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WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, November 30, 2004
5:30 PM
Town Council Chambers
Town Hall

Members Present

Acting Chair, Elaine St. Onge, Charles Ford, Pat Warner, Paul Montinieri. Also in attendance were Peter Gillespie the Economic Development Manager/Town Planner, and Leigh Standish from the Strategic Planning Committee.

Acting Chairperson Elaine St. Onge called the meeting to order at 5:30.

Minutes

The [minutes of the October 26th meeting](#) were reviewed. No changes were made. The approval of the minutes was moved by Pat Warner and seconded by Charles Ford. The vote was affirmative.

Old Business

None

Presentation

By: Mr. James Murdy & Mr. William Williams of the Research & Resolutions firm hired by the town to prepare the Tourism Assessment. The chair welcomed Mr. Murdy and Mr. Williams. Our consultants were in attendance to bring us up to date on the Tourism Assessment.

- Mr. Gillespie distributed the document that was received that day to all commission members.
- Mr. Murdy stated that he visited most if not all of the tourist sites, hotels, restaurants, historic sites, etc.
- Mr. Murdy continued by referencing the 2001 Economic Development Strategic Plan that references tourism as a potential asset for economic development that the town needs to take advantage of. Mr. Murdy informed the commission that his comments are based on many years of experience and thoughts regarding destination, image, and management.
- Mr. Murdy suggested that the town needs to exploit the resources that it has; one of those being the Cove and the Connecticut River. Water images are an effective way to attract tourists to the community and has worked successfully in other communities such as Essex, etc. This imagery should be used in future media publications to promote the community.
- Mr. Murdy then continued by stating that he intends to sit down with all members of the tourism commission, chamber representatives, business associations, political leaders of the community such as the council, town manager, the mayor, staff of the commission, and staff at town hall, and the historic sites to get a handle on their perception of tourism here in town. Additionally, he will be looking at the regional perspective; he will be talking to state and regional tourism staff and agencies including Ben Seidel regarding the Adrian's Landing Convention Center to see what link can be established by excursion tours from the convention center.
- Additionally, a dedicated phone line and articles in Wethersfield Life, Wethersfield Post, or the Hartford Courant are being pursued. Elaine St. Onge suggested that maybe the Rare Reminder be used because it has

wide spread distribution and comes out on a weekly basis.

- A web site will also be used.
- A meeting will be held in a public location. The Keeney Center or the community room at the police station was suggested. Those details need to be worked out.
- The dedicated phone line will be used to screen potential interested parties for a steering committee to be interviewed regarding tourism experiences here in town.
- Mr. Ford stated that December is a bad time of year for the business community to get involved in meetings such as this. Mr. Williams will discuss this further with the business community.
- Potentially, one on one interviews will be used to supplement the community meetings with the business community. The intent is to get a plan in place the early part of 2005 so that it can be incorporated into the Strategic Plan and be available for budget discussions with Town Council.
- Mr. Ford will get a list to Mr. Murdy to see who is available in the business community for meetings. Mr. Ford reinforced the fact that he wants as many business members involved as possible and stressed how important that was and will be to the successful tourism plan.
- Mr. Murdy suggested that focus groups and interviews be held two or three times with the business leadership as well as residents in the community to get the various perspectives of tourism here in town are important.
- Mr. Murdy and Mr. Williams were thanked for their attendance at the meeting and they will contact Mr. Gillespie and Mr. Forsdick to discuss the next steps.

At this point the meeting turned to the reports as noted on the agenda.

Reports

Grant Funding Committee

Anne Krucko not present. No report to be given.

Heritage Partnership Committee

Chris Traczik not present. No report to be given.

Marketing and Publicity Committee

Ann Warner was present.

- Ann mentioned that there has been some discussion about advertising. They are still waiting to get back prices to see if our monies can be spent on national advertising rather than on the seasonal printing of the calendar. The calendar can potentially be put on the web site and be distributed in other ways, so that the money spent for printing could be used for advertising. Mr. Ford noted that that was a good idea and it would save money; money that could be used for other things.
- Mr. Gillespie mentioned that the brochure distribution contract had been signed for the I91 Distribution Corridor. He noted that the I91 distribution is quite wide and diverse extending from Danbury over along the I84 Corridor into Manchester, and even down RT9 to the shore and Old Saybrook. Therefore is a good value for our money.
- Additionally, Ms. St Onge noted that the promo kits were being printed and distributed through Camelot Hotel and Mr. Botini is working on that and it seems to be going quite well. It was noted that there are 400 of these being put together and much of the information is available at Elaine St. Onge's office.

At this point the meeting discussion turned to the Strategic Planning Committee.

Strategic Planning Committee

Mr. Standish representing that committee was present.

- Mr. Standish distributed a summary of the recommendations from the 1995 Strategic Plan as it affected tourism, asking the commission members to review the information. There are two pages on tourism.

- There is intent for a public hearing in mid-January on the report, getting it to the Town Council January 24th, and the final report being done sometime in March, to be in time for budget processing.
- The committee meets on Tuesday evenings.
- The town web site contains the meeting schedule and Mr. Standish encouraged members to attend these meetings, and to provide input to the Strategic Planning Committee as soon as possible.
- Mr. Gillespie will try to attend a future meeting to provide input.
- Mr. Murdy also stressed that it is important to have the timing of the Tourism Plan align with the final plan in preparation of the Strategic Plan, so that that information gets included in the Strategic Plan.

At this point in the meeting the agenda turned to New Business, including vacancies.

New Business

- It was noted that there is still a need for a businessperson representing the hospitality industry on the commission, and that Mr. Forsdick was charged with that responsibility.
- Mr. Gillespie noted that on Thursday evening December 9th, there will be a forum on the Silas Deane Highway Committee's work and that potentially members might be able to recruit an interested businessperson at the meeting. So, he encouraged committee members to attend. The meeting will be held at 6:30 PM in the police department community room.
- Also under New Business, Mr. Murdy noted that the most ancient town image is a great brand identity, living history is a great brand identity, and pictures of people at various events are very important to include in media publications.
- Mr. Williams noted that Wethersfield has a unique living historical experience that is different from competition in the region. It is very marketable.
 - The town is located in close proximity to other activity centers.
 - It is a destination on its own.
 - The Internet hits on this brand are large.
 - Thought should be given to identifying Wethersfield in regional and statewide publications. Partnerships should be developed with the state vacation guide and regional visitor guides to remain competitive.
 - This is a dynamic experience that the town needs to take advantage of.

This information will be included in the final report.

It was noted that there will be no meeting in December, taking December off, and the next meeting will be in January.

At this point the acting chair Ms. St Onge adjourned the meeting at 6:24 PM.

Respectfully Submitted

Peter Gillespie, Economic Development Manager