

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

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday, February 26, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Hall Conference Room #1
MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Vice-Chair Chris Traczyk.

Roll Call/Attendance: Members in attendance: Vice-Chair Chris Traczyk, Charles Ford, Carol Hall, Gerry Munroe, Elaine St. Onge, and Katie Sullivan. Also in attendance: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: Charlie Forsdick, Chair; Joan Hughes; and Paul Montinieri, Town Council Liaison.

Public Comments: None

Approval of Minutes: Chris Traczyk asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes. One correction was requested under Convention Center Future Events. Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended, Katie Sullivan seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions: None.

Reports:

- **Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission:** No report.
- **Economic Development Commission:** No report.
- **375th Anniversary Committee:** Chris Traczyk reported that a \$50,000 budget had been requested for the anniversary events. Some event ideas being considered include: fireworks, web announcements and a "house parade". Peter Gillespie said that Keilor Associates believes the anniversary should be a big event for the Town, and recommended meeting with the 375th Committee to discuss publicity.
- **2006-2007 Budget Report:** Peter Gillespie said that there was nothing to report since there was no change since last month (e.g. no money had been spent).

Old Business:

- **Convention Center Future events** - status of last month outreach & review of newly posted upcoming meetings-conferences: Carol Hall reported that she had received no response from the National Model Railroad convention contact. She also said that a new convention had been posted that appeared to have potential - the Small Business Innovations Conference, November 11 - 14. She is in the process of finding a contact for the conference. Peter Gillespie said that he is still tracking down a contact for the New England Library Association convention.
- **Revised Promotion Package** - distribute final version to commission: Peter Gillespie reviewed the contents of the package: a welcome letter from the Mayor, an introduction to the history of Wethersfield, a map showing proximity to other cities in the Northeast region, contacts for various attractions, a copy of a Wethersfield Life article and an onion seed packet. The consensus of group discussion was that several updates and changes were needed: replacing the Wethersfield Life article with a more recent one from the Boston Globe; condensing the itinerary; and removing the hotel brochures. More copies of various brochures are also needed from: the Silas Robbins House (when they become available), the Chester Bulkeley House,

and the Town walking tour. Also, Keilor Associates should be asked to review the overall content for their feedback, especially the sample itinerary and Town history sheets. Charlie Ford is going to check on the availability of a Broad Street Green Tour brochure.

- **Visitor Specials/Promotions** - Katie Sullivan reported that she had contacted the Hilton Hotel in Glastonbury, but the Camelot/Best Western in Wethersfield had not returned her call. The Hilton said that it would welcome a discount package that they would offer to individual customers. Their discounted rates would likely be \$99 per night per room from November through March, \$109 per night from April through October, and \$129 per night for the Memorial Day weekend (for the first 60 rooms). Some black-out dates would apply, and group discounts are only offered through a corporate process.

The J. Michaels Tavern is interested in participating, and is meeting with Katie Sullivan February 27th. The Commission members suggested other places that may also participate, such as Patty Cakes, Main Street Creamery and the new Narcissus Chocolate Café in the old train depot off Church Street. The Webb Deane Stevens Museum said that it would offer a discounted admission of \$6 (i.e. 25% off of the regular \$8 price) and special rates for group events such as night lantern tours and wine tastings.

The members also discussed various ways to distribute the discounts such as: connecting to larger, special events in Town, and via the internet so that the numbers, referral source, etc. can easily be tracked. Katie Sullivan mentioned possibly assembling a walking map of where the discounts were located and clip-off coupons. She had seen one like this while on vacation in Rockport, MA. Katie also said she is pursuing contacts with theaters such as the Bushnell and Hartford Stage, to attract visiting performers and crew members.

- **CTM 2008 Proposal:** Peter Gillespie reviewed some information he had received from the Connecticut Tourism District, which displays brochures at 6 welcome centers it operates along interstate highways in the State. He said displaying brochures costs \$690 for 6 months or \$1,200 for 12 months. He did not know which months were included in the 6 month deal. Katie Sullivan made a motion to purchase this service for a six month period, provided it included prime tourism season months such as May - October, and authorizing Peter Gillespie to find out and decide whether the months available are worth the expense. Carol Hall seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.
- **2008-2009 Budget:** The members discussed various options for budget-cutting should it be necessary, including these reductions: reducing the display advertising budget by 50%, from \$33,00 to \$17,500; reducing ad design expenditures by 50%, from \$5,000 to \$2,500; and reducing horse and buggy ride advertising from \$5,000 to \$1,000. The members also discussed eliminating several non-priority items such as hosting potential groups, train and trade shows and purchasing photographs to build an image library for publicity.
- **Billboard Grant:** The members expressed concern about whether the Governor's new policy regarding billboards would affect the grant the Town recently received. Peter Gillespie said that he thinks the grant would go forward since the state already had contracts in place to carry out the program.

There was discussion here about whether more brochures were needed, but I didn't catch what it was in relation to. The last revision of the brochure was 2005, when the State may have given a grant for part of the cost of printing 100,000 at 12 cents each. We maybe don't nearly as many to tide us over another year, but there's no money in the budget now for printing even a small number.

- **Preserve America:** Peter Gillespie said that the next meeting is planned for March.

New Business:

- **Quarterly weekends** - review/discussion of spring and fall events that may be marketed as a seasonal weekend: Elaine St. Onge said that the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers Association rescheduled their event to April 26th. She also noted that the OWSA website needed updating. Peter Gillespie said that the horse and buggy ride may be run during the April school vacation.

- **Web site advertising - GHVCB:** Chris Traczyk said that she would check to see when is the application deadline.
- **Profile/PR outreach** - Peter Gillespie distributed to the members copies a proposal from Keilor Associates for a series of press releases to travel editors. Each one would be several pages on various features of the Town, such as bed and breakfasts, museums, attractions, parks/greenways, and a town profile. A walking tour map would be developed including all of these features. The consensus of the members was that it was a very good idea. Peter Gillespie said he was not sure whether the cost of developing the proposal was included in the Town's monthly fee, or if Keilor expects additional payment.

Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve development of the press releases according to the Keilor Associates proposal dated 2-28-08, provided there is no added cost to the Town. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all in favor.

- **Photo contest:** Chris Traczyk reviewed the rules for a photo contest by the Town of Southington as a basis for discussion. The consensus of the discussion was that the contest should: be tied-into the Town's efforts to develop a quarterly/seasonal schedule of events; be of a scene or event in Wethersfield; be open to residents and non-residents; and publicize the winner on the Town website and provide some kind of certificate or prize. Publicity would be through flyers, the Town's website, posters, and area newspapers. A tentative schedule would be to have contestants submit photos during each calendar quarter (i.e., e.g. April - June) and pick the winner during the first month of the next quarter. The publicity for the winner would also serve as a reminder of the beginning of the next quarter for submitting photos.

Charlie Ford said that he could assemble a panel of professional photographers to act as judges. Peter Gillespie said that he would look into getting legal help for issues on rules such as: the Town taking possession of the photos submitted and how to ensure that releases were obtained from the people in the pictures. The members agreed that a name for the contest is needed and would be discussed at the next meeting.

Completed Items/Tasks: None.

Correspondence: None.

Next Meeting Date: March 25, 2008 at 5:30 PM, Town Hall Conference Room #1.

Call to Adjourn: Carol Hall motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:25 p.m., Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Commission Recording Secretary