

**Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.**  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council  
175 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI  
Wednesday, March 9, 12 noon  
Via Zoom

**Attendees:**

Dave Richards, Chairman  
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer (via Zoom)  
Dr. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane, Secretary  
Michael Gwynn (via Zoom)  
Lee Eskilsen

**Absent:**

Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman  
Kathy Roberts  
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, Chairman Dave Richards called the meeting to order at 12:19 p.m.
2. Approval of Notes from December 14, 2021. Joyce Hindle-Koutsogiane moved to accept the notes from the December 14, 2021 Board of Directors meeting. Mike Gwynn seconded the motion and the notes of the December 14, 2021 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.
3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach presented the Treasurer's Report. A discrepancy was noted in the dates on the Balance Sheet, so that document was not reviewed. Judy explained the Income Statement for July 2021 through January 2022 budget vs. actual and as compared to the previous year. Judy explained the positive effect on the Income Statement of Polar Express ticket sales. She also noted the \$972,456.85 received in grant payments and thanked Natalie for her tireless work on the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant (SVOG) and other grants which BVTC received. The SVOG grant money is specifically to be used for Polar Express related production expenses. Judy also noticed the increasing Lodging Tax. Natalie also shared that the Ocean State Charities Trust awarded us \$10,000 to be used toward our new office furnishings.

Lee Eskilsen moved to accept the treasurer's report as presented, Dave Richards seconded the motion, and the treasurer's report was unanimously approved as presented.

4. President's Report

Dave Richard asked Board members to pay special attention to Bob's President's Report concerning the Central Falls lease agreement, as members will be asked to vote on the lease agreement today.

Central Falls Landing Lease. Two leases have been negotiated for our space at 1420 Broad Street, Central Falls with Central Falls Landing LLC, 521 Roosevelt Avenue, Central Falls. One space is approximately 1,500 square feet for the purpose of a River Classroom and the second space is 2,174 square feet for the purpose of the Headquarters of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. The Board is being asked to approve a five-year lease at \$2,717 a month for the first five years and \$3,035 a month for the second five years as the Headquarters space, as well as a lease for the River Classroom at \$1,875 a month for the first five years and \$2,095 a month for the second five years. After ten years the Board would have the option to negotiate a new lease. The lease will commence as of February 2022, since we moved into the space in February. There will be no common area fees charged for either lease. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council will maintain its third floor facilities, mechanicals and utilities and will insure the office at the required rate. The Board is requested to authorize Chairman Dave Richards or President, Robert Billington to sign the lease after review by the Council's corporate attorney, Keith Fayan.

Marina Flannery Case. Allegations of discrimination were made by a former employee. The case reached the State Commission on Human Rights as well as the Federal entity and it was found by both that the case has no merit. The case was dropped as of January 5, 2022.

William Blackstone Monument. There were accusations by the community and some Native Americans that public money shouldn't have been spent in the building and instillation of the William Blackstone monument in Pawtucket. Mayor Grebien hired a firm to review all transactions related to the monument and it was found that the City of Pawtucket properly followed every procedure and policy regarding the monument.

SVOG Grant. Funds received by the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council from the Shuttered Venue Operators Grant will be used to create a Village Marketplace at this year's Polar Express. We are working with a company to build wooden sheds to be set up outside the Polar Express Depot and will invite vendors to use them. This will expand the space outside the Depot for passengers to reduce crowding. We also plan to work again with the students at Mount St. Charles who produced the Polar Express Prologue in 2021. RIDOT will allow us to keep the wooden sheds on their property throughout the year.

Dave Richards moved to approve the President's Report, Joyce Hindle-Koutsogiane seconded the motion. There were questions raised by Board members regarding access to the docks at Central Falls, which Bob stated are the property of the City of Central Falls, the parking spaces allocated for BVTC business and whether we can have

a certain number of spaces allocated to us. Bob shared that the Mayor of Central Falls is talking with the Madeira Club to be able to use their parking lots. He also stated that there is street parking available as well as parking across the street from Cumberland City Hall. There was discussion regarding insurance of the other tenant(s) in the building in the event there is damage caused to our property by them. It was also suggested that we develop a plan to be able to pay the leases if the Polar Express was not able to occur. Natalie explained that a plan was in place regarding this. It was agreed that Bob will speak to the Landlord regarding the parking and insurance issues.

Following discussion and once all questions were answered, the President's Report was unanimously approved, including approval to enter into leases described above for the Central Falls property as described by Bob.

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

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff

**ADDENDUM:** Bob Billington has confirmed with our insurance company that our spaces at 1420 Broad Street in Central Falls are covered for the required amounts and that our insurance company would handle with the other tenant's insurance company should our space be damaged through the fault of the other tenant(s).

Bob will also speak with the Landlord about designated parking spaces for the use of the BVTC.