

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday, October 30, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Manager's Conference Room
MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35 p.m. by Chair Charlie Forsdick.

Roll Call/Attendance: Members in attendance: Charlie Forsdick, Chair, Charles Ford, Carol Hall, Elaine St. Onge, Katie Sullivan and. Also in attendance: Joan Hughes, EDIC Liaison; Paul Montinieri, Town Council Liaison; and Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: Anne Kuckro, Gerry Munroe, Chris Traczyk.

Public Comments: None

Approval of Minutes: [September 25, 2007](#) - Charlie Forsdick asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes, and none were requested. Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Charlie Ford seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions:

- **J. Michaels Tavern Opening** - Paul Montinieri said that he went to the Tavern on its opening day. He said that the place was packed, and thought the service was very friendly and the food very good. Katie Sullivan reported that she was very pleased with her lunch visit. Her one suggestion was that the Tavern have a separate lunch menu.

Old Business:

- **Trolley for Fall Festival Weekend - Cost apportionment:** Peter Gillespie reported that the trolley bill had been received, the cost was consistent with the price quote, and the cost per partner comes out to about \$125 - \$150 each. Attendance was approximately 250 - 300 for the weekend. Trolley riders said that the driver was excellent. The consensus of Commission members was that the trolley service and the whole weekend was a big success, aided by the perfect weather and the Silas Robbins House opening. The members also felt that the Town should repeat the fall weekend format next year. That is, hiring the trolley on a weekend when the Craft Fair and Scarecrows Along Main St. overlap. Charlie Forsdick said that he planned to revive the idea that there be a featured weekend like this once per season, and that he would be looking for volunteers to oversee each one. He said the weekend was confirmation of what the Town's publicity consultant has been saying - events grab added attention over permanent attractions, and are an important part of marketing.
- **Budget** - Peter Gillespie said that \$5,307.09 had been spent out of the budget so far this year. The biggest expense was display advertising = \$3,692 (\$2940.from EDIC). The fall weekend trolley cost \$739, not including reimbursements from the partners. GHCVB dues were \$375, and the Greater Hartford Hotel Guide ad redesign was \$500. The Commission has a budget of \$36,500, \$17,000 of which is shared with EDIC. Charlie Forsdick will meet with EDIC to obtain approval for planned display advertising.
- **Horse & Carriage Ride Grant** - The Town's bid went back out with a winter / holiday season focus, and 2 vendors have expressed interest. Elaine St. Onge, Joan Hughes and Katie Sullivan volunteered to form a subcommittee to work on logistics for the ride. Elaine St. Onge said that the Keeney Center parking lot should be available for use in December, as the fire damage renovations would not start until later. Peter Gillespie said that no votes or other actions are needed by the Commission to start the ride.
- **Promo Packet** - Content approval & distribution - Charlie Forsdick said that the changes in the packet include a welcome letter from the Mayor, an attraction list with updated contacts, suggestions for one-day and two-

day itineraries, and a map showing Wethersfield as a hub for other attractions. The members reviewed the materials and the consensus was to remove the reference to the casino on the hub map, and to inventory all of the materials to be certain there is enough of each piece.

- **Display ad Schedule** - Charlie Forsdick led a discussion of the list of proposed ads. The total cost for the ads listed is approximately \$25,000. The "What to do in Connecticut" and the Greater Hartford Hotel Guide ads are done.
 - **Visitors Guide** - A half page ad is planned for the Greater Hartford Visitors Guide, but the full page design the Commission has available needs work if it is to be used for a half page ad. Charlie Forsdick recommended that the Commission vote to request a redesign of the ad so it is useful for more than one size. Elaine St. Onge motioned to redesign the ad and purchase a 1/4 page ad or a 1/2 page ad depending on the design cost, Katie Sullivan seconded, and the vote showed all members in favor. Peter Gillespie said that ad expenditures also need EDIC approval.
 - **Group Tour Magazine** - The members discussed the merits of advertising to group tour operators vs. directly to people within driving distance of Wethersfield. The member consensus was that group tour participants tend not to return to Wethersfield more than once, and tend to spend less time and money as they are dependant on their group transportation. Individuals within driving distance of Wethersfield are able to return for another visit, recommend a visit to other people within driving distance, and can spend more time and money while they are here. The member consensus was to focus advertising spending on AAA's Journeys magazine. The local museums and businesses say that Journeys is consistently the most important source of visitors. The members felt that no money should be spent on group tour advertising, but that the promotional packet should be sent to group tour operators instead.
 - Charlie Forsdick said that a 3 season ad in Journeys costs \$8,460, including the design cost. Peter Gillespie said that this amount may be too high for the remaining budget. Charlie Forsdick asked if the Historical Society or the Webb Deane Stevens Museum would be interested in sharing the cost with the town. Elaine St. Onge and Katie Sullivan said that they their organizations would not be able to afford to partner on this ad. Charlie Forsdick asked them to inquire anyway, so he could relay that back to EDIC and the Town Council. Elaine St. Onge motioned to purchase a 1/3 page, 3 season ad (spring, summer and fall) in Journeys magazine, Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

New Business:

- **GHCVB** - Charlie Forsdick said he is looking for a volunteer to be the primary contact for the GHCVB. In the mean time, Carol Hall is monitoring the schedule of upcoming conventions on the GHCVB website. Carol will be noting conventions of almost any interest to Wethersfield for now, especially larger groups, until the Commission gets a sense for the size, type, etc. convention to focus on.
- **Greeter Manuals** - Katie Sullivan volunteered to update the manuals kept in key places around town.

Reports:

- **Visitor Survey Results** - Peter Gillespie said that he will soon be tallying the surveys for the year and providing a report of his findings.
- **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** - Joan Hughes said that the only item of interest is that a new restaurant called "Humphreys" is planning to move into the former Firehouse Grill at the intersection of Mill St. and the Silas Deane Highway.
- **Grant Funding** - Preserve America - Peter Gillespie said that comments are being prepared on a preliminary draft report. After that, it is expected that there will be a public forum in early December on the draft report.
- **375th Anniversary Committee** - Neither of the Commission representatives, Chris Traczyk or Anne Kuckro,

were present to provide a report.

- **Promotion Package** - Charlie Forsdick said that this package is "free publicity" since there is no charge for its distribution, and the incentives are discounts provided by local restaurants and shops. Katie Sullivan volunteered to meet with the manager of the Best Western hotel to discuss the timing, duration, etc. of the next package.

Completed Items/Tasks: None discussed

Correspondence: None.

Next Meeting Date: November 27, at 5:30 PM, Town Hall Conference Room #1 (basement).

Call to Adjourn: Elaine St. Onge motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:57 p.m., Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Commission Recording Secretary