

CENTRAL REGIONAL TOURISM DISTRICT BOARD MEETING

October 27, 2020

The Board Meeting of the CRTD was held via Zoom.

The following were in attendance: Len Baginski, Samantha Bellisio, Johanna Bond, Patrice Carson, Jennifer Cassidy, Sheri Cote, Tom Danyliw, Don DeVivo, William Hosley, Jacqueline Hubbard, Victoria Kolyvas, Ginny Kozlowski, Sheree Landerman, Sierra Lopez, Irene Makiaris, Barbara Malmberg, Deb Mathiasen, Paul Mayer, Charlie Myers, Jacob Nadeau, Robyn Rifkin, Donna Staples, Amber Wakley, and Meri Wick.

Chairman Don DeVivo opened the meeting at 4:00 p.m. and the following business was conducted: Don welcomed and thanked everyone for their attendance and gave updates on the State. He then informed the board that he knows it's a tough time for everybody and recognizes that tourism isn't exactly booming anywhere right now, but knows that the CRTD will keep pressing forward and appreciates the state's and board's support throughout this difficult time period.

MARKETING & PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT:

Marketing Chairman, Paul Mayer updated board members on CRTD's new marketing plans due to many of their previous plans changing because of COVID-19.

Paul then reminded the board of last year's very successful digital marketing campaign that generated 10.5 million in economic impact, including \$701,000 in tax revenue. He then explained that this year, the visitor rate was down by 8.6% which is 25% less than last year. He then mentioned that the timing of the district's campaign last year couldn't have been better. This year, the total impact was almost \$5.3 million in economic impact, including over \$553,000 in tax revenue. He then informed the board that they should be very proud of these numbers during COVID as they adjusted their digital marketing strategies with the district's \$400,000 budget. Paul then informed the committee that Makiaris Media will present CRTD Marketing research with Witten Intelligence in the near future.

Industry Representative of Makiaris Media Services, Irene Makiaris, stated that this year the district faced a reduction of advertising dollars due to COVID-19. She also mentioned that the targeted impressions this year were 50% Connecticut and 50% of the surrounding market which includes New York County's, which is a little different from last year because of the research that their company had on the fact people want to stay home. They also realized that outdoor places like Stafford Motor Speedway, Hammonasset Beach and more made people want to get out and explore Connecticut.

Paul then mentioned that Johanna Bond and Sierra Lopez have done an amazing job promoting Central Connecticut through various tactics on social media such as, Micro-Weddings, Natural

Resources, and Fall Itineraries dedicated to day trips, overnight stays, and weekend getaways during COVID-19. He then informed the committee that they have also began working on Winter Itineraries that will be promoted this winter. Paul then stated that the district has distributed 350,000 brochures throughout the region to compliment the state's tourism efforts. CRTD has also been busy building the photo gallery with photos of Connecticut tourism gems and video packets to help advertise what Connecticut has to offer along with a podcast about "Every Town Has a Story."

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Johanna Bond thanked Paul Mayer and the entire marketing group on their efforts in pivoting the district's Marketing and Public relations efforts. She then stated that it has been very difficult to watch all of the stats come in which included struggling hotels, restaurants, and arts that Connecticut is known for. She then mentioned that because of the tourism industries struggles, CRTD created a campaign called, "See it Now, Experience it Later" to let visitor see Connecticut virtually to experience those places once they feel more comfortable. She then informed the board that she has just partnered with Google and is creating a workshop about how to take a virtual video so visitors and Connecticut residence can "See it Now, Experience it Later." Another campaign that Johanna is working on with Ginny Kozlowski is a Christmas Tree Farm Day Trips that will launch this winter to help offer Connecticut's natural resources. She then informed the committee that they are also working on getting a blogger to help promote Central Connecticut and asked the board for ideas, suggestions, and feedback.

NEW BUSINESS:

The board members then discussed new ideas and suggestions to help promote Central Connecticut. The following ideas where discussed:

- Share other people's video footage of Connecticut
- Have attractions present what they are offering
- Have CRTD meetings at an outdoor attraction
- Have a Best Idea Contest

Don DeVivo then closed out the meeting by stressing to the board the importance of not getting discouraged and to keep moving forward to prepare for when the state opens up. He also encourages members that if they have any suggestions or ideas to email himself, Paul, or Johanna.

Chairman, Don DeVivo adjourned the meeting at 5:00 p.m.