

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.

Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
175 Main Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
March 21, 2017

Attendees:

David Balfour, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman (via phone)
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer (via phone)
Michael Gwynn
Louis Yip
Debra Berardis
Dr. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane
Paul Palange (via phone)
Thomas Kravitz

Absent:

Alexander Parmenidez
Dave Richards, Secretary
Mark Brodeur
Courtney Iannuccilli

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 12:06 p.m.
2. Approval of Minutes from January 17, 2017. Tom Kravitz moved, Joyce Koutsogiane seconded, and the minutes from the January 17, 2017 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.
3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach reviewed the Balance Sheet as of January 31, 2017 and the Income Statement from July 2016 through January 2017. Deb Berardis moved, Tom Kravitz seconded, and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

Natalie explained the Profit and Loss Statement from the 2016 Polar Express, showing a net income of \$251,291.80.

4. Director's Report:
 - Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide – Paul Palange, with help from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council staff, is developing a Blackstone Valley Visitor Guide. It will be 32 pages long and include information on: Adventure, Accommodations, Performing Arts and Theatre, Wineries/Breweries, Galleries, Family Attractions, Public Golf Courses, Bike Paths, Hiking, Boating and Fishing, Kayaking and Canoeing, Campgrounds, Historic Sites, and Chicken Family Style restaurants. Also included will be a calendar of events and stories on such things as The Samuel Slater canal boat, the breweries of the Blackstone Valley and Family Fun. Bob will be proofing the guide on March 27 and publication date is scheduled for April 18. Thanks were sent to Paul and staff for their work on behalf of the Blackstone Valley and the Tourism Council.

- Fund Raising Report – Geraldine Barclay-King has developed sponsorship packets to increase the number of sponsorships for BVTC events. The goal is to receive \$80,000 in sponsorships. Year-to-date \$25,000 has been received. Geri has several leads and prospects with which we can use the help of Board members to contact. She distributed a list of these prospects and asked Board members to let her know if they can put her in touch with any of these prospects. Geri explained the information found in the sponsorship packets and also explained that we are using a sophisticated fund raising program called “Green Light” to track and manage our fund raising prospect list.
- Golf Tournament – Amanda Wood spoke about the 14th Annual Blackstone Valley Heritage Golf Tournament. It is a great opportunity to network with other business people. We have 9½ foursomes registered so far. Amanda asked the Board members for help in finding more foursomes as well as donations for the silent auction and raffles. Donations should be received by June 1. Non-golfers can come for the dinner for \$40.00. A business can sponsor a tee sign for \$100. Navigant is an original sponsor and they continue their support this year. Steve Aylward, formerly of Lexus of Warwick and now of Toyota in Smithfield, has agreed to have Toyota of Smithfield be the hole-in-one sponsor this year, as Lexus has been in the past.
- Regional Hotel Tax – Bob Billington explained that the Town/City Council Presidents of the nine Blackstone Valley towns have received a draft Resolution from the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council asking the Town/City Council to adopt the Resolution which supports keeping the hotel tax formula as it is currently, as this formula is beneficial for the Tourism Council, especially since we have lost revenue from several Blackstone Valley hotels, either fully or partially, while being renovated. If the formula is changed, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council stands to lose \$40,000 in revenue.

Deb Berardis noted that a new hotel is being built across from her Hampton Inn and Suites in Smithfield. It will be a Home2 Suites by Hilton and will be an 84-bed extended stay hotel, a property of Rudrah Hospitality of North Attleboro, MA.

- The Bikeway – Bob Billington reported that \$4 million is available from the Green Economy Bond to continue work on the bike paths. Bob asked that the planners to use money in their towns, as the money will go farther than allowing the state to manage the funds. The money will be available to spend as of July 1. The goal is to show progress on the bike paths by next year, so we can ask for another bond in 2018 to continue progress.
- There will be a round table meeting highlighting national tourism issues at the Visitor Center on April 12 with Congressman David Cicilline.
- Mr. Yip has been working with the City of Central Falls on the refurbishment of Central Falls Landing. The Tourism Council would like to move its offices there in 2018.

- Pawtucket Red Sox – McCoy Stadium Study – Bob has spoken to Larry Lucchino who has assured Bob that the team would like to stay in Pawtucket. Mike Gwynn shared that two sites are being considered for construction of a new stadium – the Apex building and the Tidewater area. Mr. Lucchino has been working with Mayor Grebien.
 - Donna Kaehler of the BVTC staff runs the Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful program. On April 20, she is doing an Earth Day presentation at the State House.
5. New Board Member. Mike Zhang of Johnson & Wales University is being considered as a new Board member. Bob and Mr. Yip have spoken with him about being on the Board as we would like to strengthen our relationship with Johnson & Wales University. We would also like to have someone from Amica be on our Board of Directors. Bob is recommending that Mike Zhang be invited to be on our Board of Directors. Tom Kravitz moved to accept Mike Zhang as a member of the Board of Directors, Mike Gwynn seconded the motion. It was agreed that there was no need to meet the candidate, and it was voted unanimously to ask Mike Zhang to serve on Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors. It was also agreed that we should pursue someone from Amica to be on the Board of Directors.
6. Other Business
- A new Visitor Center in the Hopkinton area is not being constructed and the \$9 million for that project may go back to the federal government. However, it is hoped that those funds could go toward upgrading the Richmond rest area.
- We have closed our restaurant at the I-295 Visitor Center. We had invested about \$100,000 in our time over 3½ years to get the restaurant operational again when it was shut down by the federal government. We have been offered \$18,000 in restitution, while the vendor has been offered \$200,000 plus equipment. Our attorney, Keith Fayan, has asked for clarification on how the \$18,000 figure was determined. We are asking for lease payments for the full lease of 30 months.
- The I-295 building could be used as the headquarters for the National Park.
- Joyce Koutsogiane is working to create a designer show house event as a fund raiser for the BVTC. Ideally, we are looking for a site with an unoccupied house and an open area for parking. If a house is located in the Blackstone Valley, area designers would be invited to showcase their design talents in the house. Current sites under consideration include Franklin Farm and the Rueben Mason House. Geraldine Barclay-King and Donna Houle from the BVTC staff have been working with Joyce on the project, which would bring visitors to the area. It is suggested that the event take place on the first 2 weekends of October 2017.
 - Mr. Yip introduced the BVTC to a student from China that we have hired part-time. She is currently helping us with internet marketing. We are trying to get her sponsored through Mr. Yip so that she can continue working part-time with us.

7. Adjournment. There being no further business, Joyce Koutsogiane moved to adjourn the meeting, and Mike Gwynn seconded the motion. All were in favor and Mr. Balfour adjourned the meeting at 1:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff