Sturbridge Tourist Association

*A Committee of the Town of Sturbridge*

 **Regular Monthly Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday, March 27, 2024– 5:30 P.M.

**Members Present**:
Sandra Gibson Quigley
Jasmine Bell

Nick Salvadore

**Absent:**

Pete Champagne

**Guests:**

Alix McNitt, Exec. Director, Central South Mass Chamberr

Sam Ashraf, Marketing Manager, Discover Central MA

Sarah Martin. Break The Ice Media

**Staff Present**:

Terry Masterson, Economic Development/Tourism Coordinator

**Meeting Open**

Sandra opened the meeting at 5:35 p.m. and welcomed everyone.

**Marketing Update by Break The Ice Media (BTI)**

Sarah Martin briefed the STA on BTI’s marketing efforts through 2024. Sarah noted that in 2024 many travelers are seeking simplicity and low-key get aways. Low stress outlets and locations. Outdoor trails, personal shopping. Goals for 2024 were identified as continuing to promote travel destinations through digital messaging. Pushing hotel stays as well as day trippers. Profile visitor is female aged 25 to 65 within a 4 hour drive of Sturbridge. Sarah detailed that “understanding the customer journey” is important and supported by the following steps: 1- Plan Trip 2- Book Trip 3- Enjoy and 4- Share trip with friends. Future tactics will include (1) Shared social media 3 times per week (2) Manager web site with 2 blogs per month (3) Email marketing.

**Collaborating with Discover Central Massachusetts (DCM)**

The STA heard from Sam Ashraf, Marketing Manager for DCM, the regional tourism organization for the Worcester region. Sam detailed several ways that DCM can promote Sturbridge digitally. Sam noted that the DCM newsletter has 29,000 subscribers. Jasmine and Sam discussed how Sturbridge and DCM can work together to mutually promote Sturbridge. There was also general discussion about the “Sturbridge Townships” section of the DCM web site. Sam noted that DCM was participating in a $1M Economic Development Agency tourism grant but there are limits to the grant which includes that only non-profits can be promoted and that the off peak “should seasons” are eligible for grant financing.

**Harvest Festival**

The STA and Alix McNitt, Director of the CMS Chamber discussed the Chamber’s application for a grant for the 2024 Harvest Festival (FY 25 STA Budget). Alix offered some new features to the festival which could include costumed witches and dancers. Nick asked if there were ways to measure attendance. Sandy ended the discussion with an intention of voting on the grant request at the April meeting.

**SEC Grant Request for Mix N Mingle Event**

There was general discussion in response to a request from the Special Events Committee (SEC) for support for a new community event to introduce new and long time Sturbridge residents to each other. Discussion reflected thoughts on how tourism is supported by an event geared to local residents only. Although the SEC request was close to the event for some unforeseen reasons; it was still noted that grant requests should arrive with time to review, consider and speak with the grant applicants.

**Grant Award for Mix N Mingle Event**

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| **Motion:** | To award up to $500 to support expenses for the SEC Mix N Mingle event. |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: J Bell |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Bell and Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Grant Award for Summer 2023 Fire**

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| --- | --- |
| **Motion:** | To award $1,000 to Sawdust Coffee House for marketing and advertising to mitigate the impacts of the Summer 2023 Fire. This grant has also been approved at an earlier STA meeting for 3 other affected businesses. |
|  | BY: N Salvadore SECOND: J Bell |
| **Vote Record:** | **Yes:** Gibson Quigley, Bell and Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |

**Next STA Meeting**

There was agreement to work toward meeting on April 24 or May 1st.

**Adjournment**

7:45PM

**Adjournment**

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| **Motion:** | Adjourn Meeting |
|  | BY: J Bell SECOND: S Gibson Quigley  |
| **Vote Record:** | Yes: Gibson Quigley, Bell, Salvadore  |
| **Outcome:** | Approved 3-0 |