

Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
175 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI
Thursday, April 30, 2020
Via Zoom Meeting

Attendees:

Dave Richards, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Dr. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane, Secretary
Thomas Kravitz
Michael Gwynn
Kathy Roberts

Absent:

Louis Yip
Mark Brodeur

Also Attending:

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

1. Call to Order. There being a quorum present, Dave Richards called the meeting to order at 11:11 a.m.
2. Approval of Minutes from February 25, 2020. Kathy Roberts indicated that she was at the February 25 meeting by phone but was not listed on the attendance list. It was suggested that in the paragraph regarding the William Blackstone statue, the word "Indian." should be replaced by "Native Americans". Mike Gwynn moved to accept the corrected minutes from the February 25, 2020 Board of Directors meeting. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane seconded the motion and the minutes of the February 25, 2020 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented with correction.
3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach presented the Treasurer's Report. She explained the Balance Sheet as of March 2020 as compared to the previous year. She answered questions and reviewed the effect of not selling tickets to any events so far this year.

Judy explained the Income Statement for July 2019 through March 2020, budget vs. actual. There was concern about the impact on the Council's budget with the uncertainty of income from train trips, boat trips and hotel tax. There was discussion on the proposed budget for next year with the uncertainty of the situation regarding the coronavirus and the effect on our usual activities. Bob briefly shared his thoughts about the possibility of proceeding with our Polar Express event. Barry Mechanic moved to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented, Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane seconded the motion and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously approved.

4. President's Report

a. Payroll Protection Program. The Tourism Council was fortunate to obtain a PPP Loan and staff will remain intact until the end of June with these funds. He thanked Dave Richards, Judy Fischbach, our bookkeeper Kevin and Natalie Carter for their quick action and diligence to secure these funds.

b. Tourism Council Events. There is concern about whether our usual events – Dragon Boats Races, River Tours and River Classroom, Fall Train and Polar Express - will be able to take place this year as well as concern about the progress of Central Falls Landing, due to the effect of coronavirus and social distancing.

c. The Woonsocket Depot. Another legal proceeding will be taking place on May 23 between the Boston Surface Railroad Company and the RI Department of Transportation.

d. Polar Express or Christmas Event. The Tourism Council is beginning to investigate other Christmas events to raise funds if Polar Express on the train isn't possible this year because of the need for social distancing. We are determining if an event at the Rustic Drive-In in North Smithfield where guests stay in their cars might be an option. We are also discussing having a PE conductor (and/or other PE characters, such as chefs or Santa) make visits to people's homes, within a certain number of miles, with Polar Express gifts. Joyce Hindle-Koutsogiane suggested looking into doing an event at McCoy Stadium for Christmas.

e. Culinaria Events. We have created a Bingo game to support the food and drink vendors of the Blackstone Valley. We are also planning regular Culinaria Live events on Facebook Live to promote restaurants offering take-out by filming a chef creating a meal from their restaurant. Board members were invited to suggest restaurants that might be interested in participating in Culinaria Live.

f. Blackstone Valley E-Newsletter. Our weekly newsletter now highlights activities that can be done at or near home in the Blackstone Valley at this time of social distancing.

g. Flower Donation. Ocean State Job Lot has donated hundreds of artificial flowers. Donna Kaehler, our Keep Blackstone Beautiful/Keep America Beautiful coordinator, had planned to use them in a decorating contest with Blackstone Valley School for Earth Day. Because Earth Day activities were cancelled due to the coronavirus, Donna reached out to Blackstone Valley towns and the flowers will be used to decorate food trays for Meals on Wheels.

h. Canoes/Kayaks. The Tourism Council is also working with Ocean State Job Lot to obtain canoes or kayaks for our Central Falls Landing site.

i. Future Planning. Bob will be attending an upcoming meeting with Commerce RI to discuss the effect of the coronavirus on the tourism industry. Natalie will be working to create a budget for next year to present at the next Board meeting.

5. Next Board Meeting. It was agreed that the next Board meeting will be on Thursday, May 28 at 11 a.m. via Zoom.
6. Adjournment. There being no further business, Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane moved to adjourn, Mike Gwynn seconded and the motion passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned by Dave Richards at 12:01 pm.

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff



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