

**Town of Provincetown
Visitor Services Board Tourism Summit
Meeting Minutes from
Thursday, February 8, 2007
Judge Welsh Room**

Chairman Lynne Davies convened the Tourism Summit at 10:05 AM noting the following attendees:

Members Present: Lynne Davies, Chairman; Peter Bez, Vice Chairman; Kathleen Fitzgerald; Mick Rudd and Hersh Schwartz.

Excused Absence: Laurel Guadazno; Michael Peregón.

Other attendees: Bill Schneider, Administrative Director of Tourism; David Gardner, Administrative Assistant II; Judy Cicero, Chamber of Commerce; Candice Collins-Boden, Chamber of Commerce; Marilyn J. Downey, Chamber of Commerce and Provincetown Inn; Edward Gage, Finance Committee; Austin Knight; Jeff Lovinger, Chamber of Commerce and Lotus Guest House; Bob McCandless, Four Gables Cottages; Richard Olson, Selectman; Steve Tait, Provincetown Business Guild; Tom Thurston, Finance Committee, Cape Air, Cape and Islands Travel; Warren Tobias, Acting Chief of Police; Walt Winnowski, Finance Committee and Lobster Pot Restaurant;

Lynne Davies welcomed the attendees and initiated the discussion by providing an overview as to why the Summit was convened.

Mick Rudd made opening remarks underscoring the important role the tourism industry has on the Town's economy. The Visitor Service Board is funded by room tax revenue, which also adds nearly a million dollars to the Town's General Fund each year.

Lynne Davies re-emphasized Mick's comments by restating the importance of the tourism industry and citing several examples of the importance of the public-private partnerships and the impact those relationships have on meeting the needs of the tourism industry.

Bill Schneider, Administrative Director of Tourism, commented on the importance of maintaining a strong marketing presence within the travel industry because the Town competes for tourists and tourism dollars with every destination throughout the world. Marketing efforts are what keep us competitive in the travel industry. Our infrastructure is vitally important in that regard. Having dirty streets or uncollected trash sends a message to visitors and negatively reflects on our efforts to maintain our tourism industry.

Lynne Davies facilitated the discussion amongst the attendees.

COMMENTS

Seeking a paradigm shift in the way we look at funding, our infrastructure needs to be further developed. Tourism is the primary industry and needs attention and support. Marketing is an essential component to making Provincetown attractive.

Steve Tait suggested that perhaps the current 55-45% split of room tax revenue between the Town's general fund and tourism fund might be insufficient to sustain the infrastructure and marketing needs of the tourism industry in Provincetown. Many of our competitors, especially in the gay and lesbian market, receive up to 100% of their room tax revenues, which puts us at a disadvantage to compete.

Infrastructure deficiencies, such as proper signage and "way finding" for tourist amenities and attractions, are lacking in Town, which creates an unfriendly and often hostile environment.

Candy Collins-Boden reemphasized the importance of infrastructure and marketing in maintaining tourism industry in Provincetown. Provincetown has become an international destination as a result of our

marketing efforts and those visitors expect more in the way of amenities. In addition to infrastructure, customer service is crucial. In the past, the municipal government paid little attention to the tourism industry. Since the decline of the fishing industry, Town government has been forced to identify the importance of the tourism industry. Hopefully today's summit is successful in bringing all the elements of the Town municipal government as well as the business and cultural community together to support the needs of this industry.

Parking violations contribute to the ill will of many visitors and we need to ensure that visitors do not leave with a sour feeling about visiting Provincetown. Police department needs customer service training.

The Chamber of Commerce supports the parking violation rebate initiative as a way to soften the enforcement of parking regulations. This is a public-private partnership that seeks to turn a negative into a positive as well as a way to resell Provincetown. Identifying the importance of repeat visitors is also a significant key to success.

Both the Chamber and Tourism Office acknowledged the importance of customer service in all aspects of the business and government sectors. The Town needs to do a better job at customer service training, not only with summer police officers, but also parking attendants and comfort station employees.

The Town also needs to make a commitment to the tourism industry and support the needs. The support has grown over the years and needs to continue to grow in order to sustain the tourism infrastructure needs of the Town. Maintenance of the tourism infrastructure needs to be incorporated as a line item within the budget.

This past year, the VSB made an attempt to back away from funding the operational and maintenance support needs of the Town and redirect that into line items for the Beautification Committee.

50% of the VSB budget helps to fund the marketing effort. These marketing efforts have been very successful in getting out the word about our tourism industry, but more needs to be done.

DPW has finance and manpower deficiencies that limit their ability to provide the essential services to support these infrastructure needs. However, the tourism fund dollars need to be maintained in order to ensure the financial viability of the Town.

There will be a drastic change in leadership within the next year, with a new town manager and a new Board of Selectman. It will be important to relay many of these needs to these new members to ensure the importance of the industry is communicated and everyone is properly educated.

Tourism is both a blessing and challenge because of the demand that tourism puts on the municipal government. Town staff and municipal departments are constantly required to do more with less as Town budgets are level funded or reduced each year.

The Portuguese Festival is seeking a public-private partnership to make public infrastructure improvements that will benefit not only the Town but also future civic endeavors. But the organization does not know how to approach the Town in order to get this done. The leadership of the Town needs to be more receptive to these initiatives and partnerships in order to get things accomplished.

We need to be a diversified community. We need both families and gay/lesbian visitors.

The finance committee will be meeting during the month of February to discuss the Town's finance budget. These meetings are open to the public, but little input is ever provided.

We can get people to Town, but if they are not provided with the amenities needed to have a quality experience, they will not return. We need to start an initiative to thank visitors and provide a good customer service effort to convey the good will to every visitor.

There is no fat in the Town's municipal budget. There is just no money available to do everything that is needed. One thing we must do is extend the room tax revenue to transient visitors who visit and stay in short-term rentals and condos.

We need to have a paradigm shift that allows us to find solutions to the obstacles and challenges that we face. Rather than responding to these issues by saying, "we can't find the money to pay for XYZ," we need to start thinking "how do we find the money to pay for what is needed."

We are making an emphasis on marketing through the Internet. The Town has created a visitor services page on the Town's site.

The PGB is starting an effort to increase the profile of Provincetown on the web, by creating ways in which Provincetown will be more prominently displayed in key word searches and general web searches over the Internet.

Wi-fii initiative is an important element for tourists.

We need to create a vision for the Town. We not only need to consider where we need to be now but where we want to be ten years from now.

The streetscape initiative, which is moving forward, will include new paving, wi-fi and way finding efforts that will be an improvement.

NEXT STEPS

How do we move into the right direction in order to maintain the integrity of the tourism industry for Town?

The leadership of the Town needs to be educated to ensure that the needs of the tourism industry are met.

We need to get the stakeholders involved in the process. The members of the public and business community need to take a leadership role and remain involved in the process.

We need to create a community vision to give to the board of selectman.

This is an important topic that needs to be addressed, so how do we get there?

Like the recent housing and school summits, perhaps this group needs to break down the issues into working groups to move the issues forward.

The group recommended an organized facilitated Tourism Summit forum be scheduled in April to move forward with establishing strategic, long-term goals.