

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

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday May 27, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Hall Conference Room #1
MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:34 p.m. by Chair Charlie Forsdick.

Roll Call/Attendance: Members in attendance: Charlie Forsdick, Chair; Jenna Delay, Charles Ford, Carol Hall, Geraldine Munroe, Elaine St. Onge, Katie Sullivan and Chris Traczyk. Also in attendance: Tony Homicki, EDIC liaison; and Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: none.

Public Comments: None

Approval of Minutes: [April 30, 2008](#) - Charlie Forsdick asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes. Several clarifications were requested. Chris Traczyk made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended, Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions:

- Charlie Forsdick welcomed Tony Homicki, the new EDIC liaison.

Reports:

- **Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission** - Geraldine Munroe: Tabled for discussion under Tourism DVD
- **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** - Peter Gillespie said that EDIC is working on updating the Town's strategic plan. EDIC was waiting for the Preserve America report to incorporate its findings in the Strategic Plan. EDIC will likely seek the Commission's input on the findings in the Preserve America report. Mr. Gillespie said EDIC is working with the Town Chamber of Commerce on a "buy local" campaign. The EDIC is also co-sponsoring with the Wethersfield Redevelopment Agency a public information forum on redevelopment. The forum will be held at the Silas Deane Middle School on June 11, 2008 at 7:00 PM.

Mr. Gillespie said that it appears that the Town has a total of \$245,000 available for gateway and way finding signage. The Town just received preliminary word that it will be awarded a \$90,000 Preserve America grant for way finding signage. That is in addition to \$115,000 from the State Bond Commission for gateway signage, and \$40,000 of Town funds for guardrail repair.

- **GHC&VB, Potential Events** - Carol Hall: No report, as the calendar has not been updated since the last meeting.
- **Grant Funding**
 - **Preserve America - Status** - Peter Gillespie/Chris Traczyk: Chris Traczyk said that the next step is a public hearing.
 - **Billboard Grant** - Peter Gillespie said that the State is finalizing the billboards to be placed along I-91 and I-95 in June and July.

- **Marketing Grant** - Peter Gillespie said that there was no progress to report.
- **Budget Status, 2007 - 08; 2008 - 09:** - Charlie Forsdick said that he attended the last Town budget hearing and tried to make a strong case for restoring the display advertising funding that had been cut from the budget. The funds were not restored, but he was told that funding could become available later depending on the availability of State funds. Peter Gillespie reported that the FY 2008 - 2009 budget includes a total of \$38,080 for Tourism, with \$10,080 being the Town match for the highway billboards. Chris Traczyk recommended that website hits be monitored in June and July to see if the billboard advertising increases web traffic.
- **Revised Visitor Survey** - Peter Gillespie said that he revised the visitor survey form to produce clearer responses. The visitor responses are very important for justifying budget requests, and evaluating the effectiveness of expenditures. The members discussed some changes to the revised survey, and various ways to increase the percentage of visitors filling out the surveys.

Chris Traczyk made a motion to approve the revised visitor survey, as amended. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

- **375th Anniversary Committee** - Chris Traczyk said that there was no progress to report.
- **Tourism DVD** - Geraldine Munroe said that there was no progress to report, as the person making the DVD has not returned her calls. Charlie Forsdick asked if the pictures and video requested had been given to the DVD maker. Ms. Munroe said that she had plenty of seasonal pictures, but not much for events. Peter Gillespie suggested that she check with local newspapers to see if there were event pictures they could use.
- **Greeter Book update** - Kate Sullivan reported that the updated book is done. It just needs to be copied and distributed.

Old Business:

- **Display Ad Schedule** - Charlie Forsdick said that the Commission should leave the schedule as is, in case funding becomes available at a later date.
- **Promo Packet** - Distribution: Peter Gillespie said that the only remaining task is to assemble the packets. The members agreed to hold a packet stuffing meeting on June 5th at 3:00 in Town Hall. Charlie Ford said that funds are needed to print more of the popular Broad Street Green brochures, and the members agreed that this would be put on the agenda for a future meeting.
- **Event Calendar** - Update: Jenna Delay reported that she has been updating the calendar regularly. Chris Traczyk will get the 375th Anniversary calendar to her to include with the other events. Ms. Delay said that she would be working to make more prominent the link between the Tourism webpage and the Town visitor webpage.
- **Horse & Carriage Ride Grant** - Update: Peter Gillespie said that the carriage was a big hit in the Memorial Day parade, and rides were popular over that weekend. Charlie Forsdick said that the grant funding is almost gone, so the Town needs to be selective about its use. State Senator John Fonfara has reportedly said he is committed to trying to continue funding the rides.
- **Website advertising** - Chris Traczyk reported that there had been no progress, as the GHCVB contact, Theresa Reynolds, had not returned her calls.
- **Photo Contest/Library** - Charlie Forsdick distributed copies of a resume from a library science student. The student has offered to catalogue the Town photo library at no charge, and the Town library staff has recommended this student. Peter Gillespie said that it is customary to offer a small stipend to students doing such work. Katie Sullivan made a motion to engage this student to catalogue the Town photo library at no charge, but offer the student a small stipend in an amount to be determined later. Chris Traczyk seconded the motion and the vote showed all in favor.

Peter Gillespie said that there was no progress to report on the photo contest. More legal advice is pending.

- **Brochure Reprinting** - Peter Gillespie said that he had received a quote of \$930 to edit the brochure from Brian McGee Marketing. Chris Traczyk made a motion to accept the bid of \$930 from Brian McGee Marketing to do the brochure editing, and to authorize Peter Gillespie to issue a purchase order to carry out this task. Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion and the vote showed all in favor.
- **Visitor Specials/Promotions** - Katie Sullivan reported that she is working on checking with shopkeepers and hotels. Charlie Forsdick said that all related businesses should be contacted out of fairness. The members discussed the format of the flyer to be distributed, and all agreed that it should be shared via e-mail for feedback as it is drafted.

New Business:

- **Benchmarking/Monthly Report** - The members had a wide ranging discussion about how to capture more of the right kind of data needed to keep the Town Council informed on the use and effectiveness of Town spending to promote tourism. The consensus was that a monthly report should be developed and provided to the Town Council. Charlie Forsdick said that visitor spending could be a part of a monthly report. Such spending could be estimated from a headcount and an assumed amount spent per person. He said that the tourism industry has figures on per person spending that the Commission can use. The headcount data would have to come from regular, comprehensive distribution and use of the visitor survey, along with a consistent effort to compile, evaluate and report the data. He said a subcommittee, or perhaps a new committee entirely would be needed to provide the attention needed to make all this happen.

Other ideas discussed included: monitoring web hits over time to gauge the effectiveness of advertising; get names and addresses compiled by Journeys Magazine to do follow-up mailings; establish a special telephone number to use in advertising to enable tracking the number of calls, and provide a way for callers to leave their contact information outside of business hours; send Commission representatives to shopkeepers meetings to stress the importance of getting surveys filled out and to get feedback from the shopkeepers; create a joint marketing plan to help develop measures and reporting; and establish a communication plan so tour operators can coordinate better with shopkeepers, museums, etc. to ensure they are open and properly staffed when tours come through.

Geraldine Munroe shared a positive experience she had recently regarding communication about a tour she was leading that was expected to draw 20 people, but ended up drawing 40. She commended Peter Gillespie for quickly responding with information packets; J. Michaels Tavern provided excellent food and service on short notice; and the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum quickly added staff to handle the extra people.

- **Banner** - Charlie Forsdick displayed the new Tourism Commission banner that was used in the Memorial Day Parade. He said that the banner was made by John Oldham, who charged only for the cost of materials/donated the cost of labor. The members agreed that the Commission should send Mr. Oldham a thank you letter.
- **Open House** - June 4th: Charlie Forsdick said that the Tourism Commission has a free booth at the upcoming Open House hosted by the GHCVB at the Connecticut Convention Center. Charlie Forsdick said that he will attend and bring the new banner, brochures and a table top display. Katie Sullivan volunteered to attend in period clothing. Geraldine Monroe and Chris Traczyk also volunteered to attend.
- **Special Event Signage** - Charlie Forsdick said that the Design Review Advisory Committee has inquired about standards for "gateway" signage to advertise and direct people to events in Town. Katie Sullivan made a motion that the Tourism Commission supports the concept of gateway signage for special events, pending further discussion of additional information on related issues such as logistics, cost, etc. Chris Traczyk seconded the motion and the vote showed all in favor.

Completed Items/Tasks: None discussed.

Correspondence: None.

Next Meeting Date: June 24, 2008 at 5:30 PM, Town Hall Conference Room #1.

Call to Adjourn: Chris Traczyk motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:27 p.m., Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Commission Recording Secretary