



MAD RIVER VALLEY VERMONT

Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce Minutes of Board Meeting April 14th, 2017

Present: Amy Todisco, Rosemarie White, Peter MacLaren, Lori Klein, Brad Long, Ted Fisher, Jim Tabor, June Anderson, Jack Sharry. Also ED Jasmine Bigelow.

Apologies: Roger Nishi.

The Board meeting was called to order by the Chair Amy Todisco at 11:05p.m.

A quorum of 7 Directors present at the start of the meeting was declared by the Chair. June and Ted arrived shortly after the meeting started.

Minutes of March 20th meeting:

1. Moved by Rosemarie that the minutes of the March 20th Board meeting be accepted as circulated, seconded by Jack. Carried. The minutes are posted on our website.

Action Item updates:

1. Those not dealt with during the agenda were deferred to the next meeting. See list at end of minutes.

Financial Update:

1. Jasmine reported that as result of follow ups the A/R has been reduced substantially. As suspected, some invoices had not been seen by recipients as they had been relegated to spam. Also while several members were current with their most recent dues they had been unaware that past dues invoices had not been paid.
2. There are only two members now with arrears of over \$1,000 and both have been followed up directly with hand delivered invoices.
3. All members who still have overdue payments, despite extensive reminders, have been suspended from the website. Each will receive a mailed letter shortly encouraging them to take steps to get reinstated.
Action: Jasmine.
4. The Board extended its thanks to office manager Stephanie for all her hard work.
5. Bookkeeping. The ED has met with Karen Pearson, a freelance bookkeeper who reviewed our current books. She has expressed confidence that she can help us get them cleaned up, prepare monthly reports on an interim basis, and train Stephanie to manage them effectively ongoing. The ED has now retained Karen on an as needed basis starting at the end of April. Karen has recommended that we continue to have Hall and Holden handle payroll and annual tax filing.
6. Noted that we do have the following reserve funds that can be used by decision of the Board:
 - CSP Balance: \$33.4k
 - MAWP balance: \$2.4k
 - MRV-ME projected surplus: \$2k

Membership Update:

1. No new members have joined in the last month.
2. The ED plans to set up the Membership Task Team to review and evolve member benefits, and potentially recommend updates to the dues structure. **Action: Jasmine.**
3. The ED is planning meetings with Matt Lillard, the new manager at MRG, and Eric Freidman, and also Lisa Loomis and the Rec District, to update them on our progress. **Action: Jasmine.**

Strategic Plan continued:

1. The ED recommends a basically flat budget for the 2017-2018 year to act as a baseline as our plans are put in place.
2. The ED is carrying out a detailed review of operations costs, to free up more funds for marketing. Opportunities include: Terminating the postage meter contract; replacing Mail Chimp with a complimentary account from Constant Contact offered to Chambers of Commerce (which will come with a discount for all Chamber members who use Constant Contact); the phone bill, terminating the printer & copier contract given very low usage and replace with less expensive printers, and rationalize credit card merchant accounts to reduce fees. **Action: Jasmine.**
3. The ED recommends eliminating MAD Money at Chamber mixers. The focus instead to encourage our members to attend will be a theme for each mixer, i.e. a program and not just a social. Some Board members suggested that we could offer, as an alternative to Mad Money, for the winning business(es) to be highlighted on the website and the Chamber Social Media feeds for some period. **Action: Jasmine.**
4. MRV-ME replacement. Contributions have declined since this program, which replaced CSP, was introduced 5 years ago. It was noted that at its height CSP brought in close to \$200k per year, while MRV-ME this year is expected to bring in just over the budgeted \$20k. The ED recommends that the new program should be focused on raising funds for marketing, and that we should phase out of direct financial contributions to Events. No decisions have been made as yet. The Board agreed that there need to be tangible incremental benefits to members contributing extra funds. The idea of a tiered membership was discussed. It was agreed that the ED would come back to the next Board meeting with a more specific recommendation. **Action: Jasmine.**
5. The ED reported that she had met with Gary Kessler to provide background on the reduced event grant for the Green Mountain Stage race for this year. Board members commented that while the GMSR brings several hundred people to the MRV, it is held on Labor Day weekend, which would likely be a sell out weekend in any event. In contrast the Mad Marathon is on a non-holiday weekend in July and brings in significant upside business to the valley, particularly as most participants stay for 3 or 4 nights. It is not clear yet what Gary's plans will be.
6. The ED plans to set up an Events Task Team to investigate how the Chamber can provide the most effective support to events in the Valley, other than financially. **Action: Jasmine.**
7. The ED has met with Joshua and Kristine, at the MRVPD, and Robin Morris, of the Food Hub and the new Taste Place.
8. After further consideration, the ED has now decided that the Chamber should take over the Economic Dashboard that is published in the Valley Reporter. She believes it fits the mandate of the Chamber, we can build on what has been done to make it better, and while it will be extra work we can make it happen. Jasmine advised that she has access to s/w used by others that will simplify data collection and ensure comparable month-to-month results even if there is some incomplete reporting in any month. The cost to set up will be small. The transition from the MRVPD will happen in May. Jasmine and Kristine from the MRVPD will send a joint letter to all participants to advise of the change. **Action: Jasmine.**
9. Brand Equity/Placemaking. The ED has agreed with Joshua and Kristine at the MRVPD to work jointly on an initial plan. The scope will be for the Chamber to take leadership to develop a visual approach and placement plan and work in collaboration with other organizations and stakeholders in the Valley to plan implementation. The initial costs will be in the region of \$1.5 to \$2k for design work. Joshua has pointed out that there is existing placement of information booths for the Mad River ByWay, such as one outside the General Wait House, and these can also be used for new signage without any formal re-approvals. Peter noted that we have a copy of the presentation of the plans that Killington developed for their rebranding – he will send a copy to Jasmine. **Action: Peter.** The Board expressed their enthusiastic support for this initiative. Moved by Jack that the Board approve the plans for taking leadership on Brand Equity/Placemaking for the Valley and authorize initial expenditures of up to \$2k. Seconded by Lori and carried unanimously. **Action: Jasmine.**
10. To ensure focus on moving forward with the priorities that have been agreed and to continue to develop the detailed work plans, the ED noted the she will be setting up some “closed door” time in the office.
11. The Ed will move forward on setting up the following Task Teams by suggesting roles for Board members and inviting Board members to identify their interest. Also to recommend other Chamber members who could help with these task teams. **Action Jasmine and all Board members.** The Teams will include:

- Welcome (of new businesses, new members)
 - Marketing and “content” for our messaging
 - Membership, including benefits and dues
 - Development, focused on grants and other potential big-ticket non-dues revenue sources
 - Sales, focused on packages for marketing and revenue value
 - Communication to members and to prospective visitors
 - Events, as in how to support and grow events in the Valley
 - Visitor Information
 - Advocacy
12. Website re-design is a priority. To be discussed in more detail at next meeting. **Action: Next Meeting**
 13. We have been given the opportunity of a comp’d ad in “Art New England”. Jasmine will be looking for someone to help with the design. **Action Jasmine**
 14. Still be discussed at the next meeting is the proposal for a “Valley Vitality Fund”. **Action: Next Meeting**

Other updates:

1. Noted that the Taste Place being developed by Robin Morris will be open July 1st. It will also be the venue for the Chamber August Mixer in conjunction with the NSB. (Secretary’s note: Some irony there, given the prior role of the building!)
2. Preliminary Plans for annual meeting in September are being worked. American Flatbread has offered to host it in their renovated Red Barn. Ideas include a silent auction to showcase members’ products and services and to also raise marketing funds. Possible invite to Wendy Knight, the new Vermont Tourism & Marketing Commissioner.

Adjournment:

1. Moved by Peter, seconded by Lori. Carried. Meeting adjourned at approximately 1:05 p.m.

Next Meetings:

1. The next Board meeting has been CHANGED to Friday May 19th.

Minutes submitted by Peter MacLaren, Secretary

Held over Action Item Summary:

1. Continue dialog with LCRCC Chamber. **Action: Jasmine**
2. Kiosks. **Action: Roger**
3. Banner Protocol. **Open**
4. Top Gas area maintenance. **Open**
5. Strategic Plan communications coordination. **Action: Jasmine**
6. Member newsletters, Board bios. **Action: Jasmine**
7. Invite a friend to ED Coffee mornings. **Action: Board Members**
8. Exchange ideas with Karen Nevin. **Action: Jasmine**
9. Follow up with Central Vermont Chamber regarding their recruiting in the MRV. **Action: Jasmine.**

New Action Items:

10. Mail letter to suspended members. **Action: Jasmine**
11. Meetings with MRG, Lisa Loomis & Rec District. **Action: Jasmine**
12. Address various operations cost savings. **Action: Jasmine**
13. MRV-ME replacement proposal. **Action: Jasmine**
14. Take over Economic Dashboard starting in May. **Action: Jasmine**
15. Brand Equity/Placemaking planning. **Action: Jasmine**
16. Send copy of Killington Plan to Jasmine. **Action: Peter**
17. Set up task Teams. **Action: Jasmine**
18. Design for Art New England Ad. **Action: Jasmine**
19. Website Re-design. **Agenda item for May meeting**
20. Valley Vitality Fund. **Agenda item for May meeting**