

[NOTE: These minutes are made available to the public prior to Tourism Commission acceptance.]

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday January 29, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Hall Conference Room #1
MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Vice-Chair Chris Traczyk.

Roll Call/Attendance: Members in attendance: Charlie Forsdick, Chair (by conference phone), Charles Ford, Carol Hall, Joan Hughes, Gerry Munroe, Elaine St. Onge, Katie Sullivan and Chris Traczyk. Also in attendance: Paul Montinieri, Town Council Liaison; and Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: none.

Public Comments: Heather Gaunt, President, Wethersfield Junior Women's Club (WJWC): Ms. Gaunt said that the WJWC is working with the Wethersfield 375th Anniversary Committee. They want to sell reusable grocery bags for the Town's 375th Anniversary to promote the Town, the event and recycling. Ms. Gaunt said that they would like to request the use of the onion graphic part of the Commission's "Historic Wethersfield" logo. She showed a mock-up of a bag with the onion and "Wethersfield 375th Anniversary" printed on it. Ms. Gaunt said that the bags would be sold through the Committee, schools and all around Town. The consensus of the members was to allow the use as requested. Charlie Forsdick made a motion to allow the onion from the Commission's logo, without the words "Historic Wethersfield", to be printed on reusable grocery bags along with "Wethersfield 375th Anniversary". Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all in favor. Peter Gillespie said that he would send the logo to Ms. Gaunt via e-mail.

Approval of Minutes: Chris Traczyk asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes. Charlie Forsdick noted several places where names needed correction. Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as corrected, Charlie Forsdick seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions: None.

Reports:

- **Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission** - Gerry Munroe reported that there is a summit of international tour operators April 14 - 16 at the Omni Hotel in New Haven. She recommended that Wethersfield get a display table at the event, and have a representative there. Chris Traczyk asked Ms. Munroe to look into arrangements for a table at the event.
- **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** - Charlie Forsdick reported that awards were presented to the owners of the J. Michaels Tavern and the Silas Robbins House.
- **Grant Funding**
 - **CT State Tourism** - Marketing, Strategic Planning, Special Projects: Chris Traczyk said that Wethersfield had been awarded grant funds for billboard ads. Peter Gillespie said that the award is \$25,000 and that the Town must match around \$10,000. The content of the billboard must follow a format specified in the grant that refers to the State's ctvisit.org website, and allows for a couple of pictures and a highway exit number provided by the Town. Jenna Delay confirmed that the town is linked to the ctvisit.org website, so it is not a problem that the Town's website will not be on the billboard. The billboards ads will be run in July and August at 3 interstate highway locations: along I-95 in Mystic, I-91 in Wallingford, and I-84 in Waterbury. Mr. Gillespie said the Town Council must approve the expenditure, and that it would not be a problem to run the ads this summer, since the

expenditure would be part of next year's budget. Gerry Munroe made a motion to recommend to the Town Council that the grant be accepted and that the matching funds be budgeted. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all in favor.

- **Preserve America** - Status - Peter Gillespie said that there had not been a meeting since October, and a draft report is not yet finished. He said that there is a Freedom of Information Act request pending for the draft report, and there is a hearing February 8th on an appeal of the FOIA request.
- **Horse & Carriage Rides** - status - Peter Gillespie gave a summary of the ride activity to date. He said that the vendor cost was \$850 per day. The ride fees brought in about \$200 per day, so the daily net cost was \$650. The last day of the winter ride was on January 13th, but more rides are being considered for the weekend after Valentine's Day, during the April school vacation, and during other Town events. Katie Sullivan said that she saw a significant increase in people walking through the area of the Webb Deane Stevens Museum while the ride was in operation. Mr. Gillespie said that potential riders were turned away on many days. He said an ad may be placed in the Valentine's Day supplement to the Hartford Courant, and another to coincide with a shopkeeper's discount event tentatively planned for March 22nd. Chris Traczyk asked if there are other upcoming events for which the horse and carriage ride should be planned at the same time. Katie Sullivan said that the Webb Museum is holding a Victorian woman event in February to celebrate Black History Month. Gerry Munroe said she will mention the idea to the owners of the J. Michael Tavern.
- **375th Anniversary Committee** - Chris Traczyk reported that there is no firm calendar of events yet, but activities being considered include: a visit by "George Washington" to the Webb Museum, a colonial encampment and reenactment, walking tours of Griswoldville, letterboxing around the Town, an art walk on Main Street by the Art League, a plant and red onion sale by the Garden Club, and more.
- **2006 - 2007 Budget Report** - Peter Gillespie reported... _____. Chris Traczyk said that there appears to be enough money left in the budget to run one more print ad, maybe in the Connecticut Magazine. The consensus was not to run an ad in that magazine based on discussions in previous meetings concluding that this magazine is not a good match for Wethersfield tourism. The members also discussed spending the funds on assembling information packages for the international tour operator's summit in April. Gerry Munroe made a motion to put the promo kit marketing materials into a package for the international tour operator's summit. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Gerry Munroe said that it may be useful to give walking tours of the Town to Welcome Center staff. Ms. Munroe volunteered to put a tour together for that purpose.

Old Business:

- **Convention Center Future events** - Carol Hall reported that she has been monitoring the schedule of upcoming events, and two events appeared to be a good match for Wethersfield to pursue specific marketing: the National Historic Interpretation Workshop, and the National Model Railroad Association. The members reviewed the list of upcoming events, and decided several others also warranted follow-up. Chris Traczyk asked the members for volunteers to contact the organizations from the list. The organizations and the associated volunteer are as follows:
 - National Historic Interpretation Workshop - Elaine St. Onge;
 - National Model Railroad Association - Elaine St. Onge;
 - Connecticut Education Association - Paul Montinieri;
 - New England Library Association - Town Librarian, Laurel Goodgion;
 - National Association of Oil Heating Contractors - Gerry Munroe; and
- **Revised Promotion Package** - Elaine St. Onge said that the final version is ready and she will distribute it to the Commission members before it goes to print.

- **Visitor Specials/Promotions** - Kate Sullivan asked for clarification of this task. Chris Traczyk said that the idea is to put together hotel discounts with the promo package, then get all of that out to tour operators, groups, events, etc. The hotels do not need to be limited to Best Western or those in Wethersfield. The consensus of group discussion was that these materials could also be put into hotel rooms, but that the first priority should be marketing to groups.

New Business:

- **CTM 2008 Proposal** - Peter Gillespie said that the proposal for 2008 includes ad placements in "What to do in CT" for the Spring, Summer and Fall editions quarter page ad and brochure distribution at the Mystic Visitor Info Center for the season, the rate would normally be \$8,050. CTM is offering this program to us for \$6,705. Mr. Gillespie said that the deadline is February 8 for the spring edition ad, so there probably is not enough time to design an ad. The consensus of group discussion was to place the existing ad in the spring edition, then review at the next meeting whether to pursue a redesigned ad for the summer and fall editions. Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve the new contract for 2008. Gerry Munroe seconded the motion, and the vote showed all in favor.
- **CT Tourism Visitor Centers** - Peter Gillespie said that the CT Tourism Visitor's Centers will maintain brochure in their 6 centers for 6 months at a cost of \$690, and \$1,200 for 12 months. He said that the Town had not previously used this service. Chris Traczyk said that the cost fits into the current budget, but there is no deadline, and suggested tabling the issue for next month's meeting.
- **2008-2009 Budget** - Chris Traczyk said that Town Manager Therrien requested a prioritized spending list from the Commission. Ms. Traczyk said that Ms. Therrien had also asked if the Commission could tell which efforts are providing a good return. Peter Gillespie said that the Town's visitor surveys consistently show that the best source of visitors is family and friends, and the AAA magazine. He said that he can also provide statistics on website hits, to see if there are spikes after press coverage, advertising, etc.

Ms. Traczyk distributed a draft spending list in which she had assigned priorities of high, medium and low. Two items she noted were the high priority for the matching funds for the billboard grant, and reduced spending for design services since they are no longer doing ads. Gerry Munroe said she agreed that website maintenance should be a high priority. Paul Montinieri said that the matching funds for the billboard grant are essentially a one-time expense, and would check with the Town Council on whether to fund that separately from the Commission's regular budget. The consensus of the group discussion was that the list was prioritized well. Katie Sullivan made a motion to accept the prioritized budget list as proposed by Chris Traczyk. Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion and the vote showed all in favor.

- **Quarterly weekends** - Chris Traczyk recommended that this topic be tabled until the next meeting.
- **Report on DVD** - No report requested by the Vice-Chair.
- **Report on Greeter Manuals** - No report requested by the Vice-Chair.
- **Volunteer for Event Coordinator** - Chris Traczyk asked if any members wished to volunteer for this task. Elaine St. Onge said that the Commission members, separately or collectively do not have time coordinate events. Chris Traczyk recommended that further discussion of topic be tabled until the next meeting.

Completed Items/Tasks: None discussed.

Correspondence: None.

Next Meeting Date: February 26, 2008 at 5:30 PM, Town Hall Conference Room #1.

Call to Adjourn: Katie Sullivan made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 7:01 p.m. Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Commission Recording Secretary