

## **MINUTES of Tourism Commission meeting**

**December 15, 2014 at 6:00PM**

**Gloucester City Hall, 9 Dale Avenue, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor**

**Present:** Laura Dow, Tom Daniel, Carol Thistle, John Orlando, Pauline Bresnahan, Paul Fronteiro, Karen Ristuben. Also present: Tobin Dominick, Kay Ellis, and Linn Parisi.

**Absent:** Peter Webber, Laura Baker, Zach Sears, and Catherine Ryan.

Tom Daniel recapped Five Year Marketing Plan process: Chris Pappas, Open Door, Inc. met with key stakeholders (including Tourism Commission, Discover Gloucester, PR for Gloucester, and Chamber of Commerce) over the summer. In October, Chris presented the Phase I Plan to key representatives of Discover Gloucester, PR for Gloucester, and the Chamber of Commerce.

In November, a meeting was held at City Hall to present Phase I to the community to get their feedback. The Mayor has the Tourism Commission's memo for review and it is anticipated to go to the O&A Committee in February.

Linn Parisi presented her ideas for a transition proposal: The proposal to establish a non-profit will help Discover Gloucester grow. Other funded tourism programs are: Brand USA; Essex National Heritage; NOBCVB. Discover Gloucester has solid 7-year track record – many accomplishments and many contacts.

Linn expressed concerns with transitional instability: losing market share, losing subscribers to Visitors Guide, unrealistic timeline, timeline not in sync with DMO work as well as concern with the sustainability of city funding.

She proposed:

- Extended transition timeline beginning on 1/1/15
- 18-24 month transition timeline
- 2 visitor guides within that period
- Trade show July 2015
- TC and present DMO Board to comprise transition team
- Consider it a merger, not a dissolution
- Elect and pay Linn as transitional Executive Director
- Develop a job description for Executive Director
- Designate Discover Gloucester as the new organization early in process
- Communicate with stakeholders constantly to assure smooth transition

Commissioners discussed that the authority to move forward is with the Mayor, including recognizing existing DMO. Tom anticipated having the Mayor's feedback before next Tourism Commission meeting in January. It was suggested that the Tourism Commission vote on the DMO proposal and to recognize it as the official DMO. However, more discussion was recommended.

Tobin expressed her concern with the level of budget – enough to contract out for experienced representatives for trade shows?

Carol Thistle relayed that Phase II of Five Year Marketing Plan was anticipated this week and may answer some questions and concerns about the transition period. In addition to a marketing plan, Phase II will also include a transitional timeline and a 2015 budget.

Carol presented Stage Fort Park stats: 16,000+ visitors May-October, which were nearly 1,000 more than last season. Nearly 4000+ visitors filled out the survey, which provides helpful marketing demographics.

Chris Pappas will be present, Phase II of Five Year Marketing Plan at the January TC meeting.

Next meeting: January 12, 2015.(rescheduled to January 6, 2015)