

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

**Review and/or edit needed where highlighted in yellow**

**Call to Order:** The meeting was called to order at 5:36 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: Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: none.

**Public Comments:** No one commented, but one member of the public stated that he was present as an observer. Dan Morgan, a student at Kingswood-Oxford School, said he was observing for a class assignment.

**Approval of Minutes:** August 26, 2008 - Charlie Forsdick asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes, and several clarifications were requested. Elaine St. Onge made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Katie Sullivan seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

**Announcements/ Introductions:**

- Charlie Forsdick announced that two new Commission members were present at the meeting: Shireen Aforismo representing the Wethersfield Chamber of Commerce, and Dorcus McHugh representing EDIC. Mr. Forsdick welcomed them and said he was glad to have them both as members.
- Charlie Forsdick said that he believes that the Commission has gained a reputation of being proactive and accomplishing a lot. He feels that the Commission may have lost some momentum and wanted to know what the other members think. Elaine St. Onge said that she felt a positive change already with the new members that have joined lately, for example, Jenna Delay and the new projects she has taken on.

Geraldine Munroe said that she has been very excited by all of the recent positive tourism press. She said that she thinks it is mostly aimed at Old Wethersfield and she wonders if the businesses on the Silas Deane Highway and Berlin Turnpike are offended. Charlie Forsdick said that it has been difficult over the years to gain the interest of the businesses from those two corridors. Chris Traczyk said that she feels the new stakeholders e-mail list will help keep everyone informed and up to date, and help with data collection for the activity reporting to the Town Council.

## Reports:

- Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission – Geraldine Munroe reported that she has been trying to get a calendar of events, but has received no response. Peter Gillespie said that he had received an e-mail about the deadline for the 2009 Visitor’s Guide being October 6<sup>th</sup>. He suggested that the 2008 Guide be reviewed for how it was set-up, so they can quickly get something in for the 2009 Guide.

Geraldine Munroe said that there is a membership event October 8<sup>th</sup>: a beer tasting at the Thomas Hooker Brewery in East Hartford. Charlie Forsdick said that there is another membership event November 5<sup>th</sup>: a wine tasting at the Silas Robbins House.

- Economic Development and Improvement Commission – Dorcus McHugh said that she had little to report because she is new. She did say that she felt that the Town is making good progress, for example, the façade loan program helped Leo’s Pizza Restaurant successfully renovate the front of their building. Peter Gillespie reported that the EDIC reviewed its project list and had the Film Commission down as a low priority for EDIC. He said that the EDCI likes the idea, but does not have the resources to follow through. Geraldine Munroe suggested that a multi-town effort be considered since a film in Wethersfield would need more hotels and restaurants to support a film project.
- GHC&VB, Potential Events - Carol Hall reported that she had no update, since their website was still inactive after having been attacked by a virus.
- Grant Funding
  - *Preserve America* – Status: Peter Gillespie said that the master plan was approved by the Town Council. He said that the Preserve America Subcommittee will get together around the end of October to begin implementing the plan. Charlie Forsdick said that Rae Anne Palmer will be looking for more **representatives on the Subcommittee.**
  - Marketing Grant – Status: Peter Gillespie said that he has put together a short list of marketing firms for a simple Request for Proposal. Charlie Forsdick said that Tourism would probably be the entity assigned to overseeing that grant. Peter Gillespie said that the stakeholders will be meeting soon, and he will want to get feedback from them at the meeting on a draft of the RFP.
- Way-finding & Gateway signage – Peter Gillespie **said that the way-finding and gateway signage grants will be going to the Town Council on Monday. He said that the Way-finding Signage and Preserve America subcommittees may be combined for implementation efficiency.**
- 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee – Chris Traczyk said that she missed the last meeting, but knew that the Committee had handed out promotional items at the Cornfest (i.e. pencils, flyers with a list of events without dates). She said that she has offered to the Committee

some space on the Tourism webpage for the events. An often-suggested event heard at the Cornfest was a lantern tour since it was so successful previously.

Charlie Forsdick said that this is a good example of a situation where it would be great to have a Tourism representative to take ideas to the various organizations in Town and try to find a producer for the idea or event. He said there should be inherent interest for producing events, because they can be good fundraisers. Jenna Delay said that she would volunteer to help do some of this work. Charlie Forsdick said that Jenna would need a partner to help her.

Peter Gillespie said that he had been approached by Connecticut Magazine for an article. He suggested that Tourism consider providing funding to Keilor Associates to have them develop an article or other publicity for the 375<sup>th</sup> event. He said that Tourism is about the only organization with funding and energy to do something like this.

Elaine St. Onge made a motion to authorize Peter Gillespie to offer funding to the 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee for publicizing the anniversary events list. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

- Budget Status, 2008 – 09: Peter Gillespie reported that little money has been spent, and that there is still no funding available for the brochure printing.
- Event Calendar – Update: Jenna Delay reported that she has obtained a good amount of information for events through January. She has started a newsletter for distribution in the schools, and e-mails for distribution among the stakeholders.
- Visitor Survey – Peter Gillespie said that he has received about 110 surveys so far, but there has been no analysis of the data yet. He will be getting more surveys out to the stakeholders soon. Charlie Forsdick said that there are not enough surveys coming in to make a monthly report worthwhile, so he suggested that the reporting be done quarterly.
- Phone Inquiries – Peter Gillespie said that there had been little inquiry except for information about the horse and carriage ride. He said that the number of calls was low because the number was not yet well known.

On other outreach fronts, Peter Gillespie said that the AAA magazine had generated 84 requests for information from Wethersfield. Charlie Forsdick said that the tie in to Mass Staycation had generated a good number of hits, so he felt that effort had been a worthwhile.

- Website Hits - Jenna Delay said that web hits through September 2007 were 1,712. Web hits through September of 2008 were 2,110. She said that the top search requests that led to the website were referrers and attractions. Ms. Delay also said that there are weblinks on the Wethersfield schools website, and on the Historical Society and Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum websites.
- Monthly Report – Charlie Forsdick said that he is anxious to get some hard data to the Town Council. The Commission needs the stakeholders to consistently and frequently collect and

submit surveys. Charlie Ford said that it is hard for shops and restaurants to have a one on one opportunity with customers to give out surveys. Jenna Delay suggested that people be surveyed at events like the Cornfest and the Craft Fair.

### **Old Business:**

- Brochure – Reprinting: Peter Gillespie said that there has been no progress with finding grants for the reprinting. Rae Anne Palmer said that there are few grants of the type that would pay for something like reprinting. Chris Traczyk suggested that just enough be ordered to get by, rather than purchase in quantity. Peter Gillespie said that he would try to estimate when the Town will run out of the brochures.
- Spring Weekend (Scavenger/Mystery Hunt) – Chris Traczyk said that there was no progress to report. Charlie Forsdick said that it is generally better to have multiple events on the same weekend, or multiple weekends.
- Farmers Market – New event: Jenna Delay reported that she had met with Rae Anne Palmer, Doug Sacks and Joan Hughes. She said that Rae Anne is looking for input from the Health District. Bob Yandow of Bob’s Produce on the Berlin Turnpike is apparently excited about the prospect of a market on the Silas Deane Highway. Jenna Delay said that she hopes that the Silas Deane Highway will also be a good bridge from Old Wethersfield.
- Greeter Book – Update: Kate Sullivan said that copies of the Greeter Manuals were now located at the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, the Historical Society, the Town library, and both bed and breakfasts. Peter Gillespie said that a copy has traditionally been kept at the Town Hall.
- Horse & Carriage Ride Schedule: Peter Gillespie said that the rides are planned through the end of October to cover all of the Scarecrows on Main Street. There is not enough money to run the ride in November, but the rides would resume on Saturdays and Sundays in December through the holidays and New Year’s Day. He said that group requests are now being made, and the Town has received a lot of very positive e-mail about the presence of the ride in Town.
- Photo Library – Peter Gillespie said that Mr. Kurlock is now working on this project. He is working on classifying the photographs, but there is no timeline for completion of the project at the moment.
- Tourism DVD – Footage and still collection; Chris Traczyk/Gerry Munroe: The DVD maker, Paul Mayer will be in Town on Thursday and Friday October 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> to videotape various parts of the town. He plans to at least video a staged tour of the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, and the Scarecrows on Main Street. Joyce Rossignol put an article in the **Wethersfield Life** about the need for video clips. Mr. Mayer believes he will finish the DVD by the spring.

- Winter Holiday – (Door Decorating Contest): Charlie Forsdick said that he had no success finding a sponsoring organization for this contest. He said he had contacted the Village Improvement Association, the Historical Society, the Home Garden Club and the Men’s Garden Club.

**New Business:**

- Stakeholder meeting schedule: Peter Gillespie said that the stakeholders meeting would be during the week of October 20<sup>th</sup>, and the tentative date is Wednesday, October 22<sup>nd</sup>.
- Ad commitment: Charlie Forsdick said that a commitment is needed to place ads in the Visitor’s Guide to Greater Hartford, and the Hartford River Valley Guide. Charlie Forsdick said that the ½ page ad last year cost about \$3,000. The Commission members then discussed which ad to use. Chris Traczyk made a motion to authorize Peter Gillespie to have Pita Communications take the ad used last in Journeys magazine and revise it to tie into the Town’s 375<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, and have the ad published in the Visitor’s Guide to Greater Hartford, and the Hartford River Valley Guide. Katie Sullivan seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

**Follow Up Items:**

- Monthly Report response
- DVD progress
- Photo library cataloguing

**Correspondence:** Charlie Forsdick said that the Town library has been placed on the Literary Landmark Register. He said that a plaque and a map by a local artist would be dedicated and placed in the new Wethersfield Room at the library. One of the reasons for being added to the register is because Wethersfield is the setting for the book “The Witch of Blackbird Pond.”

**Next Meeting Date:** October 28, 2008 at 5:30 PM, Town Hall Conference Room #1.

**Call to Adjourn:** Katie Sullivan 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