

MRV Chamber Meeting Minutes

Date: January 8, 2024

Time: 3:03 pm - 4:18 pm

Location: MRV Visitor's Center

Attendance:

In-Person: Mary Tuthill, Steve White, Anna Nasset, Sean Kramer, TJ Greenwood, Suzee Edwards, Diane, Aaron Shea

Via Zoom: Matt Lilliard, Mimi Bittenheim

Absent: Kim Donahue, Roger Nishi

Opening Remarks

- Sean Kramer opened the meeting, highlighting the challenges faced due to the lack of snow and its impact on tourism.
- Steve White expressed concerns about decreased holiday traffic due to new pass regulations, with tickets priced at \$250, limiting spontaneous visits and families
- Eric raised questions about the valley's capacity to handle the volume if it were increased - especially the restaurant sector

Meeting Minutes Approval

- All attendees approved the 10/30/23 meeting minutes with no opposition.

Financial Report

- The financial report was not available due to formatting issues caused by the bookkeeper's maternity leave.
- Star Kits sales are down 25% from last year.
 - Efforts are being made to increase Star Kit sales by engaging interns from Harwood, although there are challenges in promoting the program to students.
 - Sean suggested involving the five foundations more actively in promoting the program.
- Chambermate Issues
 - There are ongoing issues with Chambermate not generating new invoices for quarterly payments, leading to some members using invoicing as a reason to cancel their membership.
- Discussion arose regarding the perceived value of Chamber membership and its benefits to members.

StewardMRV

- Tom will return to manage the program, with all three towns committing to level funding.
- The Memory Tree fundraiser will exclusively benefit StewardMRV.
- Eric emphasized the need for more businesses to promote and support Chamber fundraisers on social media.

- Steve suggested a reminder email from Eric about promoting fundraising
- Sean inquired about a photo bank for businesses to use for making social posts

Visitor's Center Updates

- A touch screen kiosk has been installed, and programming is in progress.
- VOREC is progressing well, with the bridge scheduled for installation in May.
- The MRV Path is working on trail kiosks and signage, and VC parking lot is set for renovation.

Rural Innovation Initiatives

- Sugarbush hosted a meeting with WCVT and a rural tech company, Eric made a connection with Matt Dunn
- Non-profit group that works on bringing tech hubs to rural communities, including collaborative workspaces to encourage young people working remotely to live in more rural communities

CPR Classes and AEDs

- CPR classes have been well attended, with efforts to increase the number of certified individuals in the valley.
 - Currently 28 people certified
- A bulk purchase of AEDs for more businesses is being considered, with potential insurance assistance.

VACE Insurance

- VACE insurance offering supplemental vision and dental insurance to employees was discussed.

Event Initiatives

- Efforts to promote events, including the upcoming eclipse, were discussed.
 - Steve to get back in touch with Jess from mad River Barn to keep sub committee moving forward
- Collaboration with Waterbury for the eclipse event was mentioned.
- Women in Business meetings are held regularly every other month, led by Samantha.

ADA Compliance

- There was a small response to the ADA survey, with businesses expressing concerns about the cost of compliance.
- There is an effort to work with MRV Path to get parts of the pass accessible
- Eric emphasized the need for more options and flexibility in compliance efforts.

Future Planning

- Eric proposed a forward-thinking board approach, suggesting another strategic plan to be developed with the assistance of the Vermont Association of Chamber Committees, which offers programs to support board development. There is a grant available to help pay for the board development consultant.

Adjournment

- The meeting was adjourned at 4:18 pm.
- The next meeting is scheduled for March 4, 2024 at 3 pm.