



Sturbridge Tourist Association

A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge

Meeting Minutes

13 November 2019, 6:00pm

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

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

Staff Present: Kevin Filchak, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator (KF); Jeff Bridges, Town Administrator (JB)

1. **Call to Order** – BA called the meeting to order at 6:05pm with a quorum being present.
2. **Review of Previous Minutes – 9 October 2019** – TC MOVED to approve the minutes, BA seconded. APPROVED (4-0-1).
3. **Treasurers Report** – KF provide update and noted that the budget season has begun and suggested a budget timeline for the STA. TC asked about how the decrease in occupancies seen in hotel data may affect next year's budget. KF noted that there has been several consecutive quarters where there were decreases in occupancy, but this trend is the same throughout the state. A lengthy discussion amongst the members on hotel occupancy, its effects, and the hotel business in Town. KF said it is unknown at this time what the effect of the lower occupancy may be at this time. General discussion on the Host Hotel and Conference Center. *TC MOVED to accept the Treasurers Report. BA seconded. APPROVED 5-0.*
4. **New Business**
 - a. **Business of the Year Award Discussion** – BA gave brief overview of the proposal with KF providing additional comments, suggesting only an annual award for a tourism business. General discussion amongst members on the costs of the award. BA asked when this should the award be conferred, KF suggested soon because the STA has the DCM memberships that it can distribute as per their current contract. Members discussed how to choose the winner of the award. BA, TC, DM and NS highlighted different businesses in town and what they are doing for Sturbridge. DM suggested

using the question, 'who is out there promoting Sturbridge?' as a criteria, and supported KF's idea of thinking outside of the usual contenders or those who don't have storefronts. KF suggested a path forward by having a public "best of" award. General discussion on categorization of awards. TC suggested using the STA's moto of 'shop, eat, stay, play' as the categories for consideration. TC asked what the cost of purchasing two more memberships from DCM, KF said that they could check. KF said he would next week, put out a press release, ask public for nomination based on previously proposed categories, close it a week prior to the STA meeting, and then the STA would review and select a winner. JA asked that there should be a question asking why you're nominating the business for the award, members agreed. TC also suggested encouraging self-nominations. Members agreed to award the award at the next BoS meeting. *TC MOVED to have a business awards program, anchored around 'Shop. Eat. Stay. Play.'* and that KF will finalize the discussion points for the program. DM seconded. APPROVED (5-0).

- b. **Restaurant Week Discussion** – BA gave overview of STA's history with restaurant week describing the time when the Chamber used to run the event. General discussion on the value of a restaurant week and when it would be most advantageous. BA and NS suggested winter/February as those are slow months. JA asked how long the event should be, BA suggested seven days. TC suggested it would be up to each restaurant to determine what they would prepare/how they would price it. BA said that this would help promote the restaurant. JB said could we kick it up a notch by having participating restaurants use punch cards and having a reward for someone at the end. DM suggested that to be entered, you need to go to one restaurant during the week to get an entry, and you're entered to win. JB suggested different ways to get the cards. General discussion on ways to get cards returned. JA asked is this being presented the cards verses having them at the register. TC said this would be a good way to measure the restaurants involvement. JA asked what are the incentives for the restaurant to go through all the effort to make sure their staff participates. DM said the incentive is promotion of those businesses; TC said the advertising package for this would be further incentive for this project noting it's their choice to opt in. JB suggested creating a label for this. NS suggested adding a question at the bottom on the card that asked if folks were excited to participate in restaurant week. TC suggested offering a membership to the winner of restaurant week. JB suggested identifying how others do restaurant weeks. DM and NS talked about how a gift basket could be organized. KF suggested a path forward by having him do some research, and prepare a general plan for the STA for their December meeting, members concurred. TC asked if caters could participate as well, members agreed they should.

5. **Old Business**

- a. **Update on Branding & Marketing Project** – BA gave overview on the project, noting that most stakeholders have been contacted. BA noted that the consultant has some initial feedback and gave brief overview. TC noted that some of the questions included regionalism, the hub and spoke. BA explained that the Host came up, and that the Village is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays. General discussion of members conversations with the consultant. KF noted his conversation about businesses views of the Town and those relationships. BA noted also the lack of communications amongst businesses and town, leading to a general discussion. TC also raised with consultant that we're lacking information following events, referencing the Herbfest after action review (AAR). General discussion on AAR for Herbfest and how better to help. *TC MOVED to reach out to both consultants to coordinate a date in January for a joint meeting. BA seconded APPROVED (5-0).*

6. **EDTC Report** – KF provided overview.

7. **Next Meeting – December 11th** – BA gave overview of OSV bus tour meeting that will be occurring at 11/14. Members changed date to 12/16.

8. **Adjourn** – *BA MOVED, TC seconded to adjourn the meeting at 7:35pm.*