

Meeting Minutes 18 March 2010

John Stratton called the meeting to order at 7:10pm and recognized Joe Lacasse to lead the Pledge of Allegiance.

John expressed thanks from the Chamber to Jim Caramantes and the Hideaway staff for hosting our meetings from February through May and reminded members to return the survey about a Lyme Old Lyme membership directory that was distributed at last meeting.

Tony Sheridan presented some upcoming Chamber of Eastern CT programs, including a breakfast event with Lynn Malerba, the first female leader of the Mohegan Tribe since 1743, and the Home Show. The Chamber of ECT has 2 for 1 tickets available.

John indicated that new scholarship applications are in the hands of appropriate departments at Lyme Old Lyme High School and the Lyme Academy College. Emily Griswold passed around a sign up sheet for members willing to assist with Taste of the Lymes 2010. Tickets were mailed out to Lyme Old Lyme members for the April 18 event.

Cathy Frank presented recommendations from the Board for donations as follows:

- OLVNA (\$250). Motion was made by Steve Ross, seconded by Kurt Zemba. Unanimous approval.
- OL Fire Department (\$200). Motion was made by Norm Emerson, seconded by Joe Lacasse. Unanimous approval.
- Shoreline Soup Kitchens & Food Pantry (\$350) Motion was made by Greg Carnese, seconded by Sheila Wertheimer. Unanimous approval.
- Midsummer Festival (\$400) Motion was made by Russ Gomes, seconded by John Stratton. Unanimous approval.

Additional donations, not requiring member votes, were made by the Board to the Lyme Old Lyme High School alcohol free graduation party (\$100), and to two senior Girl Scouts planning a community service venture over the summer months (\$100). A request has been received by Boy Scout Troop 26, which is sponsored by the Chamber, for a Chamber donation covering camp fees for a local scout. That request will be considered by the Board at its May meeting and may require a member vote, also in May.

- **Chamber Spotlight:** Nancy Elliott of the US Census Bureau presented a Census trivia quiz & distributed travel mugs to members who correctly

answered questions including when was the first Census? (1790); When is Census Day? (April 1); and for how long is personal information kept confidential by the Census Bureau? (72 years). Congratulations to all the winners!

Break for Dinner

John Stratton stated that tonight's program would be a discussion of the proposed merger between the Chamber ECT and the LOL Chamber. We are in the 2nd year of a 3 year trial merger. The Board asked the three members (Charlie Delinks, Steve Ross, and Pam Stevens) who were instrumental in drafting the current agreement to provide us with the history of the current agreement. Pam Stevens is out of town. Tony Sheridan is here to answer questions if necessary.

John recognized Charlie Delinks, who spoke about Lyme Old Lyme's historic relationship with Eastern CT. The LOL Chamber had been a member as a Chamber and ECT provided the liability insurance needed for our annual Taste of the Lymes event. During his tenure as Chamber President, Charlie wanted the Chamber to be more business-oriented. The 3 year trial agreement with ECT was a step in that direction. Charlie suggested that members ask themselves if they have used any of ECT's resources, and what results they have seen from the partnership.

Glenn Sulmasy asked about the dues structure if the agreement were permanent.

LOL members grandfathered in the current trial agreement currently pay \$40, which is retained by ECT. If the trial becomes permanent, members would pay ECT member rates. A social membership category with reduced member fee will be offered by ECT.

A member asked if Charlie et. al had also explored relationships with Middlesex.

Others had not been explored, he said, because LOL had a preexisting relationship with ECT.

Charlie introduced Steve Ross, who reviewed the terms of the current trial agreement. He stated his opinion that LOL had not relinquished any control of its activities during the trial and said that ECT had conducted a membership drive as stipulated, and that 14 new members had resulted from the drive. Steve believes that the major concerns of LOL members are loss of control over local activities and the future dues structure.

Charlie Delinks stated that LOL membership is actually down, not up.

Greg Carnese asked if donations would still be locally determined.

Tony Sheridan confirmed that ECT's local councils make donation decisions.

A member asked the age of the LOL Chamber.

John Stratton recounted that the Chamber was formed in the early 1930's as an off-shoot of the Lions Club. John suggested that members need to decide if we are a little town or if we are part of something larger.

Joan Ryan and Jenny Timcke of the Woman's Exchange expressed their non-profit organization's disappointment in services received from the ECT Chamber. The Woman's Exchange joined LOL as a new member during the trial agreement and paid ECT's non-profit rate of \$185. They said they had left phone messages and had visited ECT in person but had still not been contacted by ECT. For the member fee paid, they said, they expected more exposure and more networking opportunities.

Tony Sheridan provided two examples of the business support offered by ECT. One was recent testimony against a proposed sick pay bill that would require all businesses to offer sick pay to all employees (incl. part-time). The other is the liability coverage (previously mentioned by Steve Ross).

A member asked for clarification on the financial relationship between ECT and LOL.

Tony explained that ECT staffing expenses are allocated among Councils but that no funds are exchanged.

A member asked if the trial membership must last the full three years.

The current agreement may be terminated by either party (LOL or ECT) at any time with 90 day notice.

Kurt Zemba said he is an 18 year member of the Chamber and pleased with the unique combination of social opportunity and business networking offered by the LOL Chamber. *He asked that any voting on the merger be conducted by mailed paper ballot: one to every dues paying member.*

John Stratton adjourned the meeting at 9:15pm.

Cathy Frank
21 March 2010