

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Pawtucket, RI

March 10, 2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by Chairman David Balfour.

Attendees:

David Balfour, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman (via phone)
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Keith Fayan, Secretary
Michael Gwynn, Member
Thomas Kravitz, Member
Lori Urso, Member
Louis Yip, Member

Absent:

Courtney Iannuccilli, Member
Debra Fournier, 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, Recording Secretary

2. Approval of the January 13, 2015 Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Tom Kravitz **moved**, Judy Fischbach **seconded** and the Minutes were unanimously approved as presented.

3. Treasurer's Report

Judy Fischbach presented the Treasurer's Report, reviewing the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council financial reports for December 2014. She made note that differences between year-to-date actual and year-to-date budgeted were due to timing of the reports, but that everything is accounted for. Lori Urso **moved** to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented, Tom Kravitz **seconded** and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

There was discussion with accountants Sparrow and Sparrow regarding payment methodology for Polar Express staffing. In addition, Bob, Gayle and Natalie are working on establishing a policy regarding employees' accruing compensation hours. Keith and Barry offered to review the policy.

Judy reported that she has received one quote to date of \$8,500 from Ledoux, Petruska & Company for an audit planned for June 2016. More quotes are forthcoming.

4. President's Report

Bob Billington reported as follows:

Room taxes are tracking well for 2014 with an appropriate growth curve.

We have reached out and met with North Providence and East Providence regarding expansion of the Tourism District.

Auclair and Auclair are retiring – Oak Leaf Wealth Management will take over our accounts.

Alexandra Curtis was crowned by the Governor as this year's Cherry Blossom Princess on February 27. The Cherry Run Road Race will be held on April 26th, ribbon cuttings will be on April 25.

James Toomey, Marketing Director has recently developed 3 new brochures in an effort to get our marketing material out into the community.

Bob commented on the Blackstone Bikeway Construction in Woonsocket and Providence.

Staff members took a field trip to Hooksett, New Hampshire last week to meet with NHDOT and NHED regarding the construction of their two Visitor Centers to be used as models for our work at the I-295 Visitor's Center. We are meeting this week again with RIDEM and two vendors with a plan. BVTC may have to exercise its lease position to work as an umbrella to bring in two businesses.

We have taken the responsibility to keep the Visitors' Center in Pawtucket open during the winter months by pushing hard on rentals of the space and relaxing rental fees on the office and the Visitors' Center store, The Blackstone Shop.

We are getting ready to work with Quebec on the North American Francophone Cities Network – an idea which BVTC presented to them about 8 years ago.

We introduced the Council General of Japan to the statue of Hachiko in Woonsocket.

We have had several meetings with the Mayor of Pawtucket regarding the move of the Pawtucket Red Sox from Pawtucket. The Mayor has asked us to help with a social media campaign.

We testified on the Twin River hotel proposal.

The BVTC hosted Senator Reed and Congressman Cicilline on February 17 to welcome the new Superintendent of the Blackstone National Historical Park, Megan Kish.

We are working with Providence and Worcester Railroad and Rail Events on seeking a handicapped accessible train car in 2015 for Fall Foliage trips and The Polar Express.

The 30th Rhode Island Statewide Historic Preservation Conference is coming to Glocester, RI.

We are waiting for a final contract with the Providence & Worcester Railroad regarding The Polar Express 2015.

We have found a local cookie vendor in Cranston to produce an allergen-friendly cookie for the Polar Express.

We are continuing our work with RIDOT regarding river access along the Blackstone River.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was represented at the AAA Northeast Travel Marketplace at Gillette Stadium this weekend – a huge success.

The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council was represented at the BuyLocal Show in Woonsocket this weekend.

Keith Fayan **moved**, Tom Kravitz **seconded** and the President's Report was unanimously accepted.

5. Continuing Business

Governance Committee Report - Keith Fayan presented the name of Alexander Parmenidez for consideration as a new Board member, serving an initial 1-year term with the possibility of extending to a 3-year term. On behalf of the Governance Committee, Keith Fayan **moved** to accept Alexander Parmenidez as a new Board member as of the May 12, 2015 Board meeting, Tom Kravitz **seconded** and the motion was unanimously approved.

Long Range Plan – Gayle Gifford proposed a new version of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council's mission statement, as follows: To inspire the development of sustainable tourism in the Blackstone Valley. There was discussion of the wording among Board members. Gayle reports that she continues to work with BVTC staff regarding strategic planning and programs. The next program to be discussed will be the Explorer river boat on March 18 at 12 noon in the BVTC conference room. Board members are invited to attend any of the meetings with Gayle and the BVTC staff.

6. New Business

Planning for the Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament on June 8, 2015 is underway. Board members are encouraged to participate and suggest foursomes for the event.

7. Adjournment

There being no further business, Lori Urso **moved** to adjourn the meeting, Keith Fayan **seconded** and the meeting was adjourned at 1:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff
Recording Secretary