

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
175 Main Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860

Corrected Minutes
July 12, 2016

Attendees:

David Balfour, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer (via phone)
Dave Richards, Secretary (via phone)
Thomas Kravitz
Debra Berardis

Absent:

Alexander Parmenidez
Courtney Iannuccilli
Mark Brodeur
Michael Gwynn
Dr. Joyce Koutsogiane
Paul Palange
Louis Yip

Also Attending:

Dr. Robert Billington, President, BVTC
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations, BVTC
Joan Loos, BVTC Staff

1. Call to Order. Mr. Balfour called the meeting to order at 12:08 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes from May 17, 2016. Tom Kravitz moved, Debra Berardis seconded, and the minutes of the May 17, 2016 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.
3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach presented the financial statements – the Balance Sheet as of May 31, 2016 and the Income Statement from July 2015 through May 31, 2016. Dave Richards moved, Tom Kravitz seconded, and the Treasurer's Report as presented by Judy was unanimously accepted.
4. Director's Report.
 - Bob reported on the Paths to Progress Committee which he formed a year ago to gather support for completing the bikeways throughout the state. The Governor's Green Economy Bond includes \$10 million for the bike paths in the state. Bob and other members of the Paths to Progress Committee will be meeting with Parag Agrawal, Director of the State Planning office about developing a state-wide bike plan for using the \$10 million. Bob emphasized that no additional funds should be spent on planning for the Blackstone Valley portion of the bike path, and that construction needs to start.
 - The Broad Street Regeneration Initiative 2.0 Committee is continuing to work well with representatives from Pawtucket, Central Falls and Cumberland to invigorate the Broad Street neighborhoods.

- The Rhode Show filmed a segment aboard The Explorer riverboat for special programming they are producing for the summer.
- Bob reviewed the upcoming programs being run by the BVTC, including the Explorer Riverboat which is operating tours from Central Falls, East Providence, Pawtucket and Woonsocket this season, the American Girl Train Ride on September 17, the Fall Foliage Train to Putnam, CT on October 22, and bike tours along the Blackstone every other Saturday from June to October.
- The Samuel Slater Canal boat is being rented out through Airbnb and is doing well with bookings every week. One of the guests was Andy Smith from the Providence Journal, who will be writing an article about his stay for the paper soon.

5. Rhode Island Room Tax Legislative Changes. Bob has been participating in the Commission for Tourism Growth in Rhode Island. The room tax formula for the different tourism regions had been changed and would have resulted in a loss of income to the BVTC. However, it was decided that the formula should be changed back to the previous formula and the BVTC will retain some of the income it expected to lose. The BVTC is working with the other state tourism regions with Commerce RI to keep a collaborative tourism effort going. A new Chief of Marketing for Rhode Island has been hired, Lara Salamano.

The BVTC has received a letter from the RIDEM stating that The Outpost, located at the I-295 Visitor Center, is illegal and must stop operation. The BVTC as well as The Outpost owner would like to be made whole from the financial losses incurred. The issue is still ongoing. The National Park Service may be interested in occupying the building.

6. Invenergy Thermal Development, LLC Energy Center Proposal. Tom Kravitz, Board member and Burrillville Town Planner, gave a general explanation of the planning process from start to finish in an effort to explain what is required of the Town and Planning Board in terms of reviewing the project as directed by the EFSB. Mr. Kravitz gave no indication whatsoever as to how he feels about the project. **Mr. Kravitz recused himself from further discussion and left the Board meeting.** Discussion continued. Bob questioned whether the BVTC should take a position on the proposed power plant, being that it could have a high ecotourism impact. The BVTC had hosted a presentation by Keep Rhode Island Beautiful, whose representatives spoke against the proposed power plan. After a lively discussion, it was felt that before the BVTC decides whether or not to take a position on the proposed power plant, more education is needed. Bob will pursue another educational session and reach out to Invenergy representatives. He will keep the Board informed about any future educational sessions. It was decided to table the issue at this time and revisit it after more education is received.

7. Adjournment. There being no further business, Dave Richards moved and Barry Mechanic seconded to adjourn. Mr. Balfour adjourned the meeting at 1:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff