

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Pawtucket, RI

May 12, 2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:05 p.m. by Chairman David Balfour.

Attendees:

David Balfour, Chairman
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Debra Fournier, Member
Michael Gwynn, Member
Courtney Iannuccilli, Member
Thomas Kravitz, Member
Alexander Parmenidez
Louis Yip, Member

Absent:

Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Lori Urso, Member
David Richards, Member
Mark Brodeur, Member

Also Attending:

Robert Billington, President, BVTC
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations, BVTC
Keith Fayan, Legal Counsel
Joan Loos, BVTC Staff

2. Approval of the March 10, 2015 Board of Directors Meeting

Tom Kravitz moved, Louis Yip seconded, and the March 10, 2015 Board of Directors minutes were unanimously approved as written.

3. Treasurer's Report

Judy Fischbach presented financial statements as of March 31, 2015 – the balance sheet as compared to February 2015, the income statement covering July 2014 through March 2015 and the income statement by class. Louis Yip moved and Debra Fournier seconded to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented and the motion was carried unanimously.

Bob Billington and Natalie Carter thanked Judy for the time she has spent with Natalie, the BVTC accountant and the BVTC bookkeeper to learn the complex accounting system for non-profit organizations.

Judy is reviewing proposals from companies to perform an audit in this our 30th year.

4. President's Report

Update on the Governor's Budget Proposal – Bob Billington explained that the Governor's original budget plan was to take about \$190,000 away from the BVTC, which is about 50% of our base funding derived from our share of the room tax. Bob had suggested that instead the room tax be expanded to include all types of accommodations, including Airbnb, Homeaway, vacation rentals and campgrounds. Joan Milas, our lobbyist, has been working hard to represent our concerns on this issue.

Pawtucket Red Sox Move – In order to better understand the issues surrounding the potential move of the Pawtucket Red Sox, Bob has invited sports economist, Dr. Victor Matheson from the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, MA, to be our guest speaker. Mr. Matheson, will be speaking in our Visitor Center theatre on Wednesday, May 13, 2015 at 10:00 a.m. His topic will be "The Economic Impact of Investing in Baseball Stadiums". All Board members were invited to attend.

5. Continuing Business

Golf Tournament - Amanda Wood, BVTC Office Manager, continues to coordinate the annual golf tournament. She was invited to brief the Board on the status of the planning for the tournament. Amanda reports good sponsorships from companies such as AAA, Wal-Mart and Navigant Credit Union. She also has many companies sponsoring tee signs. Currently there are 18 foursomes registered and her goal is between 25 and 36 foursomes. She asked Board members for help in putting foursomes together as well as help with items for the silent auction. Board members were invited to participate and were reminded to come for the dinner even if not golfing.

Corporate Sponsorships – Lisa Castellone, Fund Development Coordinator for the BVTC, was invited to update the Board on sponsorships she has obtained for BVTC programs, from such companies as Lexus of Warwick, Hope Global, Twin River, AAA, WalMart, Dave's Marketplace, Santander Bank and Bristol County Savings Bank. She is working to create an organized sponsorship and fund raising program, as well as educating potential sponsors what the BVTC stands for and keeping sponsors and potential sponsors informed on BVTC activities.

Cause & Effect – Gayle Gifford's work has been put on hold until the budget is finalized.

6. New Business

Budget Discussion – Because the Governor's budget will likely not be determined until July 1, 2015, the BVTC budget cannot be presented at this time. A special meeting of the Board of Directors may need to be called to approve our budget.

Gray Line Tours – Peter Conway of Conway Tours has asked the BVTC to manage the Gray Line business in Rhode Island and add product to the Gray Line site. Joan Loos and James Toomey from the BVTC staff will be coordinating the work with Gray Line and Conway Tours.

Annual Dinner Committee – Donna Houle and Natalie Carter are forming a committee to help plan our annual meeting and dinner on October 1, 2015, celebrating the BVTC's 30th year.

Introduction of American Girl Discussion – Donna Houle from the BVTC staff was asked to consult with the author of a series of American Girl books about the American Girl Doll of the Year 2015, Grace Thomas, whose story is set in the Blackstone Valley. Natalie Carter developed the idea to create a program involving the American Girl doll Grace Thomas to showcase attractions in the Blackstone Valley. Staff recently went to the only American Girl store in New England at the Natick Mall. They met with the store manager and other management regarding development of an American Girl train ride on September 19. American Girl is owned by Mattel. Other possible ideas include a boat ride on our Blackstone Valley Explorer, as well as activities at the Museum of Work and Culture, Slater Mill, McCoy Stadium, and activities on the bike path. We are currently working with American Girl on details, pricing and logistics.

Realignment of Director's Health Care Benefit – Natalie Carter reported the Bob Billington's health care benefits are transitioning from Blue Cross/Blue Shield to Medicare and because of this, there will be substantial savings in the Council's budget.

7. Other Business

Hachiko Statue – The BVTC is working with a person who wrote a book about the true story of Hachiko the dog. The story, originating from Japan, is about a dog's loyalty to his master, and is very popular in Japan. There is a Hachiko statue in the front of the Woonsocket train station.

Business Network – On May 5, 2015, the BVTC sponsored another well-attended Business Network event, organized by Geraldine Barclay-King, Program Director at the BVTC. The guest speaker was Professor Michael Sabitoni from Johnson & Wales University and his topic was "Customer Service Keys to Increase Your Business".

DEM Grants – Natalie Carter has been working with the Department of Environmental Management on Watershed Council grants.

Samuel Slater Canal Boat – During the winter the pipes on the canal boat froze. A marine surveyor is assessing the damage and repairs will be made.

I-295 Visitor Center – Keith Fayan explained the relationship with the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management, the BVTC and the I-295 Visitor Center. Mike Lafond will be operating "The Outpost" restaurant if DEM approves the lease. Roger LaPierre of Lil General Stores will consult with Mike and also with The Blackstone Shop at the Pawtucket Visitor Center to increase retail activity and profitability.

Board Vacancy - Keith Fayan will continue to act as the BVTC's attorney and will continue advising on the RI DEM/I-295 Visitor Center project. He will step down from the Board. Therefore, there is a vacancy for the position of Secretary of the Board, as well as a vacancy for the Chairman of the Governance Committee.

Helen Moroney – Helen Moroney, First Director Emeritus of the BVTC Board, passed away in March.

Audit – The BVTC will undergo an audit this year. Judy Fischbach has two proposals from auditing firms; both are \$8,500. Judy explained that the financial statements must be prepared for auditing. The result of the audit will be a management letter stating any issues which the BVTC must address. These issues must be addressed before the auditors return, usually in a year. Keith Fayan stated that the audit must be done for good governance going forward.

There being no further business, Mr. Balfour adjourned the meeting at 1:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff