

Wethersfield Tourism Commission Minutes - December 16, 2003

Chairperson Kuckro called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Town Manager's conference room. Members present were Chairperson Kuckro, Paul Courchaine, Carol Adil, Charles Ford, Charles Forsdick, Kathleen Bagley, Director, Recreation and Parks Department; Peter Gillespie, Town Planner and Donna Hemmann, Town Council Liaison.

1. Public Comments.

No comments.

2. Approval of [Minutes - November 18, 2003](#).

Paul Courchaine moved to approve the minutes. The motion was seconded by Charles Forsdick and voted unanimously.

3.

a. Town Planner - Peter Gillespie.

Chairperson Kuckro introduced Peter Gillespie, Town Planner. Mr. Gillespie spoke with Commission members regarding the role of the Tourism Commission and EDIC. He explained that EDIC is working with all town committees to coordinate efforts to improve economic development in the Town of Wethersfield. He spoke about the Tourism Commission creating a strategic plan to fit within the economic development plan. He felt the Commission should discuss how tourism affects the town, identify what tourism is for the Town of Wethersfield and identify how the town should support the Tourism Commission. This support should relate to the town's overall goals and objectives. He also reported that the town is looking to coordinate the efforts of all the boards and commissions as they relate to economic development. He suggested the Tourism Commission create a strategic plan and work with all stakeholders in the development of this plan. He mentioned that EDIC's marketing sub-committee under Chairperson Chris Lyons meets the first Friday of every month to talk about marketing issues. They will meet at "Antiques on Main" in January. Charles Ford volunteered to attend the January meeting as a representative from the Tourism Commission. Chairperson Kuckro suggested the Tourism Commission begin to create a list of stakeholders and a strategic plan. Members recommended looking at the different stakeholders in town including lodging, restaurants, specialty shops and museums. Commission members will encourage stakeholders to give their opinions on what they think about tourism in town and how the town should promote tourism. This process can also identify for stakeholders the impact tourism has on a community. Chairperson Kuckro reported that the statistics are available to demonstrate the amount of dollars a visitor spends on tourism in the Greater Hartford area. Council Liaison Donna Hemmann suggested that the Tourism Commission bring together the stakeholders and work towards a common goal. They can develop a strategic plan which looks at developing strategies for marketing and advertising the town's resources. Carol Adil reported that the Commission needs to keep in mind the opening of the Convention Center in 2005, since this will have an impact for tourism in town. Chairperson Kuckro reported that we need to be aware of the real estate market and create a packet of information from the town that identifies the nature of the town and its tourism potential. Mr. Gillespie suggested creating a database of information on the type of visitor to the Town, what their needs are and what was effective in bringing them to the Town of Wethersfield. Chairperson Kuckro reported that they will be meeting with Professor Benfield of Central Connecticut State University to discuss a school project on Tourism. Mr. Gillespie suggested doing research on how other communities evaluate their effectiveness in tourism and marketing. Charles Ford suggested a possible project for the Central Connecticut State University students might be to do this research work and develop a survey form for visitors to our museums and businesses.

b. Charles Forsdick reported that the Web Site is getting a lot of visits and hits. He will prepare a brief report

for the next meeting outlining the current information on the visitors to the Web Site. Commission members also discussed a need for a variety of sites to be linked to the town's Tourism Web Site and to have a reciprocal agreement with these Web Sites. Charles Forsdick will work with other Commission members to begin to identify particular links for the Web Site.

- c. Paul Courchaine reported that now is the time to think about the budget process and identify budget requests for 2004-05. Commission members discussed some of their budget needs for the upcoming budget process and felt a strong commitment must be made to the distribution of the brochure. This brochure is having an impact on visitors coming to Wethersfield. Donna Hemmann felt that statistics are important to report to Town Council to justify budget dollars for their Commission. She explained that the Council will be looking for budget requests that provide a return on investment that was documented by the group. She suggested the Commission develop these numbers. Commission members discussed their priorities for the upcoming budget year. These included funding of the distribution of the brochure, continuing to develop the quarterly calendar, Web Site management, marketing and public relations on the events in the calendar and development of a tourism kit. Charles Ford suggested looking at the possibility of a joint venture with the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce and the Tourism Commission for the possibility of a 1-800 number for Wethersfield. Commission members will revisit these items and costs at their meeting in January.
- d. Meeting with Ken Kahn of the Greater Hartford Arts Council.

Chairperson Kuckro reported that a meeting was held with Ken Kahn to discuss the scope of work by the Greater Hartford Arts Council for the Town of Wethersfield. They are looking at the development of a signage plan for the town. This signage plan will be done in conjunction with discussions with appropriate town staff and commissions. The end result of this work would be to have a plan available to the town to be consistent with their signage and for their wayfinding signs. A suggestion was also made that street signage for the Silas Deane Highway should be looked at, as it is important for visitors to be able to identify their location on the Silas Deane Highway. Chairperson Kuckro also suggested that each block should identify the address numbers for that block. Charles Forsdick asked if there was a possibility of grants being available for the purchase of new signage. Chairperson Kuckro reported that grants could be available, however, they might need matching money from the town or other groups for the funds to purchase new signs.

Gerri Munroe stopped into the Tourism Commission meeting. She is the town's representative to the Connecticut Heritage River Valley Tourism District. She reported that the Tourism District had their funds cut once again, but they are working to identify how to utilize their funds in the future. She suggested some events for the town including a Scarecrow Parade in the fall.

4. New Business.

- a. Report from Heritage Partnership Sub-Committee Meeting.

Charles Forsdick reported that the Heritage Partnership Sub-Committee is working on the coordination of the calendar operation with the Web Site. They are working on streamlining that process. He also reported that the Committee is looking to develop a quilting exhibit for the spring of 2005. They are currently looking for a group willing to work on this event. Also, he reported that the Partnership Committee is involved with the development of the signage plan for the Town of Wethersfield.

- b. Report from Sub-Committee Tour Bus Package Meeting.

Chairperson Kuckro reported that Charles Forsdick, George Botini and herself met on creating a tour bus package for the town. They will be developing press kits to be distributed at the Tour Bus Operators yearly meeting. They are developing a kit that will include the Tourism Brochure, the winter calendar, hotel brochure, list of restaurants, hotels and attractions in town. Chairperson Kuckro reported that Mr. Botini is donating the white folders to make this an attractive package.

5. Adjournment.

Paul Courchaine moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:00 p.m. The motion was seconded by Carol Adil and voted unanimously.