



Mystic Country

ERTD Marketing Committee
Minutes
September 25, 2020 9:00AM
Zoom

Attendees: Chris Regan, Jill St. Clair, Delpha Very, Steven Everett, Fran Kefalas, Tyra Penn Gesek, Tracey Hanson, Dave Quinn, Peggy Roberts, Dave Quinn, Tony Sheridan, Courtney Assad, Randy Fiveash

Guests: Bruce Flax, Ted Matsumoto, Felix Reyes, David McBride.

Meeting called to order at 9:02AM.

1. Regional Marketing Partnership Program Applications

a. Bed and Breakfasts of Mystic Coast and Country

Ted Matsumoto from Captain Grant's Inn presented the application. They have twelve partners in their organization. 15 months ago they engaged a web developer to redesign their website. It hasn't been doing as well as they hoped and it was recommended that they add more content to the site. They would like to expand their content with other things to do in the area and plan to use Google Analytics to measure their site activity. They are planning to create a page for each B&B as well as their partners and create stories about things to do in the area.

Chris asked about the B&Bs in their membership spread. They have inns spread out across the shoreline. Jill asked about their membership structure. Their membership is \$170 semi-annually which includes membership benefits. Fran stated that BBMC is a member of theirs and asked if they have explored linking their website to other sites that have this content and better spend the investment on marketing. They understand that there are other sites, but being the only B&B site in the area they would like to have more information for their travelers.

b. New London Unity Initiative

Felix Reyes, Director of Economic Development for the City of New London presented the application. The city is looking at their long term recovery planning and making a stronger investment in tourism. They have a large number of tourism assets, but there isn't really an effort tying them all together. They will be

coordinating with the major partners in the city and creating a central site for all of New London. They are also looking to install a historic heritage trail throughout the city. They are planning to highlight their diversity and deep history with this program. Chris asked about other stakeholders such as Ocean Beach and Cross Sound Ferry about participating. They are in frequent communication with them and are part of the conversation. Jill asked about promotion on the ferries and commented on their mural assets. They stated they are always trying to communicate with that audience. Fran discussed a connection with the CT Freedom Trail in Norwich and a focus on black history in the region. They are just getting started but are planning to connect their efforts with others around the state. Delpha discussed tourism playing a larger role in education and is supportive of experiential education through tourism. Chris asked for clarification on the timeline. The RFP process will be complete in about a month.

c. Mystic Chamber Continuation

Jill expressed her concern for not having a policy in place for Administrative Partners to apply for these funds. She is concerned about any perceived conflict and would like to see a larger conversation on that policy. Bruce explained that the entire program is being spent on the media buy, but there are no costs going to administrative overhead. He expressed that they would be open to working with ThinkMystic in the Spring, but feel they have already developed separate plans. Bruce and Chris discussed their communication about partnership on the plan. Bruce stated he feels their plan has merit and has trouble understanding the hesitation. Fran asked who will be executing the plan, Bruce responded that the Chamber will be. Tony recommended that an option could be to approve the plan and add to the criteria that organizations must collaborate within the same geographic area. Tracey stated that this is our first year implementing this program and there are many things we need to re-evaluate for next year, but the main focus should be on the benefit it brings to the area for this year. Tyra stated her concern with the current applications being so southeastern heavy. Fran discussed needing policy moving forward, but unfortunately it is not in place currently. She agreed that they need to correct this, but wants to get through this year. Steve Everett expressed that it will never be equal between the south and north and as much as he would like people to come to their area, he feels their best chance is to draw people who have come from other areas. Jill discussed that there are a few more applications coming in from different areas that will come forward soon. She feels that a policy needs to be put in place immediately rather than later about the Administrative Partners. Tyra discussed the flaw of the rolling deadline and needing to be true to the criteria we developed. Jim stated that he thought that they had disallowed the Administrative Partner from applying,

but they did not memorialize it in the guidelines. He stated they should not have heard the application if they weren't going to allow it. He stated they will take it up in the Executive Committee and bring closure to the policy, but the Marketing Committee needs to bring closure to this application. Randy stated they had advised against the rolling deadline. Randy stated that they do have a problem with Administrative Partners applying for funds and expressed issues with creating policy after the fact. Bruce reiterated the benefit of their plan and that the Chamber will not be earning anything from this.

Jill moved to approve the application for the BBMC, seconded by Tyra, all in favor, motion approved.

Tyra moved to approve the application for the City of New London, second by Fran, all in favor, motion approved.

Fran moved to approve the application for the Mystic Chamber, seconded by Steve. Steve discussed needing more time and would currently abstain. Jill and Tyra feel there needs to be a policy decision at the board level on Administrative Partners. Fran discussed the conflict of the partner being a paid contractor of the ERTD and the Chamber receiving funds that support their members. Tony spoke about the Chambers involvement in the tourism industry and that this is just a matter of lack of policy and this is a learning process. They applied prior to the policy being created and this needs to be adjusted. Jim stated that if Steve needs more time that is fair, but the Executive Committee is unlikely going to approve a policy that will be retroactive as it is inappropriate to add policy in the middle of a program. Jill stated she still feels that policy can be adopted after the process has begun. Fran withdrew her motion.

Tyra moved to table the application to October 2, seconded by Fran, all in favor, motion approved. Chris abstained.

Adjournment 10:28am.