Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Inc.
Board of Directors Meeting
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
175 Main Street, Pawtucket, RI
Wednesday, June 27, 2018

Attendees:
David Balfour, Chairman
Barry Mechanic, Vice Chairman
Dave Richards, Secretary (via phone)
Judy Fischbach, Treasurer
Dr. Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane
Paul Palange
Louis Yip
Michael Zhang

Absent:
Debra Berardis
Michael Gwynn
Thomas Kravitz
Mark Brodeur

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

1. Call to Order. While waiting for Mr. Balfour to arrive, Vice Chairman Barry Mechanic called the meeting to order at 12:12 p.m.

2. Approval of Minutes from April 24, 2018. Barry Mechanic moved, Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane seconded, and the minutes from the April 24, 2018 Board meeting were unanimously approved as presented.

3. Treasurer's Report. Judy Fischbach reviewed and explained the financials as of the end of May 2018, including the Balance Sheet as of May 31, 2018, the Income Statement July 2017 through May 2018 (Budget vs. Actual) and the Income Statement July 2017 through May 2018 vs. the Previous Year. Judy answered questions about the reports, including the effect of Advance Ticket Sales on the financials.

Also discussed and explained by Natalie and Bob was a chart showing the Hotel Tax income from previous years to the present.

Paul Palange moved, Joyce Hindle Koutsogiane seconded and the Treasurer's Report was unanimously accepted as presented.

4. Setting of Board Meeting Calendar for Fiscal Year 2018-2019. It was suggested that Board meeting be held on Tuesdays or Wednesdays. After discussion it was agreed that the Board meetings for fiscal year 2018-2019 will be held every other month beginning in August 2018 on the second Tuesday of the month.
5. **President’s Report.**

**Hotel Room Tax** - Bob explained the effect of the hotel room tax change on the tourism districts. The room tax received by the tourism districts is changing from 42% of 5% to 45% of 5%. That should generate about $11,000 more for the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, but for the larger districts with more hotels, it generates much greater income.

Two new hotels will soon be opening up in the Blackstone Valley. The hotel at Twin River is scheduled to open in August 2018, and a Home2 Suites by Hilton is scheduled to open on Douglas Pike in Smithfield at the end of September 2018. In addition, plans have recently been announced to develop a Marriott Residence Inn in Lincoln between the Courtyard Marriott and the Lincoln Mall on Rt. 116.

**Golf Tournament** - The 13th Annual Blackstone Heritage Golf Tournament was held on June 11 and was a great success. Congratulations to Board member Mike Zhang’s team who won the tournament. Navigant Credit Union was the naming sponsor and their continued support is appreciated. New this year was the participation of Professional World Long Driver, Rob Tiettmeyer, who helped us raise funds through Charity Golf International. Golfers who made a donation to benefit the BVTC’s environmental education programs could have Rob tee off for them on the 14th hole. Golfers had the opportunity to win a golf getaway to Pebble Beach. Also new this year was our guest emcee, Alana Cerrone, from ABC6 News.

**Blackstone Valley Bikeway News** - Bob has been spending time creating a “Circle Blackstone” concept so that bikers can cycle through all nine Blackstone Valley towns. This a mostly on-road route but the vision is to have an off-road route in the future. There is construction going on now connecting the bike path in Cold Spring Park in Woonsocket with North Smithfield. The Green Economy Bond includes $5 million for the bikeway program. The Bond will be voted on in November. We are working with biking supporters in the rest of the state on a holistic plan to bike Rhode Island.

**Grace Note Farm** – Grace Note Farm has developed a monthly concert series through 2018, and the BVTC has been supporting them through zoning and food issues.

**Spring Lake** – We have arranged for “The Rhode Show” to do live shots for their show on Friday, June 29 at Spring Lake Beach and Arcade in Burrillville.

**Fam Tour** – Bob and BVTC staff took representatives from NAIL, the State’s advertising team, and members of Commerce RI and the Tourism Office on a day-long tour of the Blackstone Valley. Bob mentioned a recent editorial that appeared in the Providence Journal regarding the state’s tourism campaign.

**Employee Reviews** – Bob stated that BVTC employee reviews are being conducted now and will be completed by July 1.
Dragon Boat Support – Lt. Gov. Dan McKee was instrumental in garnering the support of Formosa Plastics in New Jersey for new dragon boats. These boats are smaller than what we are currently using, holding 10-12 passengers compared to the current 23-passenger boats and will make it easier to get teams together for the races. These boats will be used in the 2019 Dragon Boat Races.

Genesee & Wyoming/Polar Express Contract – In an effort to get a fully executed contract for our Polar Express train event, Bob visited the G & W office in Darien, Connecticut. The fully executed contract was received in our office shortly thereafter. Bob is working on running a train excursion involving the Isle Brewer’s Guild with the train stopping at the future location of the new Pawtucket-Central Falls train station, but that is still a work in progress.

PawSox Update – We do not want to lose the economic potential of having the PawSox in Pawtucket. We are talking with the Northern Rhode Island Chamber of Commerce, lobbyists and others to make sure the team stays in Pawtucket and a new stadium is built at the Apex site.

Polar Express 2018 – BVTC staff has already begun working on staffing and improvements for Polar Express 2018. Joyce asked about having Polar Express chefs at the Cumberland July 4th Arnold Mills Parade, and BVTC staff will arrange that.

Paul Palange moved, Dave Richards seconded and the President’s Report was accepted as presented.

6. Remuneration for the Tourism Council President. There was discussion of an increase in the Council President’s remuneration. There has been no increase since 2016. Dave Richards moved to approve a 7% increase, Mike Zhang seconded and it was unanimously approved to grant the 7% increase. Judy recommended that the remuneration issue be on the agenda every year.

7. Other Business.

William Blackstone Society. Mr. Balfour reported that The William Blackstone Society members have nominated and approved two new members for induction into the Society. They are Denise Panichas, Executive Director of the Samaritans of Rhode Island organization, whose mission is suicide prevention, and renowned architect, designer and artist Morris Nathanson. Mr. Balfour thanked Mr. Yip for hosting the nominating meeting at The China Inn.
Annual Meeting. The BVTC Annual Meeting will be held on October 3 at Twin River. It will be a lunch meeting, rather than our usual evening meeting. We will be featuring the State’s “outward facing” tourism campaign and attendees will be able to see and hear about the ads and promotions being created to promote tourism in the State of Rhode Island.

8. Adjournment. There being no further business, Paul Palange moved, Dave Richards seconded, and it was unanimously agreed to adjourn. The meeting was adjourned by Mr. Balfour at 1:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan Loos, BVTC Staff