

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the
Western Connecticut Tourism District
Wednesday, November 18 am, via Zoom**

Directors present were: Craig Nelson, chair; Lynn Baker, John Baroody, Laura Budd, Gregg Dancho, Irene Dixon, Annette Einhorn, Michelle Falcone, Randy Fiveash, Sue Frisch, Lorenzo Gaudioso, Tim Good, Lara Green-Kazlauskas, Fran Keilty, David Kooris, Marcelo Martins, Kerry McAndrew, Dawn Nielsen, Herman Olivera, Ben Paletsky, Christal Preszler, Karen Reddington-Hughes, Tom Roman, Carmen Romeo, Steve Spivak, Jennifer Tooker, Kevin Treesh, Debbie Ventre, Jack Walsh, Jen Wastrom, and Rowena White.

Others present included: Rosemary Bove of the State Office of Tourism; from Storytellers, Chris Smith, Joe Giaccone, and Matt Shea; from the Waterbury Regional Chamber: Mandy Allen and Terry Macary.

Welcome

Mr. Nelson called the meeting to order at 10:07 am. He asked that all in attendance sign in with their name and town in the Zoom chat. He briefly reviewed the previous year for the District, noting that the District Board has come a long way in a year.

Election of Temporary Chair

Mr. Nelson reviewed the process for the annual meeting. Mr. Baroody nominated Jack Walsh as temporary chair, seconded by Mr. Romeo. Mr. Nelson then closed the floor to nominations as moved by Mr. Baroody and seconded by Mr. Gaudioso. The motion to approve Mr. Walsh as temporary chair carried.

Election of Officers 2021

Mr. Walsh read the slate of officers as presented by the Nominating Committee: Chair: Gregg Dancho, Stratford; Vice Chair: Jeff Dunn, Thomaston; 2nd Vice Chair: Lorenzo Gaudioso, Roxbury; Secretary: Michelle Falcone, Easton; Treasurer: Carmen Romeo, Wolcott; Assistant Treasurer, Rachel Kelly, Torrington; Past Chair: Craig Nelson, Warren; At Large: Steve Spivak, Ridgefield; Lara Green Kazlauskas, Winchester; Annette Einhorn, Stamford; Ben Paletsky, Morris; and Herman Olivera, Monroe. Mr. Walsh asked for nominations from the floor; no nominations were given from the floor. Ms. Nielsen moved to accept the slate of officers as presented; Mr. Romeo seconded. The motion carried.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned to the Regular Meeting at 10:14 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Macary
Administrative Partner

Directors Present:

Kerry McAndrew- Beacon Falls
Lynn Baker -- Bethlehem
Rowena White -- Bridgeport
Dawn Nielsen- Bristol
Kevin Treesh -- Darien
John Walsh-Derby
Michelle Falcone-Easton
Tim Good- Kent
Tom Roman - Litchfield
Herman Olivera – Monroe
Ben Paletsky-Morris
Marcelo Martins-Naugatuck
Laura Budd- New Canaan
Debbie Ventre-New Hartford
Christal Preszler - Newtown
Sue Frisch- Norfolk
Irene Dixon, Norwalk
Jen Wastrom - Redding
Steve Spivak-Ridgefield
Lorenzo Gaudio- Roxbury
John Barody-Sharon
David Kooris – Stamford
Annette Einhorn – Stamford alternate
Gregg Dancho- Stratford
Craig Nelson-Warren
Fran Keilty – Washington
Lara Green-Kazlauskas - Winsted
Jennifer Tooker – Westport
Carmen Romeo-Wolcott
Karen Reddington Hughes- Woodbury
Randy Riveash – State of Connecticut

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Others present included: Rosemary Bove of the State Office of Tourism; from Storytellers, Chris Smith, Joe Giaccone, and Matt Shea; from the Waterbury Regional Chamber: Mandy Allen and Terry Macary.

Welcome

Mr. Dancho called the meeting to order at 10:14 am. He thanked the members of the previous Executive Committee who were leaving their positions for all their efforts, noting that the district has been reborn in a difficult year. He said there was still a lot of work to do, particularly in regards to managing the COVID-19 response and protocols.

Approval of Minutes

Ms. Macary noted that Joe Buhler of Wilton asked via email to amend the minutes to show he was present. Ms. Nielsen moved to approve the minutes as amended; Mr. Walsh seconded. The motion carried, with Mr. Treesh abstaining.

Additions to the Agenda/Communications/New Business

There were no additions to the agenda, communications or new business brought to the Board.

Membership Update

Ms. Macary noted that 56 of the 63 municipal Board seats had been filled. She thanked Ms. Green-Kazlauskas and Ms. Falcone for all their efforts in recruiting board members. She said the next step is to recruit Industry Representatives, Board members who would come from the various tourism industries in the District. She asked that anyone with a suggestion for a Board member reach out to her.

Financial Report

Ms. Allen reviewed the Fund Balance sheet, noting that the state had approved the Waterbury Chamber's Foundation to hold funds for the District. The initial balance was \$334,650; after expenditures as approved by the Executive Committee, the remaining balance as of September 30, 2020 is \$236,596.84. Ms. Allen then reviewed the P&L, noting the major expenses are to the marketing and administrative partners, as well as minimal operations charges. Total expenses for the fiscal year as of October 31, 2020 are \$74,916.67. Mr. Walsh moved to accept the financial report as presented; Mr. Baroody seconded. The motion carried.

State Marketing Update

Mr. Fiveash updated the Board on the marketing efforts from the state, noting that the state continued to work to support tourism and business in a safe way. He said the state produced several safety-related videos in the summer, encouraging safe visiting of restaurants and other attractions. He also noted the regional pages on the site were being revamped. He said the state's role is to promote business recovery. Mr. Dancho asked about state funding. Mr. Fiveash said that it is important to go to the legislature with the same message about the importance of promoting tourism, as it was a revenue generator. Mr. Gaudioso thanked Mr. Fiveash for all his assistance and patience over the past year. Mr. Fiveash also thanked Mr. Kooris, noting that he had served as the deputy DECD commissioner, and now was the representative from Stamford.

Marketing Committee/Storytellers

Mr. Giaccone gave a brief overview of Storytellers' activity since becoming the marketing agency for the District. Ms. Smith shared an update on the social media platforms. She noted that the District's page launched in July with zero followers. After an organic and paid campaign, there are 3,133 followers: 1,207 in the past month alone. The media spend on Facebook advertising showed an audience of 70% women, primarily in the 35-45 age group. She shared the most popular posts, and asked Board members to share events from their towns. Mr. Shea shared a sample video of what has been shot on video so far, noting that the video is intended for next year. Ms. Smith said Storytellers was working with the state's marketing agency, Adams and Knight, to ensure there was no overlap in efforts. Mr. Barooddy noted that the District is looking to share all types of events, virtual as well as in-person. Mr. Dancho again asked for any content to be shared with Ms. Macary and Storytellers.

Ms. Macary shared a brief update on the One Eleven Group situation. She said that the Executive Committee was still negotiating a suitable solution. As One Eleven had been given funds that had not yet been spent, the Executive Committee has asked them to work in conjunction with Storytellers to produce printed content as well as email content.

Ms. Macary also encouraged all Board members to like and share the District's Facebook and Instagram pages, as well as helping promote local attractions and venues by encouraging them to sign up for ctvisit.com. She asked in particular for any winter footage and content.

Committees-Call For Members

Ms. Macary noted that the Legislative, Marketing and College committees were all seeking members and that anyone interested in joining them should contact her.

Suggestions for the Good of the Order

Mr. Gaudioso asked all Board members to check their appointment dates and ensure their terms were not ending soon. He asked Board members to check with Ms. Macary and be sure they got on their respective municipality's agendas for reappointment, if necessary.

Mr. Dancho noted the meeting dates for 2021: February 17, April 21, July 21, and November 17.

Adjournment

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:15 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Macary
Administrative Partner

Directors Present:

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Laura Budd- New Canaan
Debbie Ventre-New Hartford
Christal Preszler - Newtown
Sue Frisch- Norfolk
Irene Dixon, Norwalk
Jen Wastrom - Redding
Steve Spivak-Ridgefield
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John Baroody-Sharon
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