

**Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.**

Board of Directors Meeting  
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council  
175 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI  
Monday, June 14, 2021, 12 noon  
Via Zoom

**Attendees:**

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

**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, Chairman Dave Richards called the meeting to order at 12:09 pm. Dave requested to amend agenda item #7 – Woonsocket Depot Update under the President's Report. He requested that the Board discuss and possibly support that a lease be entered into with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation and the BVTC for use of the property at 1 Depot Square for our Polar Express event. Tom Kravitz moved that the agenda be amended to include such discussion, Mike Gwynn seconded, and the motion was passed unanimously.
2. Minutes from the March 25, 2021 Meeting. Kathy Roberts moved to accept the minute of the March 25, 2021 Board of Directors meeting as presented. Mike Gwynn seconded, and the minutes of the March 25, 2021 meeting were unanimously approved.
3. Treasurer's Report. Treasurer Judy Fischbach reviewed the Balance Sheet as of May 31, 2021 compared to May 31, 2020, as well as the Income Statement, Budget vs. Actual, July 2020 to May 2021 and as compared to the previous year. Judy explained the effect of not doing the Polar Express event has on Income and Expenses, as well as the effect of the decreased lodging tax income because of COVID-19. She pointed out the increase in grant income based on Natalie's efforts to secure as many grants as possible. Marketing expense increased as would be expected under the circumstances of a pandemic. Natalie commented that she is waiting for the PPP loan forgiveness for the second draw to be received. Our first PPP loan has already been forgiven. Dave Richards moved to accept the Treasurer's Report, Joyce Hindle-Koutsogiane seconded and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

4. Budget for 2021-2022. Judy reviewed the proposed BVTC budget for 2021-2022. The main driver of the budget is The Polar Express event. All questions were answered and Dave Richards moved to accept the proposed budget. Kathy Roberts seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

5. President's Report.

Paul Palange Passing. Bob reminded the Board members that Paul Palange passed away in April. He has been in touch with Paul's wife Andria often. We are in the process of interviewing to fill his position of fund development, selling ads, promoting events and getting sponsorships and contributions.

Luke Charitable Foundation The Luke Charitable Foundation has given the BVTC a grant of \$20,000 and has asked that we try to match the grant. Bob asked Board members share the information to generate possible donations. The \$20,000 grant will be used for our Kayak Program (\$10,000) and to repair and improve the Samuel Slater Canal boat (\$10,000).

Annual Meeting. Because of COVID-19 we did not have gather in person for our annual meeting in 2020. Instead the BVTC staff created a video presentation and offered a bag of BVTC memorabilia worth \$300 to anyone purchasing a ticket to the virtual video meeting for \$50.00. That was very popular and we have continued to sell other memorabilia as we pack up our office in preparation for a move to Central Falls Landing.

Visitor Center Reopening. The Pawtucket Visitor Center was reopened a week ago. It had been closed for 14 months due to COVID-19. RIPTA had asked if the Visitor Center could be reopened as a RIPTA bus passenger waiting area, as the former waiting area in the building is being rented by another business, and worked out the plan with the city of Pawtucket. We are now staffing the Visitor Center 7 days a week from 9 am to 5 pm for both bus passengers and visitors.

East Providence Update. There is legislation in the House of Representatives now that would make East Providence part of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council region. If the legislation passes, we will receive funds to help promote the East Providence area.

Woonsocket Depot Update. The RI Department of Transportation has developed a lease for our use of the building for our Polar Express event and storage of our materials. While there are still some small details to be worked out, the rent will be half of what we had been paying, but the insurance cost will go up. After discussion, Dave Richards moved to support Bob signing the lease with the RI Department of

Transportation, once the details have been finalized. Tom Kravitz seconded and the motion was passed unanimously, that:

RESOLVED, The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council Board of Directors supports Robert Billington, President of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to sign and enter into a lease with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation for rental space at 1 Depot Square in Woonsocket, Rhode Island.

Central Falls Landing. Bob stated that the construction continues on the building at Central Falls Landing, and we hope to be able to move in late September/early October. In response to a question regarding if the project received state historic tax credits, Bob stated that although the project is eligible for tax credits, the city is not pursuing tax credits for the project.

Ghost Army Tank. The Ghost Army Tank was on display at the National D-Day Museum and it has just been returned. It provided a good opportunity to educate people about Woonsocket, where the original tanks were built. Joyce asked if the Ghost Army Tank would be in the Arnold Mills Parade. Bob will talk to Mike Martin on the BVTC staff to find out where the tank will be going next.

Kayak Program. The City of Central Falls asked if the Tourism Council would manage and teach a Kayak Program if the City of Central Falls bought the equipment. We are in the process of creating the program and training instructors. Our goal is to teach 200 children from Central Falls to paddle. We have a total of 18 kayaks (single and double) and canoes. We would also like to have a rental program for the general public.

New Board Member Consideration. Adrianna Carter, Director of Sales at the Residence Inn by Marriott in Lincoln, is eager to join our Board. Bob would like to interview her with Dave Richards. All agreed that Bob and Dave should set up the interview.

6. Other Business. Mike Gwynn asked if the Tourism Council is planning to do anything in memory of Paul Palange to show that Paul was an important part of the team. Bob said that we are doing a clean-up in Paul's memory, but we will consider other ideas.

There being no further business, Joyce Hindle-Koutsogiane moved to adjourn the meeting. Dave Richards seconded the motion and the motion was unanimously passed. The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.



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