



**Newport & Bristol County Convention & Visitors Bureau  
DBA Discover Newport  
Board of Directors Meeting  
Tuesday, January 18, 2022  
Zoom Virtual  
12pm**

The meeting was called to order at 12:03pm by T.R. McGrath, Board Chair

BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE WERE: Pamela Baldwin, Karen Binder, Geremie Callaghan, Keith Chouinard, Christine Francis, Matt Gray, Ann Hof, Charlie Holder, Rocky Kempenaar, TR McGrath, Tom McNiff, Andrew Moore, John Nunes, Sean O'Connor, Bob Rulli, Dennis Turano, Missy Varao

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT & EXCUSED WERE:

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT & NOT EXCUSED WERE:

STAFF PRESENT WERE: Evan Smith, Kathryn Farrington, Tim Walsh, Anna Duffy, Alyson Adkins,

Member of the Public: Savana Dunning - Newport Daily News, Bonnie Watson

**I. PUBLIC COMMENT: N/A**

**II. NEW BOARD MEMBERS:**

The Town of Middletown has filled their open seats as follow:

- John Nunes, attractions representative is replacing the seat vacated by, Brad Read. John is the owner of Newport Vineyards on E. Main Rd. in Middletown.

**III. PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:**

The previous meeting minutes for January were reviewed by the board. A motion to accept the amended minutes was made by Keith Chouinard and seconded by Rocky Kempenaar. The motion passed unanimously.

**IV. TREASURER'S REPORT:**

The treasurer's report for November was presented by Geremie Callaghan:

- For October bed taxes, the City of Newport was up +86% as compared to budget, Newport County (excluding City of Newport) was up +76% as compared to budget, and Bristol County was up +118% as compared to budget. Total private revenue for the month of December was up +3% as compared to budget, with total revenue up +76% as compared to budget. Total expenses were overbudget by +9%.

A motion to approve the treasurers report was made by Bob Rulli and seconded by Andrew Moore. The motion passed unanimously.

#### V. PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

Evan updated the Board on the following:

- Evan thanked Bob Rulli from Warren for the heads up informing us we would be able to hold the meeting today virtually per the Governor's order. He also thanked Christine Francis from Tiverton for sending a link to an article from a Boston TV station naming RI the most picturesque state in the country.
- Forecasting for the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter of the year January, February and March are unsettled as travelers are trying to wrestle with the seriousness of Omicron. A strong travel season is expected from May – October. Reservations for cruise ships, meetings/conventions and group motor coach tour inquiries are up. Tourists are not completely comfortable traveling to foreign destinations yet. All these sectors were nonexistent last year due to the pandemic. Reason to be optimistic that the summer season will pick back up now that there are open skies.
- There are EDA (US Economic Development Administration) and ARPA (American Rescue Plan Act) federal grants coming to the state of RI totaling \$13million for travel and hospitality aid. We are waiting for more information from Commerce RI as to how the aid can be utilized and distributed. Discussion followed.

#### VI. STAFF/REGIONAL UPDATES:

- Kathryn Farrington, VP of Marketing, updated the Board as follows:
  - The monthly Marketing meetings are still not being held. In person meetings will resume in the Spring.
  - New winter campaign "Off Season Is On" is advertised on local TV in conjunction with RI Hotel Month. New campaign affiliates in our theater markets and in the NY, NJ, CT, and DC, and VA markets.
  - Burger Bender promotion runs from Feb 18-27 at participating restaurants featuring their own creative, unique, and delicious beef, non-beef, and plant-based burger offerings.
  - The Visitor's Center is open currently on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday.
  - There are outdoor Winter activities at Gurneys Newport and Blithewold Mansion Bristol.
- Tim Walsh, VP of Sales, updated the Board as follows:
  - The HBO series "*The Gilded Age*" has prompted interest in development of tours highlighting locations where the series was filmed.
  - Trade shows and client events are being booked again. Events in BOS and NYC very optimistic outlook. Interest in motor coach tours is picking back up. Looking forward to a very good year in 2022.
- Ann Hof - Barrington
  - Updated the board on the Barrington bike path, new town manager and the RIDOT RFP to replace paths
- Karen Binder – Bristol
  - Holiday Lights at Blithewold were a huge success
  - Small businesses and restaurants are struggling with staffing due to Covid.
- Bob Rulli – Warren
  - E. Warren bike path work will begin again in the Spring.
  - The Warren Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program is accepting applications on an ongoing basis for grants to reimburse businesses up to 50% with a maximum reimbursement of \$25K for improvements to their building façade. This initiative directly supports restoration and preservation of the historic integrity of downtown buildings.
  - Restaurants are doing well in town.
  - Monitoring what DOT is doing with bike paths

- Christine Francis – Tiverton
  - Wonderful holiday season in town, great turnout to support small businesses.
  - Tiverton resident Ted Hayes recently put Tiverton on the map as a Jeopardy contestant.
  - Bajah’s Cat Café opened on Main Road allowing consumers to meet and adopt felines.
  - Town council is back up and running. The discussion on short-term rentals is ongoing. The council will hold another meeting before sending it to the planning board.
- Charlie Holder - Newport
  - November and December were extremely busy. There were crowds of people coming into town at a fervent pace this past holiday season. No restrictions on capacity.
  - Several businesses were closed for cleaning/renovations or changing hands.
  - The St. Patrick’s Day parade is still on schedule for March 12<sup>th</sup> stepping off from City Hall at 11am.
  - The Easton’s Beach buildings replacements have not been decided upon by the council yet.
- Sean O’Connor – Newport
  - Earth Week festivities will run in each town April 16 – 23. Great programming across all communities.
  - Newport Music Festival has rebranded as Newport Classical.
  - February is Black History Month. On Feb 8<sup>th</sup>, the Art Museum is hosting an event with Keith Stokes as speaker.
- Matt Gray – Portsmouth
  - Seven new business applications received in town business office
  - The town of Portsmouth is allocating \$50K in ARPA fiscal recovery funds for their “Buy Local” campaign.
  - RI Craft Beer Week in RI March 5-12. RI Brewers Guild committee is spearheading events for the 36 breweries in RI.
  - No updates on bike paths in Portsmouth.
- Andrew Moore – Little Compton
  - The town is in discussion on spending ARPA funds on public goods and infrastructure. Newport Mental Health has reached out to Little Compton asking for funds to support any residents in need of the mental health and crisis resources they provide.
- Dennis Turano – Middletown
  - April 16-23 52<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary of Earth Day
  - Beaches are closed for now, two new multi-purpose fields have opened
  - Focusing on ARPA funds with an emphasis on children and businesses to help both with the impact of Covid
  - Great tourism numbers with solid numbers.
- Tom McNiff – Jamestown
  - The Jamestown Golf Club clubhouse new construction will open this Spring with a 2<sup>nd</sup> story available for catered functions.
  - The Jamestown Chamber of Commerce is looking for a new Executive Director.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT:** TR McGrath thanked the board for 100% attendance. A motion to adjourn was made by Charlie Holder and seconded by Rocky Kempenaar. The motion passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:50pm

**The next Board Meeting will be held:  
 Tuesday, Feb 15, 2022  
 Newport Marriott  
 25 Americas Cup Ave.  
 Newport, RI  
 12pm  
 TBD**