

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

Present: Tom Creamer (TC), Jessica MacDonald (JM), Carol Childress (CC)

Absent: Kevin MacConnell (KM), Jim Leaming (JL), and Kevin Smith (KS)

Approved on 4/24/13 as amended; JM 2nd; KS abstained. 3-0-1

Work Session began promptly at 6:30 p.m.

-Brief discussion regarding DRAFT STA definitions aligning with General Bylaws.

-Route 20 Restrooms: CC presented Jean Joel and Shaun Suhoski's e-mail regarding their 2014 \$8,500 funding request for the Route 20 restrooms, representing a \$1,500 increase over the STA's 2013 \$7,000 budget. CC paraphrases the 3/7/13 email forwarded to her from Shaun Suhoski with Jean Joel's comments included: the budgeted amount is intended to fund all operating expenses for the Route 20 Restrooms; Jean suggests that the recurring items are funded: Cleaning (All Pro): \$4,680; Electricity (National Grid & Hampshire): \$1,500; LeBoeuf Rubbish Removal: \$820; Water/Sewer: \$500. Jean stipulates that the list does not include any repairs or maintenance that may be made to the restrooms but it's her understanding that those items will be funded through the Betterment Account.

Encumbering funds: Jean Joel informed Carol Childress, STA Treasurer, that forms will be available to the STA in June that will allow the Association to encumber any 2013 funds not used, that the STA might want to carry over to 2014.

-Special Events Discussion: if the \$17,360.88 currently remaining in the 2013 Special Events is not used by June 2014, this amount can be encumbered, carried over to 2014, and added to the 2014 \$5,149.06 budgeted amount.

Sturbridge 275th Anniversary: TC suggests renaming this category as "Sturbridge Anniversary Celebration." Discussion regarding encumbering the \$20,000 currently in the 2013 STA budget toward the 2014 Sturbridge Anniversary Celebration.

-Tourism Study proposed by CC at the 2/27/13 meeting: after researching various internet resources and talking with Alix McNitt, E.D. of the Chamber, regarding the Sturbridge Heritage Preservation Partnership's (SHPP) Marketing and Website Studies, it is CC's opinion that a Tourism Study is not what's needed, as there is plenty of local and regional data pointing to the fact that Sturbridge's primary visitation originates within a 75-mile radius. CC touched on what she deems is the missing link in making Sturbridge a "destination" and that is "Destination Visioning" which includes finding a consultant for tourism/destination management.

CC mentioned that members of the STA have stated that Sturbridge is not a "tourist town" and yet, the STA exists, and she [rhetorically] questioned therefor, what is the STA doing and what is its purpose. CC opined that the STA throws money at marketing an area which has branded itself but has not yet defined itself; she mentioned that the business entities here (OSV, Chamber) spend lots of money on marketing and she felt that STA marketing is just more of the same and doesn't make an impact. CC felt it would be worthwhile to hire a consultant to help Sturbridge figure out how/ what it must do to define itself, set this town apart from other tourist destinations, and become the best it can be. TC mentioned using Skype for a consultant that might not be locally available. TC mentioned using Community Support for this purpose, as it's a broad enough category that includes such uses and also aligns with the STA's goals per the 2012 General Bylaws.

Event Planner suggested by CC at 2/27/13 meeting: CC mentioned that an Event Planner goes hand-in-hand with "Destination Visioning." TC mentions using Community Support for this purpose, as it's a broad enough category that includes such uses and also aligns with the STA's goals per the 2012 General Bylaws.

Event Advertising Sign Idea: JM presented an idea for installation of an STA Event Advertising Sign on the corner of Routes 20 and 148 (which would mesh nicely with a Community Support-funded Landscape Improvement Program.) The sign would mimic the one the Chamber currently uses and provide businesses and the town the ability to purchase and install signs necessary for advertising events. TC suggested that JM get on the Planning Board's agenda, and also the Design/Review Committee's agenda, for the necessary approvals.

-Next meetings:

- 1) Due to deadlines involved with getting the STA's budget approved and in a Warrant Article form, TC recommends a limited STA meeting on 4/1/13 at 5:45 pm, so a quorum of STA members can vote on the various pieces of the STA's budget.
- 2) April 3rd, 2013 at 6:30 pm, Conference Room at Town Hall, is a meeting with a full agenda.

DRAFT 2014 STA Definitions will be revised to include this Work Session's discussion.

Work Session ended at approximately 8:30 p.m.