

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Pawtucket, RI

January 13, 2015

Before the Call to Order, Mike Gwynn updated the Board regarding the status of the Pawtucket Red Sox.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:30 p.m. by Chairman David Balfour.

Attendees:

David Balfour, Chairman
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Keith Fayan, Secretary
Michael Gwynn, Member
Courtney Iannuccilli, Member
Thomas Kravitz, Member

Absent:

Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Lori Urso, Member
Debra Fournier, Member
Louis Yip, Member
David Richards, Member
Mark Brodeur, Member
Helen Moroney, Director Emeritus

Also Attending:

Robert Billington, President, BVTC
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations, BVTC
Gayle Gifford, Cause and Effect, Inc.
Joan Loos, BVTC Staff

2. Approval of the November 18, 2015 Board of Directors Meeting

Judy Fischbach moved, Tom Kravitz seconded, and the November 18, 2015 Board of Directors minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

3. Treasurer's Report

Judy Fischbach presented the Treasurer's Report, reviewing the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Balance Sheet, as of October 31, 2014, and the Income Statement for July through October 2014. There was discussion of the typical cash flow cycle of the BVTC for the benefit of the new Board members. Bob Billington shared a chart regarding the history of the hotel tax revenue to the BVTC. Natalie Carter shared information regarding the Polar Express statistics, expenses and revenue. There was discussion regarding the plan for growth of the Polar Express, considering available dates, railroad restrictions, Rail Events permission and staffing availability. Bob Billington mentioned that during this year's Polar Express, Warner Brothers executives were present on December 6 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the release of the movie. Warner Brothers was very pleased with our event and would like to work with Rail Events and BVTC to develop more train events.

The Treasurer's Report was approved unanimously.

4. Strategic Planning Update and Input – Cause and Effect, Inc.

Gayle Gifford updated the Board regarding progress on the BVTC Strategic Plan for 2015-2020. She shared a draft strategic plan, measures for success for the strategic plan, and top priorities as identified by staff. A sustainable tourism component will be included in the strategic plan. Bob Billington shared that Senator Reed will be holding a meeting at the Visitors Center on January 26, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. regarding the Blackstone Valley National Corridor being named a National Park. He discussed strategies for making a smooth transition to benefit the communities. There was also discussion regarding working with town planners, creating an Outdoor Committee, bringing cultural sites together to upgrade and improve tourism products and increasing promotion through low-cost opportunities such as Trip Advisor.

There was also discussion regarding creating an organization of statewide tourism councils to better promote the state tourism brand.

Bob Billington also reported to the Board on the results to date on meetings to expand the Northern Rhode Island Tourism District into North Providence, East Providence, Johnston and Foster.

Gayle Gifford stated that staff is still working on what programs of the BVTC will continue, based on the money-mission matrix that was created.

Board members Mike Gwynn and Courtney Iannuccilli were asked to work with BVTC staff regarding marketing and promotion.

Board members were asked to send any comments on the strategic plan to Bob and Gayle. The Board fully supports Gayle's work and thanks her for her efforts. Board members are invited to attend any of the Cause and Effect meetings with BVTC staff, the next one being on January 21 at 12 noon at the BVTC.

5. President's Report

Bob Billington presented the need for a formal financial audit this year. Mr. Balfour asked Judy Fischbach to offer advice on choosing an auditing firm. Discussion will be continued at the next Board meeting.

Bob Billington informed the Board of a new commuter railroad between Worcester and Providence that will be privately funded. If that happens, our costs for the train for Polar Express will be less.

Bob showed the cover of the Rhode Island Highways Best Practices Design Guide, which features a picture of the Pawtucket River Bridge.

The President's report was unanimously accepted.

6. Governance Committee Report

Keith Fayan reported that more information will be obtained regarding consideration of recommending Alex Parmenidez to the Board. It was suggested that a Finance and Audit Committee be formed. The Governance Committee asked staff for the demographics of the Blackstone Valley communities so that a Board can be built that mirror the communities. Mr. Fayan invited new members to participate in any Board Committees in which they are interested. The Board unanimously approved the Governance Committee Report.

7. New and Continuing Business

Mr. Fayan has been working on lease review between the DEM and the Visitors' Center located on the bike path near I-295. The BVTC is actively seeking tenants for this space with which the DEM and the BVTC are comfortable, and Mr. Fayan serves to protect our interests in this regard. However, the lease review work continues longer than originally anticipated, and Mr. Fayan requests that he be able to invoice the BVTC for his services at a lower than customary rate for lease review and at a rate mutually agreed upon by Mr. Fayan and the Board of Directors. Gayle Gifford suggested that Mr. Fayan present a proposal for Board review and that the Board consider getting at least one other bid*. There was discussion regarding legal and ethical issues in an effort to handle the work of this special project appropriately. This issue will be discussed at the March Board of Directors meeting.

8. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mr. Fayan moved, Judy Fischbach seconded and the meeting was adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff

***Addendum:** BVTC Staff researched lease review rates as follows:

Robert Ameen, Pawtucket, \$200 an hour

Devane and Devane, Pawtucket, \$200 an hour

McKinnon and Harwood, Pawtucket, \$200 an hour and up depending on project