

**Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the
Western Connecticut Tourism District
Wednesday, April 21, 10 am, via Zoom**

Directors present were: Gregg Dancho, chair, Laura Budd, Joe Buhler, Kathy Champion, Greg Dembowski, Irene Dixon, Annette Einhorn, Michelle Falcone, George Frantzis, Lorenzo Gaudio, Rachel Kelly, Marcelo Martins, Kerry McAndrew, Dawn Nielsen, Ben Paletsky, Christal Preszler, Nancy Saggese, Kevin Treesh, Jack Walsh, Jen Wastrom, and Rowena White. Others present included: Rosemary Bove of the State Office of Tourism; from Storytellers, Chris Smith and Joe Giaccone; from the Waterbury Regional Chamber: Terry Macary and Lynn Ward; industry guests Kathy Maher, Jacob Conover, Carey Weber and David Green.

Welcome

Mr. Dancho called the meeting to order at 10:04 am.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Walsh moved to approve the minutes of the February 17, 2021, meeting as presented; Mr. Gaudio seconded. The motion carried.

Additions to the Agenda/Communications/New Business

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

Financial Report

Ms. Macary reviewed the Fund Balance sheet, noting that the balance in the Chamber Foundation account remained \$226,346 and had not changed since November 2020. Ms. Macary then reviewed the Balance Sheet, showing the assets in both the active Webster Bank account and the Foundation account totaled \$461,168. Ms. Macary then reviewed the P&L, noting the major expenses are to the marketing and administrative partners, as well as minimal operations charges. Mr. Walsh moved to accept the financial report as presented; Ms. Einhorn seconded. The motion carried.

State Marketing Update

Ms. Bove updated the Board on the changes in the state Office of Tourism. With Randy Fiveash's retirement, Christine Castonguay has stepped in as interim director. She said that the first week in May is National Tourism Week and the COT plans several online events to highlight the tourism industry and launch the new campaign. She said there would be a number of tourism outreach sessions on May 4-5 for different industry sectors. She also reported that the social media and online campaign would be "Say Yes to Connecticut," highlighting that the state is ready to serve visitors safely. She said the state would be opening the welcome centers on Memorial Day. She asked anyone with recommendations for staff for the centers to reach out to her.

Marketing Committee/Storytellers

Mr. Giaccone noted that the recent campaigns for the District had centered on safe events on social media posts. He said that the upcoming marketing plans are ready to move ahead as the state plans to re-open.

Ms. Smith updated the Board on marketing efforts so far, noting that Facebook followers had grown to 7,245 and Instagram followers to 392. She shared the upcoming marketing plans from the District, including a billboard campaign in Westchester County, near Citi Field, in western Massachusetts and in Waterbury and Bridgeport. She also said there would be more social media work as well as pre-roll advertising. She shared some initial ideas for the billboard campaign, noting that they were just examples and were not approved yet for launch. Ms. Bove asked that some of the billboards include tourism businesses like lodging and restaurants.

Mr. Giaccone shared a brief update on the One Eleven Group situation. A formal plan had been submitted to the state for approval that would be separate from the marketing plan that had been presented. Ms. Bove said that there was one remaining question that needed to be resolved before approval, and then the plan could move forward.

Suggestions for the Good of the Order/Adjournment

Mr. Dancho led a conversation regarding the relaxing of restrictions and whether the Board meetings should stay virtual or move back to in-person. He said that he was not looking for anyone to make a decision, but wanted to get feedback. Mr. Dancho noted that the virtual setting was helpful, as there is no travel involved, but he missed the in-person conversations. Mr. Gaudioso said that even if the meetings become in person, he recommended there still be a Zoom component. Board members also discussed the upcoming changes in pandemic restrictions and how businesses could best respond. Ms. Bove said expressing concerns in the upcoming outreach sessions would be helpful.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:02 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Macary
Administrative Partner

Directors Present:

Kerry McAndrew- Beacon Falls
Rowena White -- Bridgeport
Dawn Nielsen- Bristol
Greg Dembowski -- Brookfield
Kevin Treesh -- Darien
John Walsh-Derby
Michelle Falcone-Easton
George Frantzis -- Middlebury

Ben Paletsky-Morris
Marcelo Martins-Naugatuck
Laura Budd- New Canaan
Nancy Saggese – New Milford
Christal Preszler - Newtown
Irene Dixon, Norwalk
Jen Wastrom -- Redding
Lorenzo Gaudio- Roxbury
Annette Einhorn – Stamford
Gregg Dancho- Stratford
Rachel Kelly - Torrington
Kathy Champion – Trumbull
Joe Buhler – Wilton