



## Visitor Services Board

# Minutes

The Provincetown Visitor Services Board Public Meeting of Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at 1:00 pm in the Judge Welsh Room, Town Hall, 260 Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA 02657.

Pursuant to Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2021, this meeting will be conducted **in person** and as a courtesy via remote means, in accordance with applicable law. Please note that while an option for remote attendance and/or participation is being provided as a courtesy to the public, the meeting/hearing will not be suspended or terminated if technological problems interrupt the virtual broadcast, unless otherwise required by law.

### Joining the Meeting:

**Microsoft Teams:** Join on your computer or mobile app. [Click here to join the meeting](#)

**Phone:** Or call in (audio only) [\(833\) 579-7589](tel:8335797589) Phone Conference ID: 149 887 624#

### To Participate during public comment:

- Teams: Raise hand to be called on to speak.
- Phone: Speak name clearly to be called on to speak.

### Please do not speak again until acknowledged by Chair or meeting moderator.

- Keep your phone muted at all times when not talking (\*6 to mute & unmute your phone)
  - Do not use speakerphone, Bluetooth devices (speakers or headphones)
- Mute all background noises, including PTV, television or computer and use only phone audio

Members present: Regina Cassidy (RC), Chair, Women Innkeepers Rep.; Erik Borg (EB), Vice Chair; David Wilson (DW), Clerk, Arts Committee Rep.; Robert Sanborn (RS), PGB Rep.; Michael Goshay (MG).

Members present by remote: Harrison Fish (HF); Susan Avellar (SA) – joining at 1:25pm.

Staff present: Anthony Fuccillo (AF), Director of Tourism.

The meeting was called to order at 1:05pm by RC who reminded all to speak clearly into the microphone. AF read the guidelines governing Public Meetings under the State laws pertaining to the Covid 19 pandemic protocols. RC gave roll call and invited Public Statements.

### Agenda [Motions may be made and votes may be taken unless otherwise noted]:

1. Public Statements – 3 minutes maximum. Board members are not obligated to respond to public statements.

Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Radu Luca, thanked Harrison Fish and Michael Goshay for joining the VSB and said he looked forward to working together.

2. Late Summer Recovery Marketing Discussion
  - a. Chamber of Commerce Executive Director, Radu Luca
  - b. Business Guild Executive Director, Bob Sanborn

Robert Sanborn (RS) announced that the Town would be hosting Carnival this year, referenced the new brochure and some positive buzz in the media; proof of vaccine will be required for entrance to all official events; all staff to be vaccinated to test negative ahead of events; limiting capacity voluntarily; leveraging of outdoor areas in most venues; mandatory indoor mask order to continue through August 21, at least; free testing and vaccinations in Town to continue through at least the end of Carnival and hopefully beyond. RS spoke of the Town staff enforcing Covid protocols; mentioned that the Town has reinstated the Community Ambassador Program; said there is no official parade this year but in its place would be an Express Yourself Day, with social distancing.

RC remarked that the Town is picking up in terms of visitors but that the day-trippers seem to be missing. AF said the radio spots regarding the Town's recovery hit last Thursday. Mr. Luca noted mid-July was slow and agreed that day-tripper visitations have decreased; related a good deal of cancellations even as the recent Family Week was a success. RC noted that this past June was like the roaring 20s in terms of robust numbers and stated her hope that the fall season might be as successful. Mr. Luca added that if the fall saw another set-back, proper notifications would be made. RC related the Town's keen approach to contact tracing and resolve following the July 4<sup>th</sup> outbreaks.

RS offered that local business has basically fallen off a cliff and that the word he has been getting from many sectors is that business has declined in the 40-50% range, which is difficult to recover from, but that the time to pivot is now; cited the need for positive press at this time and to promote Town as a safe place to visit; noted that cancellations have ticked-up, making for a net-loss; said the PBG fully supports the fall season campaign.

EB said he agreed that the bad press from the July 4<sup>th</sup> weekend and up-tick in Covid case results damaged the Town's season but that the new mask mandate for indoor venues is furthering damaging the business community and doing more harm than good.

MG said his guest house has only seen two cancellations, but that the parking rentals are definitely down, reflecting the observation that day trippers are not in force as they have been previously.

DW said the two ferry companies are marking the situation as 50-75% down in ticket sales; Provincetown Theater has been encouraging, but not mandating, masks for its outdoor theater performances; suggested a conversation on mandatory mask-wearing could be useful.

SA said she felt a mask mandate for indoor venues should be a requirement.

HF agreed with EB per mask mandates, quoted a relatively low number of positive cases and hospitalizations in terms of the amount of visitors as trending in a good direction.

### Tourism Office Marketing Plans

AF referenced a meeting with Town Manager Alex Morse, Mr. Sanborn, Mr. Luca and the Health Department last Monday where vaccination certificates were discussed and which, he said, could turned around in a day; mask mandate signage; marketing measures as a three-pronged approach, including radio, digital aspects and public relations – before the situation transitioned into recovery mode; played a new promotional radio clip now airing on various local stations.

RC asked how fast a radio ad can be turned around if conditions change, to which AF said within 24 hours. RS recommended expanding the radio promo campaign to encourage more visitors to Town in suggesting the business community is now prepared to handle the increase. AF said the Cod-com stations and the Dunes are prepared to run public service announcements for the Town.

EB spoke of what he said would be an appeal to the public to invite visitors to come to Town fully vaccinated. RS reminded the Board that all Carnival events would require proof of vaccination.

**BS made a motion to utilize existing funds to expand radio promotional spots. DW seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; BS, DW, EB, SA, MG, RC.** (HF related that his paperwork has not yet been completed with the Town Clerk's office and, as such, he would not be voting today.)

AF displayed digital color ads, along with radio scripts; discussed circulating a news release.

**BS made the recommended motion to authorize distribution of \$805.00 for PR newswire distribution through Conran PR. DW seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; BS, DW, EB, SA, MG, RC.**

MG spoke of the perception out there that the Town has been placed in a reactionary rather than an active position; that the narrative is being controlled by news sources which the Town has very little control over and recommended that the Town be promoted as a very safe place to visit; encouraged others to tap into their friendship networks to give good press. The Board concurred. AF followed up DW's mention of local resident Andrew Sullivan's Sunday CNN news report on the media's exaggerated response to the Town's post-July 4<sup>th</sup> outbreak; played the short clip into the record and suggested other local personalities could be approached to add their voices to promotional efforts.

### 3. Five-Year Plan 2023-2027 discussion

AF announced the total deposits for the FY2021 as \$3,478,000, of which the VSB or Tourism Fund receives 35%; but cautioned that the local options tax breakdown is not as yet determined due to extensions, and it is not possible at this time to credit amounts to rooms or meals tax allocations, in addition to the uncertainties surrounding the Airbnb tax.

RC said there would be more time after Labor Day to further discuss the budget and AF said the VSB's recommendation is due to the Select Board by Nov. 1<sup>st</sup>.

EB related his friend, Ben Riskin: a New Yorker and summer resident in the business-side of podcasts, who has offered to present to the VSB in sharing some insights. AF said he would put the presentation on the September 14<sup>th</sup> agenda.

RC expressed that in terms of upcoming meetings there isn't a lot of time for turn-around regarding the budget recommendations; pointed out a discrepancy in the numbers; said she felt it would be irresponsible to have an amount less than \$1 million with numbers that have been significantly in excess of a million dollars over the past couple of years; referenced tourism grant money that was not spent last year and said an investment in the tourism economy needs to be made now. RC agreed with BS in stating a request of \$1 million is supported.

#### Deputy Tourism Director

RC proposed moving the figure of \$1.9 million that is in FY2026 to FY2023 and to work with the increased percentages thereafter; announced that Tourism Office Assistant Director, Nina Cantor has moved on to another position with the Town and related Ms. Cantor's great value to the VSB and the Town in expressing a loss at her departure. AF said he has been having discussion with Town Manager Alex Morse to elevate the position of the Assistant Director a grade higher in order to offer a higher salary with more candidate qualifications; no word on when the job will be posted. RC noted that the elevation in grade of the Assistant Tourism Director has been voted on several times in the recent past and requested an assurance that the funds are still available for the position. BS also expressed regret that the upgrade had not been facilitated and suggested that had it been so, Ms. Cantor's departure might have been avoided; referencing past meeting minutes as proof of vote on the matter. RC said she has been directly involved in this issue with each new Town Manager and has experienced push-back and delays. SA said she would like to know the Town Manager's position on the change of job title from Assistant to Deputy. RC explained that the change to Deputy

was made by the VSB and AF based on the high level of Ms. Cantor's engagement in the office and that the delay has been expressed as awaiting a new compensation study. EB added the sentiment that time is of the essence in posting the job as people have come to Town, post Covid, with the aim of remaining year-round. DW asked if a temp might be hired in the interim. RS said the previous motion was made and unanimously approved on December 11, 2019.

**RS made a motion to adjust the Director of Tourism to Grade 11, Step 7 and to reclassify the Assistant position to a Deputy position at grade 9, step 8 with a preference of having this measure implemented no later than September 30, 2021. EB seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; RS, EB, SW, SA, MG, RC.**

MG asked if a new strategy should be considered, being as he is new to the process. RC went through the motions the VSB has made to move the measure along. RS said he felt this situation is an example of government Town bureaucracy and one that calls into question the authority of the Board and the responsibility of the Town to assign accountability. AF said Town Manager was unable to attend today's meeting, but would make himself available at a future meeting.

RC said she wanted it to be on the record that AF pushed for Nina Cantor to get the upgrade when it was not of direct consequence to his own position. MG added that AF was at liberty to list what sacrifices to the Tourism Office would have to be made if Ms. Cantor's replacement is not found in an expedient manner.

#### Tourism Department Report

a. Motions may be made. Votes may be taken.

AF said he would have a future draft of the new Five Year Plan as discussed today.

#### 4. Approval of April, May and June 2021 Meeting Minutes

**RC made a motion to approve the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes. RS seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; RS, EB, DW, SA, MG, RC.**

**RS made a motion to approve the April 13, 2021 meeting minutes. DW seconded the motion and it passed, 6-0-0; RS, DW, EB, SA, MG, RC.**

**RC made a motion to approve the June 29, 2021 meeting minutes. DW seconded the motion and it passed, 5-0-0; DW, EB, RS, DW, SA, RC.**

#### 5. Board Members' Statements—comments from Board members. Discussion dependent. Motions may be made. Votes may be taken.

SA said she wanted to get a positive message out for retail and the Town's shows. EB welcomed MG and HF to the Board and thanked Ms. Cantor for her hard work, as did DW and RS, who reminded all that Carnival begins on Sunday. RC welcomed MG and HF to the Board; thanked Mr. Luca for attending and participating in the discussions; thanked AF and Ms. Cantor.

**DW made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 2:47pm. EB seconded the motion and it passed, 5-0-0; DW, EB, RS, MG, RC.**

Respectfully Submitted,  
Jody O'Neil