

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday November 25, 2008 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Manager's Conference Room
MINUTES

DRAFT FROM RECORDING SECRETARY

Review and/or edit needed where highlighted in yellow

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Chris Traczyk, Vice Chair.

Roll Call/Attendance (5 required for quorum): Members in attendance: Chris Traczyk, Vice Chair; Shireen Aforismo, Jenna Delay, Charles Ford, Elaine St. Onge, and Katie Sullivan. Also in attendance: Paul Montinieri, Town Council Liaison; and Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager.

Members absent: Charlie Forsdick, Chair; Carol Hall; Dorcas McHugh; Geraldine Munroe.

Public Comments: None.

Approval of Minutes: October 28, 2008 Chris Traczyk asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes, and none were requested. Katie Sullivan made a motion to approve the meeting minutes, Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions:

Reports:

- **Central CT Culture & Tourism Commission** – No report.
- **Economic Development and Improvement Commission** – No report .
- **GHC&VB, Potential Events** - Carol Hall – December 11 Holiday Party reminder.
- **Grant Funding**
 - *Preserve America* – Status
 - **Marketing Grant** - Status
 - **Wayfinding & Gateway signage** – Status
 - Peter Gillespie said that the steering committee met last night regarding the recommendations and implementation schedule for the Preserve America Master Plan. He said the committee recognized the need to involve the stakeholders during their process. The committee broke the work into 6 task categories, including wayfinding signage, park and pathway amenities, etc. Starting in January, subcommittees would be formed around this work, and meet quarterly to follow-up. Mr. Gillespie said that one of the first things

would be a list of sign locations, which he would bring to the Tourism Commission for their comments.

- **375th Anniversary Committee** – Chris Traczyk: There was no report from this committee, except that the next meeting would be December 4th. Peter Gillespie said that he had given to the Committee some contact information for Keilor Associates, but he had no progress to report.

Elaine St. Onge said that the Wethersfield Historical Society had released a new book about Wethersfield's history: "Images of America, Wethersfield" by Beverly Lucas and the Wethersfield Historical Society. Ms. St. Onge said that the book was not the work on the 375th anniversary committee, but was done for the anniversary. She said the book is available for sale at the Keeney Center and the Old Academy. He said that there will be a kick-off celebration in January 2009 for a companion exhibit at the Keeney Center.

- **Budget Status, 2008 – 09:** Peter Gillespie said that there had been no change since the last meeting. That is, spending is frozen, and any requests for expenditures must be decided by the Town Manager.
- **Event Calendar – Update:** Jenna Delay reported that she had no new events to add.
- **Quarterly Report:** Chris Traczyk said that the first Tourism Commission Quarterly Report was finished and had been sent out to the members for their review. Peter Gillespie said that comments are welcome, as the report is considered a work in progress. Paul Montinieri said that there has been no Town Council meeting since the report was published, so it would probably be on the agenda for their next meeting.

Old Business:

- **Seasonal Event Schedule - Door Decorating Contest:** Chris Traczyk said that no sponsor was found for this event, so it has been canceled.
- **Farmers Market – New event:** Jenna Delay said that there was no activity to report.
- **Visitor Survey – Quarterly report:** Peter Gillespie said that the stakeholders are strongly encouraged to get visitors to fill out surveys and send them in.
- **Stakeholder Meeting:** Peter Gillespie said that the main meeting topic was getting stakeholders involved with the marketing grant process. The first task was to develop a request for proposal and solicit bids from at least 3 consulting firms. The consultant's role would be to develop a collaborative marketing plan among the stakeholders. The stakeholders would provide input on how to spend the funds and what to tell the consultant to do. Charlie Ford said that the \$5,000 amount of the grant would not go very far. Chris Traczyk said that the consultant should assist the stakeholders to draft bids for print ads, and develop low cost marketing ideas. She also suggested that the consultant work with the

stakeholders to narrow down the list of marketing recommendations previously developed by Keilor.

- **Stakeholder List Expansion:** Peter Gillespie said that he would get clarification from Charlie Forsdick on this topic.
- **Tourism DVD – Footage and still collection:** Chris Traczyk said that the only activity to report was that she sent some still pictures to Lawlor to work on.
- **Horse and Carriage Rides:** Peter Gillespie said that the ride schedule is in the member's information packets. Ads for the rides are to appear in the Hartford Courant and several holiday supplements. The plan is to continue to have the ride start at 200 Main Street, and the price for the rides was increased by the Town Manager. He said the rides cost about \$800 per day, and the revenue from the rides is about \$200 per day. At that rate, there may be enough funds leftover to run a few rides in the spring. Charlie Ford offered to draft an announcement about the rides to be sent to media outlets for their calendar of events sections. The members agreed that more advertising than that would not be needed since the rides have already consistently run at or above capacity. Drawing more people may only create longer lines and disappointed customers.

New Business:

- **Events – Cemetery Lantern Tour:** Katie Sullivan confirmed that the Webb Deane Stevens Museum plans to host the tour event in the fall of 2009.
- **Talking Map:** Peter Gillespie said he has found that the map fee is \$50 per location on a map, and not \$50 for the whole map. This would bring the cost of the map to roughly \$2,000. He said he feels this still may be worth doing, but he still has not received a written proposal from the vendor.
- **Website Redesign:** Jenna Delay showed the members what she has been doing to redesign the Tourism webpage. She said that she first reviewed numerous other tourism websites, including those for Salem, MA; Windsor, CT; and Essex, CT. She showed how she has better organized the homepage and made it more user-friendly. She shortened a large block of text, and posted a map showing Wethersfield being less than 2 hours drive from Boston and New York. The members were very impressed with the improvements she had made so far. The members also made a few suggestions, including: adding the Welcome from the Mayor letter, linking to the Preserve America report, and showing the improvements to the Town Council when finished.

Follow Up Items: None.

Correspondence: None.

Other Business:

Katie Sullivan said that the Webb Deane Stevens Museum would be having an open house on December 5th, from 5:00 – 8:00 PM. She said the event kicks off their holiday display season, which continues through January 4th.

Charlie Ford said that the Old Wethersfield Shopkeepers had again purchased decorative lights for the light poles in Old Wethersfield. He said he would be working with the Town to have them install the lights, as usual.

Next Meeting Date: December 30, 2008 - 5:30 PM – Silas W. Robbins House, 185 Broad Street. Chris Traczyk asked for confirmation that is OK to hold the meeting at the Silas Robbins House. Peter Gillespie said yes, as long as it is open to the public.

Call to Adjourn: Katie Sullivan motioned to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 p.m., Jenna Delay seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Commission Recording Secretary