

**VISITORS SERVICE BUREAU**  
PUBLIC MEETING  
Judge Welsh Room, Town Hall  
Provincetown MA

**TUESDAY, MARCH 19, 2018**

Members Present: Richard Murray (RM), Chair, PGB; Lesley Marchessault (LM), Vice Chair, Arts Com.; Regina Cassidy (RC), Women Innkeepers; Jay Gurewitsch (JG); Andrea Sawyer (AS); Susan Avellar (SA);

Others Present: Nina McCormack (NM), Assistant Tourism Director; David Panagore (DP), Town Manager; Josee Young (JY), Finance Director; Jody O'Neil (JON), Recording Secretary.

Excused: Bob Sanborn; Anthony Fuccillo (AF), Tourism Director

The meeting was called to order by RM at 10:00 am; introduced NM to her first meeting as Assistant Tourism Director.

**Free Cash**

RM referenced David Panagore (DP)'s anticipated arrival at today's meeting to discuss the 200k Pilgrim Landing Park budget item on the Warrant for the April 2<sup>nd</sup> Town Meeting, as well as JG's concerns regarding the Warrant and monies.

NM responded that there were monies allocated to various things, but not a figure on Free Cash. RM explained that Free Cash unspent by the end of Town Meeting goes back into the pot, per the Board of Selectmen (BOS).

- 1. PUBLIC STATEMENTS** – Five minutes maximum. Board members are not obliged to respond to public statements.

**PBG**

Robin Lapidus (RL), Executive Director of the Provincetown Business Guild, reported on the analysis done on a new website which went live May 31, 2017; have learned that traffic is pretty balanced between men and women; skews from young to old, and not all older white men as has been suggested; noted PBG has a strong foothold with citizens of Massachusetts who use the website regularly.

RL stated there are dry and live markets available; that the average amount of time people spend on the site is long by industry standards, a good and bad thing as it might be better utilized if optimized by mobile.

The recent survey yielded 41 out of 200+ organizations; feedback informed that LGBT tourism was significant to their businesses but that this traffic has been declining over the years and for a number of reasons which, RL said, could be broached later when there is more time.

## **2. WEBSITE DEVELOPER(S) (UPDATE ON RFP)**

NM said she and AF had met with Elisabeth Verde and were writing up a RFP which would be similar to what had been asked of developers previously and be ready in about a week or so; an ad would run in the Banner for two weeks and DP would assign a committee of about five people; that funds were available and those who had expressed interest in applying for the job would be notified.

RM said he thought there was 35K budgeted and that the prelim numbers were in the 20k to 45k range; NM said the figure was 30k; RM suggested it might take more money to make the website design more applicable to gadgets.

RM asked NM to relate to DP that VSB recommended a couple of VSB Board members be on the search committee; that three VSB members were in the search committee for Red Thread and referenced that there had been staff protocol errors in the process previously.

## **3. TOURISM ECONOMY REPORT CY 2017**

NM presented; said they had met with DP and the overview was good and strong, cited Harbor and Pier traffic was up but air traffic was low.

NM referenced p. 11: 2. Economic Indicators; B. Accommodations, and the formula used to calculate the Average Room Income, \$24,867; had four deposits from the Dept. of Revenue for this report.

RM said he thought they were using the Licensing Board list from last year and that it is frequently out of date; as an example, RM cited the Victoria House which he uses for staff only but is still listed as a room rental. NM said she thought the list was accurate; RM said he was sure there would be rooms on the current list that do not belong there based on numbers from 2016, 2017; felt the trend was accurate per a downward slope and asked to think how these numbers might be used to boost the number of hotel rooms in Town.

SA asked if there was a way to balance out the calculations for gallons usage to aid in reportage. RM concurred, noted the proposal to place dormitory housing in the Town's bylaws as a positive step.

SA asked to ponder how gallons are passed onto a new owner without thought into how they will be used and how this change might affect the overall gallons usage. RM referenced a business that had been asked to give back their gallons when it was determined they were not remaining open year-round as per the original condition. RM said he felt gallons unused should be put back into the gallons pool and noted that the usage calculation is skewed based on two extremely high weeks in season.

JG noted a Town Warrant article to allow the BOS for the first time to fine those not using their Economic Development gallons properly; that previously the BOS could choose to yank the gallons or would just ignore the violation.

AS asked what constitutes year-round in Town. RM said what had been done traditionally was nine and half to ten-plus months designated year-round. AS then asked if there was a known percentage of who

follows the rules; RM responded that an enforcement officer had been on duty for a year or two, but that there will probably always be those who skirt the rules. JG suggested the reason for this Warrant article is to address the officer's ability to shut someone down at will.

RM directed the meeting back to the Report in noting incomes being down, i.e., Parking and Air Traffic; Provincetown Museum down 4%; felt there are less people coming to Town.

JG asked if the 13% drop in Arrival by Air came from Cape Air. NM confirmed it was and that a lack of pilots contributed to the problem, as well as increased ferry service.

AS referenced pp. 14-15, per beach traffic being down 23.4% and a severe decrease of 120k beach visitors, asked if this was due to the parking lot damage. RM noted they started charging people arriving by bike and increased parking rates, suggested another option to bring back parking as the North Lot is gone.

SA questioned the figure on p.4 Visitors that stated visitors were spending less on goods purchases and more on experience-related purchases such as dune tours and Monument visits.

RC asked, per p. 18, why items under \$175 were not included in calculation and NM remarked it was because those purchases are not taxed.

NM directed VSB, per AF, to review summary on back of report.

#### **4. VOTING ON TOWN MEETING WARRANT ARTICLES**

a) **Article 26. Visitor Services Board – Amendments to Board Composition**

JG made a motion to discuss Article 26; LM seconded the motion and discussion proceeded.

RM stated the proposed Article's plan to eliminate the VSB board designations which currently stand as Arts & Culture, Women Inn Keepers, PGB and Chamber with three at-large positions to all seven being at-large.

SA reinstated her disapproval, said she would not vote in favor of the Article; stated that entities such as the Chamber of Commerce, the Business Guild and the Culture and Arts representation do a tremendous amount of work marketing for the Town and to reduce their presence is not a good idea; said that if the BOS feels there is something that VSB is not doing correctly, they ought to address the Board directly before putting the matter to a vote; to not negate the hard work that's been done.

AS concurred with SA, said having the diversity is paramount for leading effectively and that having all at-large members would make it too easy to skewer the board one way or another which would not be in the best interest of the Town; noted that Women Innkeepers is no longer a designation.

LM said she agreed with SA and AS; that the PGB, Chamber and Arts all need a voice on the Board and have worked well together and continually make consensus, and that it is important to have these distinct pillars and aspects of the community represented.

RC said she could have almost gone either way but feels the Arts should be on this board as they have no other entity to show their support.

JG expressed that while he has supported seven across the board as at-large, wherein the best would rise to the top, he is not thrilled with this process and suggested other things might be happening behind the scenes that are not progressive; but, in the end, he would be sticking to his vote in favor of Article 26.

RM said he agreed with the women board members and observed that as there appeared to be only vote in favor, asked if withdrawing the motion would be an option. SA followed suit, made a motion to withdraw the original motion, which AS seconded.

SA then made a motion to not recommend Article 26 of the Warrant; AS seconded the motion and it passed, 5-1-0. SA, AS, RN, LM, RC, in favor; JG, opposed.

SA & LM commended JG for expressing his point-of-view eloquently and respectfully while in opposition to the Board consensus.

**b) Article 40. Room Occupancy Tax – A Home Rule Petition**

RM summarized that this was basically a way to apply the local room occupancy tax to seasonal rentals. JG moved to approve Article 40; SA seconded and it passed, 6-0-0. JG, SA, RM, LM, RC, AS.

**c) Article 44. Expenditures from the Tourism Fund (TF)**

NM summarized Article 44 as a proposal to allocate 750k from the Tourism Office (TO) to be expended under the BOS and the VSB as follows, including all related costs:

- i. 140k for coordination of the VSB and Tourism Department.
- ii. 400k for marketing and related costs.
- iii. 50k for municipal projects.
- iv. 150k for tourism grants.
- v. 10k for the Beautification Committee.

LM made a motion to recommend Article 44; JG seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0. LM, JG, RM, LM, SA, RC, AS.

**5. FOR FOLLOW-UP DISCUSSION ON PROTOCOL SET UP/SYSTEM FOR FUTURE TRADE SHOWS, INCLUDING PROPOSALS FOR NEW COLLATERAL**

RM suggested keeping the current conversation on topic to a minimum in lieu of AF's absence, but stressed the need for new roll-ups going forward; also to give advance notice for future conventions and trips between now and June 30<sup>th</sup> so the VSB can weigh in on options and to make sure all businesses are extended an invitation when one is offered; to be as transparent as possible in terms of collateral put on the table.

JG asked after the calendar which, he said, everyone had pretty much despised. NM responded that the revived option is still being worked on and is not ready for review.

RM noted the importance in keeping items on the Agenda so they stay relevant.

## **6. TOURISM DIRECTOR'S REPORT**

### **a) Website Design**

NM reported that the website RFP is being crafted and that the TO would be requesting a motion to approve 30k for website development; the target launch date remains September 2018; the search committee will be formed under the direction of DP and that, per AF, a reminder that there are funds in the Tourism Fund Coordination Account to use toward the new website.

RM said he'd like to put in motion to reserve up to 40k for the new website design and the TO would find the extra 10k. LM made a motion to approve an expenditure of up to 40k for a new website design; JG seconded the motion and discussion followed.

JG referenced FY 2018 24k from Adjusted Available Marketing which NM said was not necessarily un-allocated at this time. JG then noted a figure of 50k listed in Social Media with "0" spent and "0" committed that NM said was actually dedicated to digital media through Red Thread and a correction would be made to the reportage.

RM called the vote and the motion passed, 6-0-0. LM, JG, RM, SA, RC, AS.

### **b) Calendar Design Development**

NM reported that the TO went with the lower bid of \$1,950 and that 10,000 pieces would be distributed; requested a motion to approve, which AS made and RC seconded

SA asked if the VSB would have an opportunity to review the design before it went to print. NM asked if it was as a courtesy that the VSB review the design or if a vote on their part to approve was a part of the procedure. RM went into a little history and recommended running big ticket items through the Chair and Vice Chair to report back to the Board adding that in this particular case, it would be advisable for the whole Board to review the tri-fold before going to print.

SA said she wasn't requesting a re-wording of the motion but a guarantee of a preview by the VSB. NM said Nadine was out on vacation, but that a proof should be back by no later than next week. RM directed NM to have AF send the proof to each VSB member who could then reply directly to AF with commentary.

AS asked how calendars are disseminated. NM said AF wants major establishments to have nice big stacks and the items be in the hands of volunteers at info booths, including Town Hall lobby and that she wasn't sure if the number of this year's printing was to match last year's.

RM called for the vote and it passed, 6-0-0. AS, RC, RM, LM, SA, JG.

c) **Visitors Survey**

NM reported the Visitor's Survey had 4k responses and that the next phase, the Stake Holders Survey, was being developed and would probably be kept to about five questions and that businesses would be asked for the zip codes of their best clients. .

d) **Trade Show**

NM said the TO is looking for new opportunities, noted NY Times Trade Show is slated for next January and that an effort would be made to inform the VSB of events and trip in advance of the booking.

e) **Grants**

NM remarked that the policy for grants is that the final reporting, including receipts, is due within 30 days of the event and that the PGB's reports have been submitted well after that due-date.

AT THIS POINT IN THE MEETING, DP AND JY JOINED THE MEETING.

7. **TOWN MANAGER**

DP spoke of Free Cash which, he said, is neither free nor cash, but is essentially the difference between what is left-over at the end of the year based on expenditures verses revenue and that Town has a basic 50/50 between the two and that Town's number is generally around one-point-something, but this year was 3.4.

DP said the model in Town that is the Capitalized Stabilization Account comes from the TF, room tax, and Free Cash – which funds the Town's capital; that when the budget was submitted in December, they tried to limit and avoid borrowing as much as possible, even as interest rates are good; noted two pieces coming up for Town Meeting to 'up' the Town's reserves; two pieces in the operating budget that are overrides; bulk of one-time payments from Free Cash, Capital Improvement Fund or Closed Articles; stated that the ones you don't see are First Pilgrim Park, Vehicle Replacement and the water tank – which comes through the Enterprise Fund.

RM asked why if the Town has 3.4 million in free cash, it is funding for the Pilgrim Landing Park out of the Tourism Fund and not Free Cash.

DP said it was viewed as beautification, and that the 375k cited by VSB is now in the Reserve, per Finance policy; spoke of the need to improve on the concept of the Pilgrims' First Landing as it currently exists in Town as a park surrounded by a rotary; that the State will repair the seawall and sidewalk; 200k is a figure they felt was reasonable, that further articulation is needed in working toward a five-year plan.

RM asked if through DP's position, there can be more conversation or a bridge between the BOS and the VSB; spoke of future Tourism funds potentially applied for the sake of improving Town Hall, including the sound system and better seating.

JG spoke strongly for the need to spend money as needed to make the Town Hall auditorium a space that can be used year-round constantly by everyone; cited organizations that have shifted out of Town Hall because they cannot get what they need upstairs. DP agreed and suggested an identity clarification is needed. RM asked to address the compressors situation to properly provide AC to Town Hall.

RM requested a meeting in two weeks before Town Meeting. LM asked that, as the BOS voted to assign the TF's 375k for the Reserve, did it designate other TF funds. JY said the BOS voted on a policy not on recommendations, added that the 70k transfer for Airport Security did make it on to the Warrant as a motion, not an Article; that the process for what would be done with the TF monies has not been established yet as it is a new thing.

RM repeated his request for a better working relationship with the BOS as the VSB is working very hard on the Town's behalf. DG agreed and commended Tony for doing a very good job on the Economic Development Report. RM stressed the need for updated room rental figures. DP said the rumor is that the State House is set to move short-term rentals.

RM thanks DP & JY for their time and DP & JY left the meeting.

## **6. TOURISM DIRECTOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)**

### **e) Grants (continued)**

RM asked NM if she was asking the VSB to waive the rules for those grantees who are tardy with their post-event reports. NM remarked that the only late grantee was the PGB. RM recused himself from the meeting for this portion.

NM gave a run-down on the PGB calendar events, including Gay Athalon Games, Valentine's Day, Holly Folly and First Light.

JG made a motion to discuss the PGB events collectively as opposed to individually; AS seconded the motion and discussion followed.

JG requested RL of PGB speak on the issue. RC asked if VSB has accepted and given out grant money in circumstances when the grantee has been late. NM said she wasn't certain as it did not come up in her meeting with AF; quoted figures on PGB events as such: Gay Athalon granted \$6,000, used \$5,768; Winter Weekends granted \$4,000, \$3,804.17 was used; Cookout was granted \$4,500, \$3,804.26 used; Holly Folly granted \$6,000, used in full; First Light granted \$6,500, 6,284.38 used.

RL said as this was her second year there is still a lot to learn about the process and deadlines, said she didn't know she could turn in receipts for matching grants any time they were available; requested to remove the Winter Weekends regarding the Valentine's Day event off the late-list as that was February 14<sup>th</sup> and they would not be late, per se; suggested that the grant process hasn't always been a 100% line in the sand, rule-oriented process, but one with a lot of leniency.

RL said the PGB was not able to cash-flow for their events. JG said he was confused because there was 175k in PGB funds. RL said that was not them that they've been traditionally in the red and didn't spend all their funds this year to keep things closer to the vest.

NM clarified that the matching grants was not the issue on the table today. JG sought to clear up the confusion felt by asking why the PGB would not turn in their receipts to be reimbursed expediently. RL said they try to get their vendors to submit timely receipts but it's been difficult; that there was confusion in the process and that a ten-page manual would be helpful.

JG said he thought there were two completely different issues; that if PGB submitted all their receipts at once that this is something he is very uncomfortable with as a precedent but that he was also not comfortable having this conversation without AF being present. SA asked if an event that took place back in June had not crossed fiscal years. LM said she agreed with JG that AF's input is required and asked for a motion to table the conversation for a future meeting. JG put the motion forth, RC seconded the motion and it passed, 5-0-0; JG, RC, LM, SA, AS.

f) **Provincetown 10k Grant**

RM returned to the meeting; LM recused herself.

Discussion ensued on how best to handle the 10k Grant that had been submitted on time Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup> but that, per Beau Jackett of MIS, was quarantined in a spam or virus-check and so not forwarded by deadline.

NM noted the history of the 10k grantee as such: in 2014, they received 1k; 2015: 1k; 2016: 1.5k; 2017: 1k and nothing for FY2018; are asking for 2k for the June event.

NM said AF would consider taking the money from Marketing if it is decided by VSB to award the grant. RM requested to table the decision until AF could be present. AS made the motion to table discussion pending AF's participation; JG seconded the motion and it passed, 5-0-0. AS, JG, RM, SA, RC. LM returned to the meeting.

RM said he spoke with Town Treasurer while he was recused and got the breakdown of VSB funds on the Warrant: 375k in the Reserve; 200k for Pilgrim Landing Park; 120k for the Airport, leaving 84k-85. LM asked for clarification on the 120k for the Airport; RM said it would be a motion. RM said he would forward the e-mail when he received it featuring the highlights of his conversation.

**7. BOARD MEMBER STATEMENTS – COMMENTS FROM BOARD MEMBERS. DISCUSSION DEPENDENT. MOTIONS MAY BE MADE. VOTES MAY BE TAKEN.**

RC asked for meeting dates which RM said he had based on a conversation he had with Town Clerk. April 9 and April 23 are currently on the books, which VSB said worked fine. RM suggested April 2<sup>nd</sup> before Town Meeting could be an option; LM agreed. VSB settled on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at 11 am – 1 pm and April 17<sup>th</sup>; time TBD, with SA possibly being late. JG said he might be late on April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

NM noted other dates being scheduled as May 7<sup>th</sup> and May 21<sup>st</sup>, and June 4<sup>th</sup> and June 18<sup>th</sup>.

JG said he appreciated the helpful document from Town Manager but was disappointed that there is left-over Free Cash of \$72,882 where TF money was used instead; wished there was more of a collegial approach between the VSB and BOS as he sees a lot of Kabuki Theatre going on which is frustrating for someone who is new. SA said she felt VSB was not the only board with this experience regarding the BOS, referenced past situations with the Pier Corp.

RM thanked NM for being prepared for the meeting and said he is looking forward to working together in the future.

**9. APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM FEBRUARY 20<sup>TH</sup> VSB MEETING.**

SA made a correction to the Feb. 20<sup>th</sup> meeting minutes, referencing the American Revolutionary – not Civil – War dedication per the Winthrop Street Cemetery Memorial. Dedication is scheduled for Patriot's Day, April 16<sup>th</sup> at around 11am.

SA made a motion to approve the VSB meeting minutes of Feb. 20, 2018; LM seconded the motion, and it passed, 6-0-0. SA, LM, RM, RC, JG, AS.

LM made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:55 pm; RC seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; LM, RC, RM, SA, JG, AS.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jody O'Neil