

Mad River Valley Chamber of Commerce
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
July 19, 2023

Attendance: Steve White, Sean Kramer, Anna Nassett, Mimi Buttenheim, Matt Lilliard, Kim Donahue, Roger Nishi
Chamber Staff: Eric Friedman
Regrets: Diane Forrester, TJ Greenwood, Suze Edwards

Meeting started at 3:06pm, by Sean Kramer.

Opening remarks from Sean Kramer: Sean is happy to see the Chamber and other businesses rallying to help our neighbors in flooded communities. Seven Days printed an article with a headline about Waitsfield partying while the rest of VT was under water. Eric spoke with the team at Sevens Days and had the headline pulled.

Eric notes that the business community is struggling. He is working on messaging that parts of VT were impacted but there is still plenty of businesses that are open in VT and need the support of visitors. Eric's intent is to make the messaging light and upbeat - not to lessen the impact of the areas that have been devastated.

Board Reports:

Financial Reports: Reports are down \$35 - 45K. There is about \$60K that comes in, in August which levels everything out by the end of the year. Annualized dues will help to even this out, making it so the financials don't dip like this every year. This is the best shape the receivables and reports have ever been in.

Membership Report: ChamberMate migration continuing. Membership dues being paid at different times continues to be the issue of the slow roll out. Migration should be done by 9/1/23. This change will put the chamber memberships into annualized billing.

Membership is fairly stagnant at the moment. Eric feels like he has lost momentum with this. Madbush Falls & Lincoln Peak Photography are new members. Kids Creative has cancelled - Eric had a really great conversation with Jill about this. Roughly at 186 members at this point.

Management Reports:

- StewardMRV is still doing great! There has been a lot of good press around the program and we now have more volunteers than sites. The Chamber has built a waiting list of volunteers
- Welcome Center coming together. One monitor of the new monitors is up, one still being setup (this is the monitor for still photos). New reception desk/computer setup are in and being used. There is now a station coffee and snacks for volunteers/visitors.

- Looking at Nov/Dec for the touchscreen display. Display in Center is focused on what is happening in the NOW - compatibility to the website is for all year round. The program can build an itinerary that can be sent to a visitor's phone. There is also a feature to send a link to other people joining the party.
- Matt L asked how traffic to the new Visitor's Center is. Eric answered this it is moderate. The new address/location is finally on Apple Maps, Google Maps, and the new signs have been put up. The Smokehouse still working on the interior. Kim is impressed with the shift of people coming to the office. She feels it is people who are really looking for the recreation. Kim feels this could be the future of the valley
- VOREC grant agreement has not been signed. Eric is not worried about this. The state is just running behind. Eric anticipates that it should be signed in the next 1-2 weeks. Reimbursements will hit every quarter. There was a 50% deposit on web project the Chamber can't be reimbursed until the equipment/ programming has been delivered.
- Eric is working on the Food & Bev page of the website. He is building a spreadsheet for every restaurant members and non-members will be included. Information to include when the establishment is open and for what meal. Members will have links non-members will not. Only one restaurant person responded to update their info.
 - Matt L asked about having a small ad in the VR to direct people to see this spreadsheet. He is wondering how do we get people to look at this information
- There are new posters and plexi glass going up at the old gas station on rt 100 where there used to be Visitor Information (called the Travel Eye). Matt L has plexi to donate for this project. Project expenses come out of StewardMRV budget
- The Chamber is working on creating a long term plan to encourage businesses to become ADA compliant - huge investment made at MT. Ellen for Vermont Adaptive Ski. VAS is trying to get places compatible for people coming to ski to utilize food lodging etc. The Chamber believes this initiative shows the community is a positive light. Eris is creating a task force to work with businesses to get more compliant. The Chamber is looking at taking on the Tom Clark/Allan Clark bike race to raise funds to help build ramps, rebuild bathrooms etc
- The Mad Marathon might need to be taken over. The race brings in about 800 runners to the valley. There seems to be a disconnect between the folks that manage the marathon and the businesses in the community. The Chamber would like to make it more friendly to the area businesses and include better marketing for the event. One thought is to POSSIBLY have StewardMRV take it over which would make Tom the organizer of the event. Doing this is a

possibility of a FT position for Tom and then turns the event into a fundraiser for StewardMRV.

- Anna N. loves Chamber taking over legacy events and not creating brand new events
- Best of RT 100 chugging along
- Women's Business initiative is still moving along. The latest meeting was held 7/18/23 at the 1824 House
- Planning district items are still moving along. These meetings are some of the most vital meetings Eric is involved in. Sam is the new Planning Coordinator - 65-70% of Josh's time is spent on Waste Water. Working out the waste water plan is the single most important thing that can be done for affordable housing.
- MR Path is working on making a path from Middlesex to Warren. The path has a new ED named Mischa Golfman.

August Mixer being scheduled for the Visitor's Center

Annual Meeting is coming up in September. Board members up for renewal are TJ Greenwood, Sean Kramer & Matt Lilliard. Matt L is willing to give up his spot if someone else wants to participate on the board. The Chamber still has 1 board seat open. Ed Reed from the Garden Center - Emily Shay (or one of the brothers) from Valley Mead are possible candidates.

Annual meeting should be an indoor event - possibly at Sugarbush - possibly where Sage was - Eric is open to ideas for where to host. Eric is thinking about inviting Betsy Bishop - president of the Vermont Chamber to speak - and having Josh Schwartz give an update with all the Waste Water/Housing developments.

Date of next meeting: TBD for annual meeting

Meeting adjourned at 4:22 pm
Minutes taken by Mary Tuthill