



Mystic Country

ERTD Marketing Committee
Minutes
September 11, 2020 9:00AM
Zoom

Attendees: Jill St. Clair, Gina Kunst, Wendy Russell, Steven Everett, Stephen Gencarella, Peggy Roberts, Dave Quinn, Tony Sheridan, Courtney Assad, and Bruce Flax.

Jill St. Clair Fritzsche chaired the meeting.

1. Regional Marketing Partnership Program Applications Review

Bruce Flax, Chair, Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce presented the application. Bruce reviewed the goals of the program to focus on day trips location to attract visitors to Mystic. They have taken areas of interest and created ads that encourage visitation for those activities. They piloted this campaign June through September with a spend of about \$6,600 and had great results. The campaign plays off the state's So Good to See You campaign. They feel it is a sustainable investment and will be adapted for seasonality. They will be focusing on opportunities through the Fall and Winter as well. Hybrid schooling is creating four day weekends giving families the flexibility to travel more and do their schooling from there. They are spending \$15,000 from funds they have gathered from their members specifically Foxwoods Resort Casino, Whaler's Inn, Bridge Marketing and Groton Utilities. The campaign directs to their webpage which has special offers from a variety of businesses even outside of Mystic. They will add the CTVisit.com/mysticcountry link on their page and logo.

Bruce Flax left the meeting.

Randy Fiveash joined the meeting.

Randy stated his support for the proposal and appreciated that it builds off of their state campaign messaging.

Peggy Roberts left the meeting.

Stephen Gencarella stated that he feels it is a good application, but is concerned with the fact that grants are going towards those associated with the ERTD, and that they are an Administrative Partner to the Chamber. He is also concerned with the amount of funds going towards Mystic out of the pool of funds. Randy stated that he feels the Administrative Partner should not be disqualified from applying for the funds. He also feels that they should not be penalized for applying after ThinkMystic. Jill raised concern with the geographical spread. Gina

stated that although they want to be equitable, the other areas aren't getting their applications in so we shouldn't wait to disburse the funds. Randy spoke about the state model which has a singular deadline to evaluate all applications at the same time to avoid inequitable decisions. Stephen Gencarella spoke about the geographic disbursement issue. Jill is concerned with the ethics as well. Dave Quinn clarified that the ThinkMystic partnership approached the Mystic Chamber to join their campaign and they declined and have decided to move forward with their own application, creating a mixed message for Mystic. Dave stated that he feels that Mystic should unite and have a common message across the area. Randy recommended the state holding both proposals until common ground can be achieved. Tony expressed that he feels that the ThinkMystic partnership should not be penalized for the Mystic Chamber declining to partner on their program. He expressed that the Eastern Chamber did not apply for the program due to how close we are to the management. There should be ample opportunity for all areas to apply for the funds. Dave recommended asking the Mystic Chamber to work with the ThinkMystic partnership. Jill expressed her agreement with that direction. The proposal from the ThinkMystic partnership to the Mystic Chamber was shared with the committee. Randy offered to have further discussions with the two groups to facilitate partnership. Jill stated her agreement to have them try to work together based on the fact it is coming from an administrative partner, it competes with another approved program, and geographical equity has not been achieved. Randy stated that they will not fund a rebirth of mystic.org as a website for the region. Stephen G reiterated that the applicant is using mystic.org as a site for the campaign focused around mystic and is not representative of ERTD and will not be used for regional promotion. Randy stated that he will serve as an intermediary if needed. Steve Everett spoke about his desire to have more marketing for the Northeast, but understands that southeastern CT is the draw for our region. Randy spoke about bringing people to the region through the larger attractions then bringing them throughout the region.

Jill moved to table the application and direct the two parties to attempt to partner, seconded by Stephen Gencarella. Steve Everett asked that if the first proposal is already approved, how they can change it at this point. Stephen Gencarella stated that ERTD has approved the proposal, but the state has directed that they work together. The offer made to the Mystic Chamber was not based on additional funds from ERTD so there is a mechanism for them to partner. The vote was taken all in favor 4-0, motion approved.

2. Other Business

Dave stated they would like to present their plans to redesign the Mystic Country page on the state website, social media calendar, creative, etc. at the next meeting. Jill asked about fall foliage as a gateway for the region. Dave stated it is a part of their proposal and will make sure it has a presence.

Adjournment 10:12AM