

**Town of Provincetown
Visitors Service Board
Meeting Minutes from
October 1, 2008 3pm
Judge Welsh Room**

Members present: Rob Tosner, Kathleen Fitzgerald, Michael Peregon, Michelle Haynes, Rita “Hersh” Schwartz and James Bakker

Member absent: Mick Rudd (excused)

Staff: Lisa Bowden, Tourism Director, Jackie Kelly, Administrative Assistant – Tourism Office; Sharon Lynn, Town Manager; David Gardner, Assistant Town Manager and Michelle Couture, Chair Board of Selectmen

The meeting was called to order at 3:05pm.

Agenda:

- 1. Public Statements: none**
- 2. Tourism Director’s Report**

Visitor Services Board – Vacancy update

The newest member to the VSB is Jim Bakker from the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum Welcome aboard, Jim, and thank you for your service.

Castle Hill – “Paints the Town” Grant change request

Due to inclement weather on September 6, 2008, Castle Hill had to cancel “Paints the Town. They would like the VSB to consider moving the funding from this event to the Dance Festival, also sponsored by Castle Hill, scheduled for October 24-25, 2008. Board discussion of request -It was determined that since the two Castle Hill events had originally been judged on their own merits, and grants awarded accordingly, it would be inadvisable to transfer funds from one to the other. It was also noted that the transfer might be seen by other groups as the basis for an unwanted precedent. The board thought that no motion was necessary; they would simply not act on the request.

Town Hall Transition – Tourism Office move

As staff continues to address the new website, public relations firm transition, drafting the FY 2010 Five-Year Plan, and the meeting schedule, the Tourism Office will be completing the move into the Freeman Building (330 Commercial Street) by late October –in advance of the rest of Town Hall departments. The following is the anticipated operations schedule for the next six to eight weeks:

PTO Moving Schedule:

Last two weeks of Sept. – site review completed by PTO staff; action items discussed with transition team; packing and moving non essential files completed by COA volunteers and PTO staff;

First two weeks of Oct. – create a punch list for the new site – shelving, rack placement, construction cleanup, etc.; construction begins - Pen Pals are providing the labor; PTO packing completed; infrastructure installation – phone and computer system; BOS meeting Oct. 14th; VSB meeting Oct. 15th;

Third week and fourth week of Oct. – Cleaning at Freeman; final transition items for infrastructure needs; on or around Oct 23rd move out of Town Hall; Oct. 22, 23 & 24th PTO office closed for final packing, move and installation into the new site; test of telephone and computer systems; installation of the satellite Town Hall accounting office operations; Oct 31st Tour Guide Appreciation Day.

First two weeks of Nov. – Elections Nov 4th and 19th; Town Hall move Nov 7th – 11th; unpacking and PTO in operation; VSB meeting Nov 5th (tentatively); satellite office moves out and clean up. BOS meeting Nov. 24th.

We greatly appreciate any volunteer assistance from the board and the community to complete this transition! (Oct 22, 23, 24)

Discussion: Additional information provided to the board – town email access will be down as of Nov 6 – 9th. There are ongoing discussions about the use of the direct line (508-487-3298) after the transition, as opposed to being an extension to the main number when the new phone system is installed. The direct line is on all of the Tourism Office printed materials and on the website.

Website RFP

As of the deadline date of September 18th, twelve proposals were received in response to the RFP. A subcommittee was formed at the last meeting of the VSB. The Tourism Director and the MIS Director developed a review process by the using a set of criteria approved by legal for a similar municipal project.

The website subcommittee met September 30th to review the twelve proposals as the first phase of the view process. Mick, Kathleen, Beau and the Tourism Director present the following three proposals for consideration: Civic Plus, Pendergraft Design Group, and Alternate Image.

These proposals have met the minimum requirements: in business for at least five years; experience doing comparable work; appropriate staff support and ability to start the project within 10 days of being awarded the contract; and proposal conforms to the RFP specifications. The full board will consider these three proposals based on the criteria for the second phase of the review. Upon approval of a proposal by the VSB, the Board of Selectmen will review the VSB's recommendation for approval of a contract.

Discussion:

The consensus of the sub-committee was for the three: Civic Plus, PDG+creative and Alternate Image. The other board members added Normal Kings and Karmuchian, possibly to be considered as a second tier. (Hersh made note that she had not been able to read the proposals and therefore, was not prepared to vote at today's meeting.) Civic Plus is Beau Jackett's (MIS Department) first choice. Rob felt that, although Civic Plus seemed to have experience and competence, the site looked "municipal," and similar to our current site when it is the expressed desire of the VSB to have a site which appeals to the tourist. Civic Plus does charge extra fees for "website optimization" which can be a substantial charge. The Tourism Director said that there was nothing to prevent the board from presenting images and "looks" to Civic Plus, if they were chosen for their technical expertise, and that we, in fact, had to deliver content and text to the designer in any case.

In response to Jim's comment that Marlo be included in the discussion about content, all were in agreement. The board was disappointed that there was only one local proposal, and that it was considered too skimpy to consider. Mike wondered if it would be prudent to put out the RFP again (partly because no one of the respondents mentioned a sensitivity to, nor an enthusiasm for, working with the diversity that is seen as one of Provincetown's main features, but the board feels it is necessary to get the project underway. It was reiterated that we will provide content and need the expertise of the designer to make the website work.

Public Relations Firm – FOCUS Communications

The Tourism Director has been working on the transition items from FOCUS Communications over the past two months. During a meeting called by FOCUS Communication on August 11th with the Town Manager, Brad Reichard submitted the firm's resignation in advance of the termination of their contract scheduled for August 31, 2008. After a series of meetings and conversations with the VSB Chair, the Town Manager and the Assistant Town Manager, the Tourism Director completed a review for the last four invoices submitted by FOCUS. A line item response was completed by the Tourism Director and submitted to the Town Manager. In turn, it was sent to FOCUS Communications and we are currently waiting for their response.

Discussion: The Tourism Director said that from an \$11,000 invoice submitted by Focus, she was able to determine that only \$3,500 was legitimate.

Public Relations Firm – Marlo Marketing/Communications

The contract for Marlo Marketing/Communications was approved by the Board of Selectmen at their August 25, 2008 meeting, with an official start date of September 1, 2008. The Tourism Director initiated a phone meeting with Marlo at the start of their contract. We are in the process of identifying a date for a FAM trip by Marlo and the staff assigned to our account. Additionally, Marlo will be attending a scheduled meeting with the VSB to discuss contract expectations.

The Tourism Director is in the process of preparing information as discussed with Marlo and scheduling meeting dates. **Discussion** by the Board about meeting with Marlo as soon as possible to get work underway, with possible meeting dates for Monday, Wednesday, or Thursday, October 6, 8 or 9.

Holiday decorations

The Tourism Director has been keeping the conversation going about decorating Town Hall for the holidays throughout the past year with vendors and town staff. During the renovation of Town Hall, the plans for decorating and/or making the site attractive will need to be addressed by the Town Manager and the transition team. However, the Tourism Director will continue to advocate for making the property look its best. Efforts to decorate the Bas Relief will continue and it will be scheduled with DPW along with the usual holiday celebrations. The Tourism Director will work with the PBG and the Chamber on a proposal for funding and decorating Provincetown during the upcoming weeks.

Discussion:

The Board discussed the history of the Provincetown Business Guild decorating the firehouse in past, and will probably do again; the Bas Relief Park will be decorated for Chanukah. The decorations schedule is determined by the lighting of the Monument. Goal is to keep the site (Town Hall under renovations) looking good for the community and the tourists, and to minimize any negative impact. The Assistant Town Manager said the fence will be moved back behind the benches so that they will be accessible, but that the War Memorial will be closed off by the fence. The VSB wants attractive signage, rather than perfunctory safety notices, and sees it as an opportunity to market town, and what the town is investing to continue to keep it as a place where tourists want to be. The Town Manager discussed restroom hours, staffing and funding of the MPL restrooms to make them available during the week. The exterior of Town hall may not have scaffolding until the first of the year, so might actually be available for holiday decorations.

Calendar of Events

Discussion:

PTO staff is working on creating a PDF of the 2009 Calendar of Events for distribution via email by the second week of October. We will continue to collect event information and add it to the PTO website. The first printing of the calendar is expected to be ready before the Thanksgiving holiday for distribution at the Lighting of the Monument, Moonlight Madness and Holly Folly. A final draft will be presented to the board before going to print. Michael would like to see something in line with "We welcome everyone, even if you are not participating in the advertised event." Kathleen would like to have a discussion when meeting with Marlo about how to address promoting "theme" weeks so that the town is not seen as excluding others.

American Bus Association

ABA's Top 100 for 2009 was officially announced on September 10, 2008 and the Provincetown Portuguese Festival was named to the list! Provincetown was host to the committee's trip to Cape Cod earlier this year in conjunction with the Cape Cod Chamber of Commerce. The list is posted on the ABA's website at: www.buses.org/2009Top100 for the next year and half. They also published a special edition of the list as a supplement to Destinations Magazine (a copy is available in the PTO). The magazine is distributed to the full membership of the ABA giving Provincetown expanded visibility in the market. The Tourism Director has already met with organizers of the Portuguese Festival and the Parking Department to begin discussions about press releases, marketing, parking issues, a new map for the bus tour market, and new signage to address the anticipated increase of traffic.

Discussion: By the board regarding marketing overnight stays. Hotels/motels in Eastham and Hyannis can offer rock bottom rates because they are offered volume, but it was also suggested that local guesthouses be given the opportunity to bid for their stay. A list of interested guesthouses could be marketed to the tour companies.

Tour Guide Appreciation Day

As we have included on the 2008 Calendar of Events for the past year, Tour Guide Appreciation Day is scheduled for Friday, October 31, 2008. The Tourism Director met with George Morgenroth, President of the Cape and Islands Tour Guide Association to discuss this year's event and marketing opportunities. Specifically, we talked about working together to increase Canadian tours, GLBT bus tours and overnight stays. The guides, who live in our region year round, have expressed interest in more information about Holly Folly and holiday shopping in Provincetown.

We have already begun to prepare beach bags for this event and we invite the members of the Chamber and the PBG to contribute gift certificates and Halloween themed gifts. We are completing the itinerary for the day that will include

presentations and updates about the upcoming 2009 season.

Meeting Schedule:

The Town's approval of the reduction of the work week to four days had a direct impact on the VSB's Friday meeting schedule and staffing of the PTO. Therefore, the Tourism Director proposed to move the meetings to the first and third Wednesday of the month at 3pm: Oct 1; Oct 15; Nov. 5; Nov 12; Dec 3; & Dec 17. The only conflict with the VSB's dates, from last meeting's discussion, was the Oct. 29th meeting. That meeting date will come in the midst of the PTO's moving schedule and preparations for Tour Guide Appreciation Day.

Discussion:

The October 29 meeting is cancelled, and the VSB will meet on November 5, instead.

Agenda proposal:

Proposed agenda items for the October 15th meeting: 2008 Fiscal re-cap; FY 2010 Five- year plan staff proposal; public relations; and website contract. Lisa will send out draft of 5 year plan before meeting Rob wants to see and weigh in with draft before it circulates in Town Hall.

Lisa aid that the Room tax report for the first quarter is late.

Michael wants all past records of the expenditures of the VSB, to see if there are carry-overs that might make more money available for spending on tourism.

4. Approval of Minutes -none

5. Old Business -none

6. New Business

Michelle Haynes made requests for the meeting minutes: she wants the Chamber of Commerce, the Provincetown Business Guild and the Economic Development Council to be informed (at their respective requests) the week before, and then 48 hours before scheduled meetings. Also, she asks that minutes be ready a day or two before the meeting for the board's review. She would like to see simple signage made, e.g. "This event is brought to you by the Visitors' Service Board" so that the message would be evident at every event, as well as asking that a member of the VSB or the PTO attend events and meetings, where the event planner would acknowledge the board's participation, hopefully using the correct name of the board, not the various and often incorrect titles that she has heard. This would be an opportunity to socialize, even briefly, with attendees. The logo which we require on our grantees' printed material is, she says, often the smallest one, and hope that we can redesign it in a larger size. The Tourism Director took note of these requests and indicated that the requirements for the grant recipients are included in the contract. At previous meetings, the Board has discussed these issues with the Assistant Town Manager including the cost for the grantees to produce the signage and compliance oversight by the tourism staff.

Motion to adjourn: Mike Seconded; Jim Vote 6:0:0

Meeting adjourned at 5:10pm

The next meeting will be October 15, 2008 at 3pm

Respectfully submitted,
Jackie Kelly

Approved by _____ on _____ 2008
Rob Tosner, Chair