discussion by noting the value of the Market Manager for their event. General conversation about the Special Events Committee budget, KF

noted that it is anticipated that the SEC will be allocated \$6,000 from Betterment pending approval at the Annual Town Meeting. BA said that if the SEC was to seek funding from the STA, they would need to provide the STA with a set amount to vote on. KF explained the budget process to the members. Members had a general discussion on the STA supporting SEC events. KC said that the goal for the joint meeting was lay the ground work in case the SEC needs to come before the STA for future funding opportunities. LB raised the suggestion that the STA consider developing town wide gift certificates. BA and TC said that it would be possible, but municipal finance law complicates the matter. General discussion on how such a program could work. TC suggested to the SEC that they may consider going to the Town to potentially look at how the hotel/motel tax is allocated or potentially the meals tax to help fund these community events. SEC and the STA thanked each other for the joint meeting, SEC members left.

- c. **2019 Annual Report** – KF provided the members with a draft of the 2019 Annual Report. NS and DM noted small grammatical fixes that KF said he would amend per their recommendations. *TC MOVED to approve the Annual Report with the corrections noted. DM seconded. APPROVED (4 – 0).*
- d. **The Last Green Valley – Annual Membership** – KF shared his and TC's meeting with The Last Green Valley (TLGV) the previous week to discuss membership. KF recommended that based on that conversation that the Committee takes no action at this time. He also explained that he would be having an additional meeting with TLGV the following week. TC said that it has been the goal of TLGV to drive membership to their organization, but that they need to expand their horizon. TC said that there is still value in the STA being listed as a member with TLGV, because the Explore Guide still has value. KF asked what the return on investment for the STA's previous investments. Members talked about getting a basic membership. *BA MOVED to approve a basic membership with The Last Green Valley for \$100. TC seconded. APPROVED (4 – 0).*
- e. **Update to STA Forms** – KF provided overview of his revisions to the STA's application and Post Event Evaluation. He explained that it was his goal to move the forms from google to the Town server. TC asked if applicants can directly upload files to each form, KF said not at this time. TC asked if that feature can be added. Members were positive towards the changes.
- f. **January Trails Webinar** – TC noted that since the webinar has passed that the STA take no action. Members passed over agenda item.
- g. **Chamber of Commerce – Annual Meeting** – *TC MOVED to cover the cost of the Chair's participation in the Chamber's Annual Meeting. NS seconded. APPROVED (3-0-1).* BA talked briefly about the meeting and its value from the team.

5. Old Business

- a. **Restaurant Week – Discussion** – KF provided an overview of his memorandum and provided suggestions for implementation. BA suggested that a restaurant week be tied in

with Maple Week at Old Sturbridge Village. Members had a general discussion on timing for the restaurant week. NS suggested that the STA ask restaurants to try to have a new menu item during that week, as a way to encourage people to get involved, perhaps creating a 'special of the week.' General discussion on how to get restaurants involved. DM suggested that the STA hold a restaurant week without a specific draw, rather advertise the town to draw interest; following they can see how the restaurants do. TC suggested that the STA consider having restaurant week over a two week period to get interest. BA suggested that the STA contact Maxine Carter Lome, Discover Central MA and the Stonebridge Press to help promote the event. Members agreed to hold the Restaurant Weeks during the weeks of 3/16 and 3/24. NS suggested tying it in with the theme of maple. BA suggested not only limiting it to restaurants, but also tying it to the breweries as well. General discussions on having the STA purchase ads to promote this event. *TC MOVED to allocate \$3,000 out of marketing for advertising Restaurant Week in Sturbridge and to authorize the Chair and the EDTC to finalize and initiate the program. DM seconded. APPROVED (4 – 0).*

- b. Branding and Marketing Update** – KF and BA gave a brief situational update of Open The Door's progress. Noted that a thorough and more formal update will be provided by the consultant at the next meeting on 12 February.
- c. Trails App Discussion** – TC said that there has been no movement on the project at this time, but that there may be other vendors who could provide quotes and other information.

6. EDTC Report

- a. Post Event Evaluation – Antique Show**
- b. STR Report – Quarter 4 of 2019**

KF provided an update to the STA. He highlighted the Economic Development Forum that is scheduled for 13 February and encouraged members to attend. KF noted that the AAA travel show will be coming up at the beginning of March. Members had a lengthy conversation about the STR report. DM gave general overview of the hotel business here in town. NS asked about the impact of Air B&B's to the hotel community, leading to a general discussion.

TC noted some concerns that there was limited public promotion of the Business of the Year awards. Members had a general discussion about how the STA could better promote the award in the future.

7. Next Meeting – The next meeting is scheduled for 12 February 2020 at 6pm.

8. Adjourn – *BA MOVED and DM seconded to adjourn the meeting at 8:11pm. APPROVED (4 – 0).*