

## **Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.**

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

### **Attendees:**

David Balfour, Chairman  
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman  
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer  
Dave Richards, Secretary (via phone)  
Michael Gwynn  
Dr. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane  
Paul Palange  
Louis Yip

### **Absent:**

Alexander Parmenidez  
Thomas Kravitz  
Courtney Iannuccilli  
Debra Berardis  
Mark Brodeur

### **Also Attending:**

Dr. Robert Billington, President, BVTC  
Natalie Carter, Director of Operations, BVTC  
Joan Loos, BVTC Staff  
John Taylor, Twin River  
Francisco Adames, Twin River

1. Call to Order. Bob opened the meeting at 12:05 p.m. by introducing John Taylor and Francisco Adames from Twin River Casino and Event Center. The BVTC has a long history of support from Twin River. John had asked Bob to serve on a "Yes on 1" Committee in support of the casino in Tiverton.

2. Twin River - Tiverton Casino Project. Mr. Balfour welcomed John and Francisco and introduced the members of the Board. He asked John and Francisco to explain the plans that Twin River has for Tiverton.

Mr. Taylor became Chairman of Twin River in November 2010 with a plan to grow Twin River and compete with Massachusetts. They have since acquired Newport Grand and are out-performing their biggest competitor, Foxwoods in Connecticut. It was decided to move Newport Grand to Tiverton.

Mr. Taylor explained the history of how he introduced the concept of a casino in Tiverton, what the issues were for Tiverton's residents, and how the casino will get on the ballot. The plan is to build an 80,000+ sq. ft. casino with 1,000 slot machines and 30 table games. Residents wanted a hotel and an entertainment complex. One of the residents' concerns was that a casino would ruin the fabric of the community and local streets. A "balloon test" was done to prove any signage would not be seen from the local streets. There were also traffic concerns but those concerns were alleviated with construction of a traffic roundabout.

The casino would bring revenue to the town of Tiverton as well as 550-600 jobs involved in running that facility. The revenue to the State of Rhode Island is estimated to be \$50 million to \$75 million. Twin River has agreed to take down the Newport Grand sign from the building in Newport as well as tear down that building when they leave if there is no buyer. They have received some resistance from a group of ministers; however, acceptance of gaming is at an all-time high. Twin River has increased their social media presence and will be starting television ads statewide soon.

When asked what the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council can do to help with the Tiverton casino project, it was suggested that we “like” them on Facebook as well as tell people that Twin River in Lincoln has been a good neighbor.

In regard to a hotel at Twin River in Lincoln, in the past they had been prohibited by state law from building a hotel. That has changed but estimates of costs to build were much higher, 100% higher, than anticipated. At this point they are almost ready to hire a construction firm and have gotten the costs down. The plan is for a smaller hotel with the service level of a hotel similar to a Hampton Inn (but will not be a Hampton Inn) with the ability to expand if needed. A public announcement about the hotel is expected in the next 30 days. The impact from Massachusetts is about 60% lower than expected.

3. Approval of Minutes from July 12, 2016. Joyce Koutsogiane moved, Paul Palange seconded, and the minutes of the July 12, 2016 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

4. Treasurer’s Report. Judy Fischbach reported that we are waiting to hear from our accountants regarding what kind of audit the state would like us to do as of June 30, 2016. It will either be a full audit or a compilation. It was generally felt that a full audit, at a cost of \$8,500 should be done this year with a compilation beyond that. Judy reviewed the Balance Sheet comparing June and July 2016 and the Income Statement from July 2016. Barry Mechanic moved, Joyce seconded, and the Treasurer’s Report as presented by Judy was unanimously accepted.

5. Director’s Report. Bob Billington reported the following:

- The Dragon Boat Races/Taiwan Day Festival on September 3 was a successful event with 20 teams racing and over 8,000 spectators in attendance.
- The American Girl Train Ride takes place on Saturday, September 17. Seats are still available if any Board members are interested.
- The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Annual Dinner will take place on October 6, 2016 in our Pawtucket Visitor Center and will be a local-to-table menu with awards ceremony and silent auction.
- The Providence-Worcester Railroad has been sold to the largest freight railroad in the world. We do not know at this point how this will affect our use of the train for excursions.

6. Invenergy Clear River Energy Center. There was continued discussion of whether or not to support the construction of the power plant in Burrillville. The Center would create 25 permanent jobs and many temporary construction jobs and will generate revenue for the town of Burrillville. However, there are many environmental groups that oppose this. Bob feels strongly that our Board should take a stand to oppose the construction of the Energy Center. Paul Palange stated that he would abstain from a vote of support or non-support until after he spoke with his publisher. Bob created a position paper stating opposition to the Burrillville Power Plant because it is not consistent with our mission and the sustainable tourism work the Council has done for over 30 years. Dave Richards felt that the Board should support Bob's position and that the Board should take a stand against the power plant in support of the town and the people of Burrillville. Barry Mechanic moved that the Board of Directors oppose the construction of a new power plant in Burrillville. Joyce Koutsogiane seconded. The Board voted to oppose the power plant in Burrillville with one abstention.

7. New Board Members. Bob asked that Board members be thinking of potential candidates to add to our Board of Directors.

8. Election of Officers.

Dave Balfour – Chairman – (term through 2017)  
Barry Mechanic – Vice Chairman  
Dave Richards – Secretary  
Judy Fischbach – Treasurer

The slate of officers as above was presented. Judy Fischbach stated she would like to stay on the Board but will step down as Treasurer as soon as a replacement is found. Paul Palange moved, Barry Mechanic seconded to accept the officers of the Board as presented and the motion was passed unanimously.

9. Adjournment. There being no further business, Paul Palange moved to adjourn the meeting, Barry Mechanic seconded and the motion to adjourn was unanimously approved. The meeting was adjourned at 1:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff