

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the  
Western Connecticut Tourism District  
Wednesday, July 19, 2023, at 10 am, via Zoom**

Directors present were: Gregg Dancho, chair; Mark Barnhardt, Barri Bialko, Laura Budd, Steph Burr, Greg Dembowski, Jeffrey Dunn, Annette Einhorn, Michelle Falcone, Mady Flynn, Sabrina Godeski, Tim Good, Ginny Gordon-O'Neill, David Green, Marietta Korsu, Andrea Moore, Shay Nagarsheth, Craig Nelson, Dawn Nielsen, Tom Roman, Mare Rubin, Rick Smith, and Jen Wastrom. Others present included: from Storytellers, Joe Giaccone and Chris Smith; from the Waterbury Regional Chamber, Terry Macary; from the state office of Tourism, Anthony Anthony and Susan Henrique; from Adams and Knight, Felicia Lindau, guests Kevin Bielmeier, Lorie Lewis, Mary Alice Limperulos, and Lisa Piazza.

**Welcome**

Mr. Dancho called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

**Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Einhorn moved to approve the minutes of the April 26, 2023, meeting as presented; Mr. Nagarsheth seconded. The motion carried.

**New At-Large Board Members**

Ms. Macary reviewed the section of the By-Laws that allows for up to 20 At-Large directors to be added to the Board. She noted that previously, the Board had accepted five At-Large Directors from Fairfield County. Mr. Nelson moved to accept the following new At-Large Directors: Barri Bialko of the Heritage Hotel, Steph Burr of the Northwest CT Arts Council, and Carmen Romeo of Fascia's Chocolates. Mr. Nagarsheth seconded; the motion carried.

**State Update**

Mr. Anthony, Chief Marketing Officer of the Department of Economic and Community Development, gave an update on the activities at the state Office of Tourism. He noted he had just completed a listening tour of the state, which was very successful. Mr. Anthony updated the Directors on the state's tourism budget, which is \$4.5 million from the general fund, with an additional \$2.5-\$3.5 million coming from a federal Department of Commerce fund. He said the overall amount is less than the 22-23 fiscal year, which will lead to some shifting of objectives. He said the office would be focusing more on drive markets, a core business for the state. Mr. Anthony also said that some of the state Welcome Centers have been getting a facelift, including a refresh with the new branding, TV screens, and kiosks. Mr. Dancho thanked Mr. Anthony for his work.

**Marketing Committee/Storytellers**

Mr. Giaccone noted it was the three-year anniversary of Storytellers beginning work for the District. Ms. Smith reported that in one year Facebook followers increased by more than 10,000 and Instagram also grew by more than 2500 followers. She shared the strong engagement rates

for content on both Facebook and Instagram. She noted the upcoming potential “National Days” to be recognized in upcoming social media posts. She asked for any suggestions or recommendations for topics.

### **Coupon App Update**

Ms. Macary gave an update on the progress of the Coupon App. She noted the District has been working with engineering students from Fairfield University, and showed a short video of the progress of the app. She said, while development continued on the technical end, planning would be beginning for the monetization of the app. The plan is for the app to be free for consumers, while attractions and venues would pay a fee to be included. She noted that a requirement for inclusion would be a CTVisit listing.

### **Suggestions for the Good of the Order/Adjournment**

Ms. Macary noted the Big E will run as scheduled this fall; anyone interested in volunteering at the Connecticut Building should let her know.

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

Respectfully submitted,  
Terry Macary  
Administrative Partner