Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

 **Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, June 8, 2022 – 6:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Brian Amedy, Chair

Tom Chamberland, Vice Chair
Sandra Gibson-Quigley

Nick Salvadore

**Guests:**

Alexandra McNitt, Director, Central South MA Chamber

Maxine Carter Lome, Weathervane Publishing

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Chair Amedy opened the meeting at 6:33 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes : May 11, 2022**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | Approve: May 11, 2022 STA Minutes |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: N Salvadore |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Amedy, Gibson-Quigley, Chamberland, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**STA Grant Application – Harvest Fest**

Alex McNitt appeared before the STA to discuss the Chamber’s request for support for the annual Harvest Fest. Alex reviewed past Harvest Fests by noting that the 2021 Fest was not as big as prior events and that there was no show in 2020. The number of vendors was up to 57 with 60 to 70 projected for 2022. 2017 saw 79. The event will include 3 bands, a roving magician and food trucks. Sandra inquired about the impacts of colder weather and asked about the geographic locations of attendees. Alex the large majority are within 25 miles. Sandra asked where the STA grant dollars would go and Alex replied that they would be devoted to Chamber operations so they can sponsor community based events like Harvest Fest. Brian asked how the economy was faring. Alex said that business is coming back and that the tourism sector is strong but workforce deficits were compelling businesses to operate under strength and within limited hours.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | To Allocate $5,000 for the October 2022 Harvest Fest from Comm. Support FY 23 STA Budget. |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: N Salvadore |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Amedy, Gibson-Quigley, Chamberland, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Importance of Business Collaboration**

Brian and Alex engaged in shared observations about the value and benefits for hotels, restaurants and tourism related businesses to work together in areas such as cross promotions, referrals for rooms or informing guests of local attractions. Alex noted that several restaurants are stand alone and not engaged in their business patterns Alex did offer praise for Baba Sushi for their generous donations to various causes.

**Thank You to Brian and Tom**

Alex ended her remarks by thanking Brian and Tom for their long time service to Sturbridge tourism and to note how much she enjoyed working with them.

**STA Tourism Grant Application – 2023 Antiques Collectibles Show**

Maxine Carter Lome appeared before the STA to represent her application for a grant to support the annual New Year’s Antiques Collectible Show. Maxine detailed some of the economic impact of previous shows.

 2022 - 70 Vendors with 550 attendees

 2021 - 40 Vendors with 750 people

Maxine noted that her shows have items for all price range and that this New Year’s Day is on a weekend. The 2023 Show will include 3 appraisers from Antiques Roadshow.

**Suggestion: Tracking Visitors to the Antiques Show**

Nick asked if it was possible to track visitors. Maxine suggested a raffle which could be offered. Nick suggested

a raffle tied to a survey with a $50 gift card. Maxine said this could be positioned on the Antiques web home page.

Sandra raised the value of linking OSV’s Christmas events and programming with the New Years Show. Sandra suggested that Maxine contact OSV.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | Approve: $5,000 for the Jan. 1 2023 Antiques Collectibles Show from the FY 2023 Budget from Marketing and Advertising  |
|  | BY: T Chamberland SECOND: S Gibson Quigley |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Amedy, Gibson-Quigley, Chamberland, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

Brian and Maxine had a discussion of current economic conditions in Sturbridge. Maxine said that business confidence and activity was affected by inflation and workforce deficits. Maxine also raised the concerns that some businesses have with paper work and procedural issues in the Town. Brian suggested that this be conveyed to the Town Administrator. Terry said that these concerns are important and deserve attention. Sandra noted that as a former member of the Sturbridge Planning Board it was important to understand that Town rules and procedures are well defined and that the vast majority of applicants navigate the approval process with no discomfort. Each concern deserves individual review.

**Suggestion: Web Site**

Nick offered the following suggestions:

1. Each business that won the BOY Award should be given a logo emblem on the web site.
2. Can visits to the Web Site be quantified and shared with the STA?

**Suggestion: STA Grant Winners**

Sandra suggested that STA Tourism Grantees receive an award letter detailing the amount, terms and purpose of the award along with explanations on how to file for reimbursement.

**Harvest Festival and Farmers Market**

Tom suggested that tourism can be represented at the Sunday Farmers Market with a table. Sandra suggested that the Town and all of its departments also man a table at the Harvest Festival. Terry noted that efforts to do this were underway and had been announced at a recent Town Staff meeting.

**Sturbridge Tourism Give Aways**

Sandra suggested that the STA work to order and purchase durable give away shopping bags with the Experience Sturbridge logo on them.

**Web Site: Costs for Digital Web Site Management**

There was general discussion of questions and topics to raise when meeting with Chris Pappas of Open the Door at the next STA Meeting in September. The discussion also covered how to continue monthly payments to Open the Door. Terry would research if continued monthly payments would require a new RFQ. There was a motion to allocate funding for the continued retention of Open the Door.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | Approve: The allocation of $15,000 from the FY23 Budget from Marketing and Advertising to Open the Door for Web Site Digital Messaging and Management.  |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: S Gibson Quigley |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Amedy, Gibson-Quigley, Chamberland, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |

**Next Meeting**

BA noted that the next meeting will be Wednesday, July 13, 2022 at 6:30pm

**Adjournment**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: S Gibson Quigley  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Amedy, Gibson Quigley, Salvadore, Chamberland  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 4-0 |