

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
175 Main Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
November 15, 2016

Attendees:

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

Absent:

Alexander Parmenidez
Thomas Kravitz
Louis Yip
Debra Berardis
Mark Brodeur

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 12:15 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes from September 13, 2016. Dave Richards moved, Joyce Koutsogiane seconded, and the minutes of the September 13, 2016 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.
3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach reviewed the Balance Sheet, Income Statement and Income Statement By Class. The effect of Polar Express ticket sales on the financial statements was discussed. Dave Richards moved, Mike Gwynn seconded, and the Treasurer's Report as presented by Judy was unanimously accepted.
4. Director's Report. Bob Billington reported the following:
 - The Outpost on I-295 has closed. Bob reviewed expenses incurred by the BVTC and Mike Lafond. We are working on being reimbursed by DEM or DOT. Our volunteers are in the building providing visitor services. The National Park Service may be taking over the building at some point.
 - Polar Express has moved into the Woonsocket Depot into the portion of the building formerly occupied by the National Park Service, through an agreement with Boston Surface Railroad Company, which is leasing the building.

- The Green Economy Bond was passed in the recent election with 65% voter approval. Our interest, from a tourism and quality of life perspective, is the \$10 million that will go toward completing the bike paths throughout the state
- The Providence-Worcester Railroad is being sold to the Genesee & Wyoming Railroad. Bob explained the potential effect of the sale on our rail excursions. At this point our program schedule for 2017 stays intact. We will need to negotiate for 2018 programs. Our possible rail excursion programs for 2017 include:

February – Fire & Ice in Putnam, CT
May – Woonsocket to Mystic
May – Providence to Worcester – National Park History Train
September – American Girl
October 7 – Putnam to Woonsocket for Autumnfest
October 21 – Woonsocket to Putnam – Fall Train

- Our annual dinner on October 6 in the Pawtucket Visitor Center went well. We recognized several community leaders who have supported us, as well as many farms and local food establishments. Mr. Balfour noted there was a noise issue during the awards portion of the program.
 - The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council would like to move their offices to Central Falls Landing. There is a plan for the property there to be renovated.
5. New Board Member Discussion. Bob would like to build the Board to a greater number. He also noted that Judy Fischbach would like to step down as Treasurer. Jackie Boudreau was suggested to be on the Board and is someone who could act as Treasurer.
6. New Business
- a. Hotel Tax Formula. Bob reported that Evan Smith of Discover Newport proposed not returning to the new formula for room tax distribution to the tourism districts. A new commission has been formed by Rep. Carson in Newport, who believes that the hotel tax formula should return to what it was in the past. Evan felt that the money generated in the tourism districts is better spent within the districts, rather than funds going statewide. Dave Richards felt that we should support going back to the “old” way of distributing room tax income. Barry agreed that the tourism districts are better off controlling that money.
 - b. Show House Fundraiser. There was brief discussion regarding pursuing a show house fund raiser, an idea proposed by Board member, Joyce Koutsogiane.
 - c. Audit. It was decided that a full audit would be done in the coming year.
 - d. Director’s Compensation. Bob and Joan left the room while there was discussion of the Director’s compensation. Results of the executive session can be found at Financial Management Services.

7. Adjournment. There being no further business, Dave Richards moved and Mike Gwynn seconded to adjourn the meeting. The motion pass unanimously and the meeting was adjourned by Mr. Balfour at 1:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff