



**Eastern Regional Tourism District (ERTD)  
Board of Directors - Meeting  
MEETING Minutes**

Thursday, December 14, 2023  
9:00am

Location

**MAPLES FARM PARK**  
45 BOZRAH STREET, BOZRAH, CT 06334  
[GOOGLE MAPS LINK](#)

*please note: there will be not be a hybrid option; this meeting is in-person only*

**Minutes**

Attendees: Miria Toth, Charlie Tracy, Chris Regan, Catherine Foley, Robert Ignatowicz, Cathy Barnard, Ellie Greenberg, Cathy Mitchell, Fran Kefalas, Steve Gencarella, Todd Babbitt, Bruce Flax, Christine Strick, Stuart Peaslee, Jim Bellano, Mary Arcuri, Jill St. Clair, Kathleen Paterson, Angela Adams

Guests: Tony Sheridan, Rachel Lenda, Anthony Anthony, Dave Jensen, Dave Quinn

1. Call to Order
  - a. Chris Regan called the meeting to order at 9:04am.
2. Approval of Meeting Minutes 09/14/2023
  - a. A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes from September 14, 2023. Catherine Foley made the first motion and Catherine Strick made the second motion. Abstentions: Cathy Barnard, Jim Bellano, Charlie Tracy, Robert Ignatowicz, and Ellie Greenberg. No opposition. Motion passed.
3. Board Chair Report
  - a. Chris Regan gave an update on the current trajectory of tourism and the positive output of work being done by the District. He talked about the District's 41 towns and what is happening in the area.
4. Treasurer Report
  - a. FY23 Budget v. Actual
    - i. Bruce Flax discussed the current financials and highlighted some key line items that need to be spent (photography, collateral

material, brochure distribution, and other advertising, specifically). A motion was made to approve the balance sheet and profit and loss statement, as presented. Cathy Barnard made the first motion and Charlie Tracy made the second motion. No abstentions or opposition. Motion passed.

5. Status Update: Administrative Partner Contract
  - a. Rachel Lenda gave an update on the contract. The Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut's Attorney with Brown Jacobson, P.C. is volleying with the District's Attorney, Halloran & Sage. The goal is to have a new draft by the end of this year. From there, the Executive Committee will hold a special meeting to discuss the contract.
6. Status Update: Three Tourist Attractions in Your Town
  - a. Chris discussed the need to engage with each municipality by highlighting three tourist destinations within their town and/or industry. The goal is to see what we don't have for information to fill in the gaps. It was suggested to create a Google sheet to share with the Board of Directors so they can input their data. Fran offered help with Norwich and Griswold. Quinn & Harry will also be included on the Google sheet.
  - b. Rachel will resend the list of types of tourism focused in eastern Connecticut. She will also include that on the Google sheet.
7. Committee Chair Reports
  - a. Finance
    - i. No additional report.
  - b. Marketing
    - i. It was shared to send content to Quinn & Hary and Rachel. Day Trips were a topic of discussion.
  - c. Bylaws
    - i. No report.
  - d. Nominating
    - i. Todd Babbitt discussed the vacant towns: Willington, Putnam, Plainfield, Lebanon, Franklin, Sprague, Preston, Montville, and

Lyme. Todd is meeting with First Selectmans' of Franklin and Lebanon to appoint Angela Adams to Franklin and Gina Kunst to Lebanon. Kathleen Paterson of Mansfield offered to be appointed to the town of Willington.

- e. Legislative Advocacy
    - i. No report.
  - f. Grants
    - i. Fran gave a report on the progress of the Regional Marketing Partnership Program. She gave an update on the recent Q&A session that was held on December 6, 2023 and Rachel will send the video link to the Board and partners.
    - ii. Fran also made a request that the Grants Committee is in need of new members. Mary Acuri will join the Grants Committee.
8. Marketing Agency Report
- a. Dave Jensen gave an update on the marketing for ERTD including paid digital advertising performance. Discussed the conversion rate will go down because it is an election year as well as olympics - platforms will be inundated with advertisements. Organic social media performance was discussed from January 2023 through December 2023. 25 reels and 10 influencer reels were produced this year. OTT and CTV were discussed on the media cost compared to impressions and the number of videos completed. Produced videos - non-skippable (cannot skip the ad) 15s and 30s. 30 second videos have been performing the best. Influencer partnerships were discussed. Blog content also discussed including "How to Have a Hallmark Holiday in Mystic, CT" and "The Best Christmas Tree Farms in Eastern Connecticut". A full topic list is on the google spreadsheet. Upcoming creative was shared.
  - b. A request was made to send out a reminder for upcoming creative ideas. Demographic of the target market was asked. Answer: younger demographic is part of the mix for the upcoming year. Right now, 35-55 men and women are the target market. Influencers - what are the average



followers looking for because of their network but their ability to engage with the audience.

## 9. Connecticut Office of Tourism Update

- a. Anthony Anthony updated the Board with some statistics: visitation is, as of September 2023, 2.2% year over year, occupancy is up 1.2%, lodging revenue is up 9.7% and hits on CTvisit were up 35.6% (8.4million hits). Good news is that it is working but, funding isn't quite what it should be. Revenues have slightly dropped but that means that different programs have to be pulled back because federal funds were used to supplement. State is working with Senator Osten on the potential for additional funding to America 250, creating infrastructure for the statewide committee, big "if" with \$33 million over the course of 5 years that could potentially be bonded. It will aid infrastructure to things like state parks as a 'capital investment'.
- b. Reminder, there are numerous ways to partner with the state through CTVisit. Individual business listings: email Rachel and Anthony Anthony to get your business and events listed. Another update: the CTVisit website management system has been updated. It is faster and easier to navigate, and includes an itinerary feature and the search function will be more accurate. Anthony discussed his appearances on Fox 61 Friday mornings, News 12, and weekly radio hits.
- c. New state brand, new logo, new fonts and updated colors were discussed. 5% Co-Op money next year will go toward updating the brand. March 27, 2024 at the Bushnell will be a half day tourism conference. The event will finish by noon and then lunch and networking. It will host educational opportunities. The Scoop newsletter will have a "save the date"; a formal save the date will come in January. The cost is \$35 sign up. For small business education see Miria Toth of Chelsea Groton Bank. The State is looking for help covering the Boat Show in January. COT is working with Dept. of Agriculture on an Oyster trail with branch off trails in the agriculture realm.



## 10. Administrator Report

- a. Rachel gave an update for the Board on recent activity since the last Board meeting in September. A list of all the meetings held (including links to view the minutes and watch the recordings), financials update, a board of directors roster update, special projects including visitor packages and eBlasts, and the results of the brochure distribution.

## 11. Other Business

- a. No other business to report.

## 12. Adjournment

- a. A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. Charlie Tracy made the first motion and Catherine Foley made the second motion; the meeting adjourned at 10:36am.