

Tourism Committee Meeting Minutes

March 9, 2016

Voting Members in Attendance: Christopher Guldner (*Chairman*), Jamie Casterlin (on phone) (*Vice Chair, Events subcommittee co-lead & Area Organization Rep*), Chris Kenyon (Not-For Profit Attractions), Robert Strong – (Attractions), Ron Ketelsen

Voting Members Absent: Jessica Loden-Kirby (*Secretary, Advertising subcommittee lead*),

Tourism Coordinator: Donna McCabe; and Nick Castellanos

Guests: Carle Kopecky, Scott Ferguson (came in at 6:45pm)

- 1) Welcome/Call to order - Meeting opened at 6:32pm
- 2) Approval of draft minutes from last meeting– Minutes were distributed. Chris Guldner noted the following action items or unresolved items from last meeting:

- Minutes should be posted on the Chamber website. Donna and Nick said they are looking into this.
- Timeline for the new website to go live. No one in attendance was aware.
- Sunshine Fair: Donna stated it would be good publicity to have a table at the Fair, which could be manned or unmanned. If unmanned, should be checked on periodically. Is a table in the budget? (\$200 for a table). Nick is going to evaluate. Rob Strong suggested the idea of a raffle.

Approval of Minutes. Ron moves to approve. Rob seconds. All in favor, none opposed, so moved.

- 3) Tourism Coordinator Position– 6:42pm. Over 50 applicants and 2 rounds of interviews. Selected Nick Castellanos. Nick introduced himself to the group.
- 4) Vacant Voting Member Positions - Three Positions- 6:49pm. Chris Guldner asked for thoughts on filling vacancies. Ron K. asked about whether voting members seats are still tied to certain industry representation. Chris G and Scott F think that it was discussed, but no formal changes were made to the bylaws. Discussion ensued about voting members distributed among certain Industries. Industries not currently represented: Retail, Ag-Tourism, Arts and Entertainment, Large For Profit Attractions are open. **Action Item: Nick will review by-laws for voting member seat requirements. Voting Members will outreach to persons interested and appropriate to fill vacant seats.**

5) Committee Reports

- a) Advertising subcommittee update– 7:03pm. Chris G read Jessica’s report. She reports that the new website is being reviewed. Should be coming to full Tourism Committee for approval in April. Scott shared more details regarding the subcommittee’s review of the website. Mohammed is setting it up to provide password protected access for members to review the website as it is constructed live.

Discussion ensued regarding excluding businesses from listing on website or in Travel Guide that have not been paying occupancy taxes or sales taxes being listed on the website/travel guide. Concern about

how to police. What is the cut-off point? What rules will we use? Suggestion made to require that occupancy taxes are no more than 1 year delinquent. Occupancy Tax is clearly directed to Tourism; Sales Tax is not. However, most tourism businesses only pay sales tax, not occupancy tax. **Action Item: Chris Guldner will ask Billy Cherry for information on businesses that do not pay sales tax, and whether it is feasible for the Tourism Committee to obtain information on all businesses delinquent on occupancy and/or sales tax for more than one year.**

Motion to exclude businesses from listing who are delinquent on occupancy tax and/or sales tax for 1 year as of the publication deadline for Travel Guide. Ron moves. Jamie seconded. All in favor. None opposed. So moved.

Kurt would like to put out an Ad in local papers to encourage business submit information for their free listings. Cost of Ad is not known. Discussion ensued about work needed to put out an Ad and whether there are a significant number of businesses that haven't already listed. **Motion to place an Ad in My Shopper and/or other local paper with additional edits as necessary. Rob moved. Ron seconded. All in favor. None opposed. So moved.**

Route 20 Association membership for 2016. Not in budget. **Motion to not renew. Chris G moves. Rob seconds. All in favor. None opposed. So moved.**

NY by Rail ad with Otsego County (cost approximately \$3700 as Donna recalls). Ad was placed last year; it is not specifically in the budget. Discussion ensued about the value of such an ad. It is the only Ad in conjunction with Otsego County and only Ad directed to NYC metro area. No information on the effectiveness of the Ad. **Motion to approve placement of a NY by Rail ad with Otsego County with addition of tracking mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of the Ad for future consideration. Moved by Chris Gulder. Rob seconds. All in favor. None opposed. So moved.**

Contracts for distribution of the Travel Guide. Do we know what these contracts are and how much is being dedicated? May be in the budget, but Tourism Committee should have some knowledge and approve decisions regarding distribution. **Action Item: Nick and Donna will get clarification Kurt on the status and nature of contracts for distribution of the travel guide.**

- b) Events subcommittee update 8:11pm. Report given by Jamie. Many applications have been received for the Tourism Grants. Meeting will held on Monday, March 14th, at 5:30pm to discuss scoring and make recommendations for grant awards. These recommendations will be sent to the Tourism Committee voting membership for approval. Payouts will be made around the end of April. Chris Guldner would like to make this group conscious of our email communications. For group emails, please only put active participants in the To: line and CC: for those just being copied for informational purposes. We should also be wary about who is on email list for discussion of grants; grant applicants and/or potential grant applicants. These communications should not be shared with current or potential applicants.
- c) Rebranding subcommittee update – No Update.
- d) Tourism update 8:26pm. Donna brought up that unspent Match Partner Program Funds were to be returned by 12/31/2015. Kurt had a conversation with parties, and only one wanted their funds back (Donna cut the check). The rest agreed to roll over their funds to next year. **Action Item: Nick is going**

to talk to Kurt and make sure that all Matching Partner Program participants from 2015 are provided their remaining balances in writing. At least one, maybe two, letters need to go to the State (copied to County) naming Nick as the program director for the Schoharie County Tourism Program.

6) Open Discussion

a) Finance Committee - Tabled

7) Recap To Do Items, Ownership & By When

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- Action Item: Nick and Donna will get clarification Kurt on the status and nature of contracts for distribution of the travel guide.
- Action Item: Nick is going to talk to Kurt and make sure that all Matching Partner Program participants from 2015 are provided their remaining balances in writing.