

WETHERSFIELD TOURISM COMMISSION
Meeting: Tuesday, July 31, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.
Town Manager's Conference Room
MINUTES

Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:50 p.m. by Chair Charlie Forsdick.

Roll Call/Attendance: Members in attendance: Charlie Forsdick, Chair, Charles Ford, Joan Hughes, Anne Kuckro, Elaine St. Onge, and Chris Traczyk. Also in attendance: Paul Montinieri, Town Council Liaison; Bonnie Therrien, Town Manager; Peter Gillespie, Town Planner/Economic Development Manager; and John Fonfara, State Senator.

Members absent: Gerry Munroe and Katie Sullivan.

Public Comments:

- Nancy Rice, 192 Fairfield Woods Rd., Fairfield, representing Friends of Animals. Ms. Rice said that she was present to object to the use of a horse for the planned horse and carriage rides. She said that she had received notes from concerned citizens in the area expressing the same objection. Ms. Rice said that horse-drawn carriages are dangerous to bicyclists and pedestrians, and the horses are often not treated well. She said she understood the historical relevance, but compared the horse use to slavery, saying that such exploitation should not be resurrected. Ms. Rice also said that members of Friends of Animals would consider the horse and carriage ride a reason not to visit Wethersfield.
- State Senator Fonfara said that he was present to support having a horse and carriage ride in Wethersfield. He said that it was his initiative to get a ride in Wethersfield, so any blame may be laid on him. He believes the ride is a good thing for the town, as it will attract people to the community. Sen. Fonfara said that he has spoken to a horse and carriage ride owner in Chester, and believes that owners take good care of their horses. He also said that the Town has placed limits on the number of days and hours the ride will operate, so it will not be overly burdensome for the horse.
- At least one television news station had a camera and a reporter at the meeting recording only the public comments portion of the meeting. No one announced their presence, but they were believed to be from Channel 61.

Approval of Minutes: [June 26, 2007](#) - Charlie Forsdick asked if there were corrections needed for the draft minutes. Anne Kuckro noted that her name was misspelled in several places. Elaine St. Onge. Made a motion to approve the meeting minutes as amended, Chris Traczyk seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.

Announcements/ Introductions:

- Katie Sullivan was announced as a new member representing the Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum. However, Ms. Sullivan was unable to attend the meeting.
- Joan Hughes will be vacating her at-large position and taking Paul Montinieri's position as the liaison from the Economic Development and Improvement Commission.
- Carol Hall has been nominated to fill the at-large position vacated by Joan Hughes.
- Bonnie Therrien said that she has contacted the Chamber of Commerce about a nomination for a member representing the Chamber.

New Business:

- **Proposed T-shirts sales:** residents Daniel Ramiri and Kevin Cashman were present at the meeting with a

proposal to sell t-shirts with a Wethersfield slogan and logo on them. They said that they were seeking Town endorsement, and showed example T-shirts that had the slogan "Historic Old Wethersfield" and an onion. The consensus of the members was that promotion of Wethersfield was welcomed, but if they wanted Town endorsement, the slogan and logo would have to be consistent with those used by the Tourism Commission. That is, the slogan would have to be "Historic Wethersfield", and include the official onion logo. Mr. Ramiri and Mr. Cashman said that they would consider whether they wanted to continue with the project using the town's slogan and logo. Charlie Forsdick said that they could e-mail to him an example layout for the Commission to consider, so they would not have to print new example t-shirts or appear before the Commission again.

- **Horse and Carriage Ride RFP:** The Request for Proposal appeared in the Hartford Courant, and proposals are due to the Town Finance Department by August 20th. The proposals will be reviewed as quickly as possible with the goal of enabling a vote by the Town Council at its next meeting on September 4, 2007. Bonnie Therrien said that the Town researched what safety and other precautions should be written into the RFP, including some recommended by the State Department of Environmental Protection. Anne Kuckro said that the timing would be great if the ride was available for upcoming events in October such as the Silas Robbins House opening, the Historical Society's Craft Fair and the scarecrows along Main Street. Charlie Forsdick added that there is an airline owners and pilot's convention in Hartford in the beginning of October, too.

Reports:

- **Central CT Culture and Tourism Commission:** Anne Kuckro said that there has been no meeting or activity on which to report.
- **EDIC:** Peter Gillespie said that the EDIC has \$5,000 available to spend on tourism advertising. Wethersfield had been contributing \$5,000 per year to the Metro Hartford Alliance but stopped due to lack of return. That money is now being considered for advertisements in magazines for bed and breakfasts and hotels.
- **Grant Funding:** Peter Gillespie reported that Rae Ann Palmer said the Preserve America Master Plan was set to have a steering committee meeting on August 13th.
- **Tourism DVD:** Anne Kuckro said that there is no activity to report and may not be any to report until September.
- **Display Ad Schedule:** Charlie Forsdick distributed a summary table of display advertising information, including publication, target audience, cost, etc. Charlie Ford said he would look into getting more information on target audiences.

Mr. Ford suggested that the Commission wait to decide on more advertising until after the final JMA report. Charlie Forsdick said that he felt advertising should not be suspended, since the most emphatic advice the Commission has received is for the Town to consistently keep its name out in publications for Wethersfield's name to take hold with potential visitors. Mr. Ford said his concern stemmed from the lack of increased tourism in town, despite the efforts of the Commission for 6 years.

Anne Kuckro said that tourism has remained level over the last few years, but that many other destinations report declines. Anne also said that the town has budgeted only a small amount of money over the previous 3 years towards promoting tourism. Charlie Forsdick said the feedback from visitor survey cards has been very positive. In the face of declining tourism elsewhere, he feels Wethersfield has fared well in recent years.

- **2008 Meeting Planners Guide Ad:** Chris Traczyk said she has looked at the guide and felt it was not very useful. Charlie Forsdick said he would have Gerry Munroe review it before the Commission decides whether to commit money to it.
- **Promo Kit:** Elaine St. Onge reported that she had just received the folders that day, and she distributed copies to the members. The consensus was that the finished product looked very good - very useful and professional. The remainder of the shipment would be stored at Town Hall.

- **Promotion Package:** Joan Hughes reported that the contacts to date have been unresponsive.
- **Convention Center and GHCVB Marketing:** Charlie Forsdick said he has learned that there are two main ways that the GHCVB gets information out to its customers. The first way is prior to booking a convention when potential customers request information about the Greater Hartford area. The GHCVB has good information from Wethersfield to distribute when they are at that stage. Information at this stage is not very date sensitive. The second way is after booking the convention when information is given to the attendees for their arrival. Wethersfield does not have any different information available for this stage. Chris Traczyk noted that such information would be very date sensitive since it needs to include what events are going on during the exact dates of the person's visit. . Peter Gillespie said that Keiler Associates suggested that a wrap or insert of current information could easily be created as a companion for the Town's new brochure. Chris Traczyk said that it would be a lot of work for one person to take on this task, since it would mean on-going creation of updated wraps, physically putting the wrap together with the brochures, getting the latest information to the GHCVB, etc. Charlie Forsdick said that such current information is critical since visitors are drawn more strongly to events than destinations
- Charlie Forsdick said that a GHCVB liaison is needed to transmit current information. Paul Montinieri suggested that the duty of GHCVB liaison could be divided up and rotated among the Commission members. Elaine St. Onge said that was a good idea, except that the GHCVB preferred one contact for consistency.
- **Budget:** Peter Gillespie said that there was nothing new to report.

Old Business:

- **Event Calendar Coordinator:** Peter Gillespie said that he inquired about the library staff taking on this task, but they cannot do so until after building renovations are complete (in about a year). He will next ask if Jennifer Delay is willing to do it, since she is already working on the Preserve America Grant. For now, new event listings should be sent to Peter Gillespie.
- **What to do in CT 2007:** Chris Traczyk said that this task is essentially done, since last year's ad is being reused.
- **Webmaster:** Jennifer Delay has agreed to do some webmaster work for the town. Peter Gillespie said that the Commission is authorized to spend some money budgeted for a webmaster. Chris Traczyk made a motion to spend \$100 per month for 12 months, Joan Hughes seconded the motion and the vote showed all members in favor.
- **Vacancy - Berlin Turnpike:** Charlie Forsdick said that he had received no response from the Berlin Turnpike contact at Carmen Anthony's Restaurant.
- **Vacancy - GHCVB:** no decision.
- **River Cruise Boat:** Charlie Forsdick said that the owner of the Hartford Belle is ready and willing to make a stop in Wethersfield Cove if the Town would provide a better, safer dock. Mr. Forsdick also said that it would take at least until next season to get the dock replaced, and that Wethersfield could learn from how Rocky Hill has gone about getting its ferry dock upgraded. Anne Kuckro said that the timing is good for next season, since it would give the Commission time to line up other opportunities such as a connection to the trolley-bus after visitors get off of the boat.
- **375th Anniversary Committee:** Charlie Forsdick said that the Town Council is forming a new committee to plan a town wide celebration of its 375th anniversary in 2009. Members will be recruited from at least the following existing groups: Webb-Deane-Stevens Museum, Wethersfield Historical Society, EDIC, Tourism Commission and the Board of Education. Anne Kuckro volunteered to be the representative from the Tourism Commission.

Other Business:

- **Redevelopment Referendum Endorsement:** Charlie Forsdick distributed a draft of an endorsement for the

Commission to consider. As drafted, the endorsement would express the Commission's support for the Redevelopment Referendum. Anne Kuckro asked if Boards and Commissions are allowed to make such endorsements, and Peter Gillespie said yes. Chris Traczyk made a motion to approve the endorsement as drafted, Elaine St. Onge seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

- **National Preservation Alliance Convention in 2011:** Anne Kuckro said that she is meeting with planners for the main convention in Hartford, to discuss using the Webb Museum as a facility for an off-site break-out session. Charlie Forsdick asked Anne to find out if there would be an appropriate opportunity for him to meet the convention planners and extend a special welcome on behalf of the Commission. Charlie also suggested to Anne that Marty Malicki would be a good person to help develop the logistics of getting the convention planners to Wethersfield and capitalizing on things like using the new trolley-bus.

Completed Items/Tasks: None discussed.

Correspondence: None.

Next Meeting Date: August 28, 2007 at 5:30 p.m.

Call to Adjourn: Joan Hughes motioned to adjourn the meeting at 7:20 p.m., Chris Traczyk seconded the motion, and the vote showed all members in favor.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kevin T. Sullivan
Recording Secretary