Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors of the Western Connecticut Tourism District
Wednesday, February 17, 10 am, via Zoom

Directors present were: Gregg Dancho, chair, Mark Barnhardt, Laura Budd, Debbie Carrothers, Kathy Champion, Dionne Craig, Irene Dixon, Jeffrey Dunn, Annette Einhorn, Michelle Falcone, Lorenzo Gaudioso, Tim Good, Lara Green-Kazlauskas, Fran Keilty, Rachel Kelly, Marcelo Martins, Kerry McAndrew, Craig Nelson, Dawn Nielsen, Roger Palanzo, Ben Paletsky, Christal Preszler, Carmen Romeo, Jennifer Tooker, Kevin Treesh, Jack Walsh, and Rowena White. Others present included: Rosemary Bove of the State Office of Tourism; from Storytellers, Chris Smith, Joe Giaccone, and Matt Shea; from the Waterbury Regional Chamber: Terry Macary and Lynn Ward; from the town of Southbury, Kevin Bielmeyer; from the town of Warren, Tim Angevine.

Welcome
Mr. Dancho called the meeting to order at 10:02 am. He noted that Governor Ned Lamont had announced new event guidelines the night before, and said that he was hopeful they would be able to go into effect as scheduled for March 19.

Approval of Minutes
Mr. Nelson moved to approve the minutes of the November 18, 2020, meeting as presented; Ms. Einhorn 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 $525,689. She noted the state will not permit a rollover of funds this year, so the Marketing Committee in conjunction with Storytellers and the COT will look for ways to wisely spend the balance. 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. Keilty seconded. The motion carried.

State Marketing Update
Ms. Bove updated the Board on the marketing efforts from the state. She said the Office of Tourism was putting together the spring and summer plan and would be working with the Districts to ensure that all promotions would work together well. She also noted that the state has primarily been advertising on Facebook and with Google, as the digital ads were more agile during the pandemic. She noted the state was sending out a survey regarding potential outreach

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events as well as the Governor's Conference on Tourism. She said the state was investigating the best ways to have those events.

Marketing Committee/Storytellers

Ms. Smith updated the Board on marketing efforts so far, noting that with two paid Facebook advertising campaigns, Facebook followers had grown to 4,602 and Instagram followers to 274. The current Facebook campaign links back to the Western District's articles on CTVisit.com. Ms. Bove noted that the state has seen an increase in traffic to the Western District's articles, and commended Storytellers on their content creation. Ms. Smith noted that the next steps would include working with the state's advertising agency, Adams and Knight, to work in collaboration for future marketing. Mr. Giaccone noted that Storytellers had taken a conservative approach during the winter months with advertising, but those efforts yielded positive results, including a focus on what topics were popular. He said Storytellers was ready to work with the Marketing Committee and the state to spend the remaining funds wisely.

Ms. Macary shared a brief update on the One Eleven Group situation. She said that Mr. Giaccone was working with One Eleven to use up the funds they had in reserve, particularly for fundraising campaigns on the creative and development side.

Mobile App

Ms. Macary reported the Executive Committee was investigating having a mobile app for locations in the District, similar to a coupon book. This would allow area businesses to advertise to consumers. She said the District would put out a RFQ for vendors, and thanked Mr. Romeo for his efforts on investigating the app. Mr. Romeo noted that he also connected with Mr. Good regarding the project, and thanked him for his expertise, particularly regarding a map.

Best Practices

Ms. Macary noted that with the state beginning to look at loosening pandemic restrictions, it is a good time for Board members to begin to reach out to constituents in their communities. Ms. Falcone shared an article she had written for submission to her local newspaper, and an email sent from Redding representative Jen Wastrom. Ms. Macary will share those pieces with the full Board. Ms. Falcone noted that Board members need to educate and work with their local venues, restaurants and other places of interest to help get them on CTVisit. She also asked Board members to like and share Facebook posts.

Suggestions for the Good of the Order/Adjournment

Ms. Macary noted the next meeting date is April 21.
With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:02 am.

Respectfully submitted,
Terry Macary
Administrative Partner

Directors Present:
Kerry McAndrew- Beacon Falls
Dionne Craig - Bethel
Rowena White -- Bridgeport
Dawn Nielsen- Bristol
Roger Palanzo - Danbury
Kevin Treesh -- Darien
John Walsh-Derby
Michelle Falcone-Easton
Mark Barnhardt- Fairfield
Tim Good- Kent
Ben Paletsky-Morris
Marcelo Martins-Naugatuck
Laura Budd- New Canaan
Christal Preszler - Newtown
Irene Dixon, Norwalk
Lorenzo Gaudioso- Roxbury
Annette Einhorn – Stamford
Gregg Dancho- Stratford
Jeffrey Dunn – Thomaston
Rachel Kelly - Torrington
Kathy Champion - Trumbull
Craig Nelson-Warren
Fran Keilty – Washington
Lara Green-Kazlauskas - Winsted
Jennifer Tooker – Westport
Debbie Carrothers - Weston
Carmen Romeo-Wolcott