

Sturbridge Tourist Association
FINAL Meeting Minutes
Work Session
February 27, 2013

Present: Tom Creamer (TC), Jim Leaming (JL), Jessica MacDonald (JM), Carol Childress (CC)
Absent: Kevin MacConnell (KM), Kevin Smith (KS arrived at 6:45 pm)
Meeting called to order: 6:35 p.m.

Minutes approved on 4/24/13 as amended; TC motion; KS 2nd; AIF.

Carol Childress reported budget as of 2/26/13:

- Enc Adv/Marketing: \$0.00 balance
- Marketing: \$0.00 balance
- Community Support: \$8,653.75 balance
- Info Center: \$4,882.96 balance
- Special Events: \$24,360.88 balance
- 275th Anniversary: \$20,000
- Revolving Fund: \$2,967.20 balance
- No invoices to be paid
- Copy of budget filed in STA file cabinet

KS arrives at 6:45 p.m.

-Short discussion about 275th Anniversary to bring Kevin Smith up to speed, who is newly appointed to the STA; if no applications received, Tom Creamer suggests celebrating the 276th Anniversary in 2014.

-On January 2, 2013, Jean Joel, Town Accountant, provided a Memo with her calculations for Betterment Committee and STA budgets for FY2014. She informed the STA that it can submit a budget request for \$127,649.06. Memo is in STA 2013 financial folder in file cabinet.

-Work Session is to prepare for budget discussion with Finance Committee and includes review of Budget Definitions. We can schedule with the FinCom up to May 8th. They're doing the Warrants in April.

TC: \$20,000 proposed a Commercial Tourist District Improvement/Landscaping Program for the area of town starting at the intersection of Routes 20/131 to Route 148. This program would augment Betterment Funds and use an application for businesses to submit who want to enhance the streetscape/curb appeal of their properties, whether owners or tenants. The concept is to have professional landscapers submit proposals; we'd seek uniformity and cohesiveness (color, types of plantings, etc.) in their proposals. In the first year, to build awareness, jumpstart the program, and allow it to serve as an example, TC proposed naming the program, "Commercial District Municipal Improvement Program", and using it on four town-owned properties, including the corner of Route 148 and 20; the area next to the old mill; the Senior Center grounds; and the corner of Cedar Street & Route 20. After the first year, it is hoped that enough interest will be generated to prompt tenants/property owners to submit applications and continue with the streetscape. Positive feedback and general consensus from STA members.

CC: \$7,000 - Route 20 Restrooms. CC read the 1/2/2013 e-mail from Shaun Suhoski indicating the following: "The Town will budget Betterment Funds for anticipated repairs or capital needs at the facility (e.g. the heater that had to be replaced; the fence around the dumpster in the prior year, etc.) *Thus the STA would be requested to fund operating costs and Betterment would be for improvements/repairs to "better" the facility.*" The STA accepted the Town Administrator's (TA) recommendation in his 1/2/2013 e-mail. CC is directed by KS & TC to check with both Jean Joel and Shaun Suhoski regarding whether amount of request is adequate (it's the same as last year.) CC Motion to accept TA's recommendation per 1/2/2013 e-mail to STA members; JL 2nd. AIF, 5-0.

CC: Tourism Study (demographics, spending tendencies, what attracts “tourists” to Sturbridge, length of stay, etc.). CC proposes an objective Tourism Study is needed as it’s an important component that’s missing from other studies completed by the town. Sturbridge might find it should build strongly and aggressively on its tourism roots, especially since the “bones” of what attracted tourists here years ago, still exists; for example, Publick House, OSV, and Yankee Spirits, are still here. Or, the town might learn that it should focus in a new or different direction. CC to research and collect information from resources such as Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, Central MA Regional Planning, MA Municipal Association, and MA Office of Travel & Tourism, and report back at next meeting.

****ADD-IN.** CC: Event Planner. Proposed setting aside funds to hire a professional event planner, on a contract basis, to hold events for Sturbridge, once every quarter. This person would coordinate the entire event, work with town offices, volunteers, etc. More discussion needed.

Info Center: \$17,500 - KS proposed a 3% increase to last year’s funding, from \$17,000 to \$17,500. Positive feedback and general consensus from STA members.

CC: \$6,500 - STA Website Maintenance. www.visitsturbridge.org is ready to jump to next step. \$5,000 Proposal dated 11/5/2012 from Smith & Jones: to convert to WordPress, allow for self-maintenance (by committee members), make it live, and include a WordPress training document along with two hours of WordPress consultation and training. An additional \$1,500 is proposed (see proposal on file) for having Smith & Jones do updates to site, estimated at roughly \$100 per hour.

\$35,000 – Marketing. This includes \$20,000 for Chamber and \$10,000 for STA. CC proposed an additional \$5,000 to create and print a regional Antiques Trail Brochure. Positive feedback and general consensus from STA members. Discussion regarding Antiques Trail Brochure – whether it should be Sturbridge-centered or regional. General consensus is that a regional brochure is best.

Community Support and Special Events. STA members to work on these definitions at next meeting.

****ADD IN** - 275th Anniversary Pins: Town Clerk Lorraine Murawski provided CC with information about pins in celebration of the 275th Anniversary. TC proposed purchasing enough to give away as a memento. CC proposed selling them. Hopefully, people will submit applications then this item can be discussed some more.

Next meeting is 3/12/13 for 30 minutes in Veteran’s Hall. Come prepared with definitions; TC will work on drafting Community Support definition for discussion.

TC: Motion to adjourn; JM 2nd; AIF, 5-0. 9:21 pm.

