

**Town of Provincetown
Visitor Services Board
Meeting Minutes from May 23th, 2017, 3:00 pm
Town Hall, Judge Welsh Room
260 Commercial Street
Provincetown, MA 02657**



Members present: Rick Murray - Chair, Lesley Marchessault – Vice Chair, Hersh Schwartz, Regina Cassidy, Dan Vanwaus, Rick Murray, Bob Sanborn, Marian Peck.

Members absent: none.

Meeting was called to order at 3:00 am by Rick Murray.

Staff: Anthony Fuccillo, Radu Luca.

Others: Robin Bazlen-Weglarz – PBG Board Presiden, Nadine Licostie – Red Thread Communications Principal

Agenda:

1. Public Statements – Five Minutes Maximum. Board members are not obligated to respond to public statements.

Robin – appreciates the VSB’s support, happy Nadine was hired and onboard, happy with the Cultural Council award, funding of the PBG from the VSB is essential and PBG relies on it, many things will come forward in the near future; pleased with the capacity to produce events and market Provincetown. PBG will celebrate it’s 40th anniversary.

2. Revisit the VSB meeting schedule. Discussion dependent. Motions may be made. Votes may be taken. (Requested by Rick Murray)

RM would like to have the meetings rescheduled for Mondays at 1 pm in the summer and 3 pm in autumn.

3. Revisit the VSB annual tourism grant process. Discussion dependent. Motions may be made. Votes may be taken. (Requested by Rick Murray)

LM wanted to open up the topic for discussion how we budget and spend the money in the Tourism Fund and possibly reduce the amount of the tourism grants and shifted funds more towards general marketing. RM mentioned the tourism grants were meant to be seed funds, but not repeating events rely on these funds annually.

RC could see decreasing the amount of the grants budget to have a more inclusive approach to marketing the town.

BS likes the grassroots aspect of the grants in promoting the town and is open for discussion and is looking at the bottom line and ROI.

MP agrees with BS and if the grants budget was reduced, we would need to let institutions that rely on these funds know in advance.

LM – many organizations rely on these funds and is skeptical about drastically reduce the grants budget, but believes the grant process should be revamped; grants money are for marketing and these organizations and events reach demographics that the VSB might not necessarily be reaching. Open to discussion about making all grants 50% matching.

HS abstained from commenting on this item.

DV – agrees with MP that we should let large grantees know in advance if we were to reduce the amount of their grants, but also need a lot of marketing dollars out there promoting the town.

4. Review grant approval Joint Meeting with BOS and discussion about the upcoming Joint Meeting with the BOS on Monday, June 26th. Discussion dependent. Motions may be made. Votes may be taken. (Requested by Rick Murray)

Nadine Licostie – doesn't believe a huge cut in tourism grants is beneficial; we should provide guidance to grantees to understand best practices and maximize the marketing funds awarded. Need to leverage the dollars and increase ROI, work together with the grantees so that there is complementary marketing. We need to tell the same story and the grantees should as well; have an overall similar message that we're putting out there and tell the same story. BS believes there's opportunity to work together, provide them with marketing tools.

5. Tourism Director Report

- A. Approval of media placements, brochures and trade shows--
Tourism Director recommends media placements, brochures and other collateral to promote and market Provincetown as a tourism destination, or town representation in trade shows.**

Red Thread Preliminary Strategy Discussion

- Working on branding and positioning for the Town
- Would like to talk to some visitors – qualitative interviews and visitor surveys
- It's important for the Town to have a visitor survey done
- Will create a toolkit that stakeholders, business owners and other organization in town should be able to use in their marketing efforts
- Will be able to present an overview at the June 12th meeting
- Been working with Tony and Radu on media buys, social media schedule, editorial calendars, press releases, media planning, etc.
- The Tourism website needs to be revamped to include as much information as possible, a website that allows easy changes, be interactive, booking capabilities, etc. Would like to cooperate with PBG and Chamber while crating an overarching website
- Summer is when we promote for the fall and winter and we don't want to be behind on that
- Smartphone application: with a mobile website there is no real need for a standalone app
- Red Thread to reach out to Towleroad and revisit the proposal they presented to the VSB this spring.

B. VSB Administration

- **Provincetown Cultural District:** Massachusetts Cultural District Initiative
 - Massachusetts Cultural Council Board Meeting
 - Thursday 18 May, 2017
 - New Bedford
 - Announcement of new Mass Cultural District designations
 - Governor Charlie Baker will attend dedication following meeting
 - Town Manager and Board of Selectmen to speak about the designation
 - Provincetown Cultural District Meeting
 - Will be scheduled in early June
 - Agenda – Next steps moving forward
 - Fall Season MCC will return to Provincetown for a workshop and assist with progress

➤ **New Businesses Opening:**

PROVINCETOWN NEW BUSINESS LIST
Mama Matcha Green Bar (formerly Mimere's)
258 Commercial St.
508-487-0777
Inna Litvinova
Real Goods
237 Commercial St.
202-412-3619
Jan VonFlatern
Gallery 444 Ptown (formerly Gallery Voyeur)
Wendy Cressey
444 Commercial St.
617-710-2026
Captain's Daughters
Dani Niedzielski & Meghan O'Conner
384 Commercial St.
912-713-6883
Mangia Pizza + More
Patricia McGraw
205 Commercial St.
631-312-8846
Ptown Café (formerly Curio Coffee)
353A Commercial St.
Andre LeBlanc
760-212-7425
Cusp Gallery (formerly Center for Coastal Studies)
Curtis Speer
115 Bradford St.
323-513-3161

Marketing & Advertising Insights:

➤ **Received the following article from David Panagore:**

- Has been shared with Red Thread
- There are some interesting points
- Many are relevant to both an entire state's marketing and a single resort destination
 - An outlying resort destination like Ptown needs to work to encourage visitation from New Englanders



ISLAND
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CONTRIBUTED BY [Tom Groening](#)

News of Maine's Coast and Islands

THE WORKING WATERFRONT

On the record with: Steve Lyons of the Maine Office of Tourism
MUCH IS AT STAKE—\$6 BILLION ANNUALLY—IN MARKETING MAINE TO THE WORLD

April 25, 2017



TOM GROENING
Steve Lyons, acting director of the Maine Office of Tourism, poses with a recent marketing poster.

BY

TOM GROENING

POSTED APRIL 25, 2017

LAST MODIFIED MAY 18, 2017

Steve Lyons has been with the Maine Office of Tourism since 1998, working under three directors. With the departure of Carolann Ouellette, he is now the acting director of the small office—which has just seven employees—tucked within the Department of Economic and Community Development.

But there’s nothing small about the office’s mission. Tourism is one of Maine’s largest economic drivers, accounting for \$6 billion in direct spending in 2016, with a total economic impact of almost \$9 billion. In the years following the Great Recession, visitation to Vacationland continues to grow.

Lyons hopes to be named as permanent director, and his longevity and steady hand through changes in marketing strategies make the case for that promotion.

“I’ve been here long enough that I know a lot of the players already,” he says. “Things have evolved,” he explained of his tenure, from marketing to bus tour groups, to overseeing the contractors operating visitor information centers, to research.

“The last several years, I’ve been the director of marketing,” working on a day-to-day basis with the advertising agency the state uses to get its message out. Lyons explains how the dominance of the digital world has impacted marketing, while other marketing approaches lean on the tried and true.

The Working Waterfront sat down with Lyons in the state office building in late March. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

WW: In your time, metrics have changed, in the way they’re gathered. It’s become much more sophisticated. How has that impacted marketing and decisions made around tourism?

Lyons: We still look at a lot of the same old metrics that we have for years. We still use taxable sales as a barometer of how we’re doing. We get that on a monthly basis from Maine Revenue Service. We also look at our annual visitation studies.

What has changed, certainly with digital becoming more prevalent in the marketplace, is you are able to analyze and evaluate your campaign on the fly.

When we used to have a TV ad or a print campaign, you had to wait for the results until the whole campaign was over. With digital, you can track individual channels to see what it’s doing. You can move money around in one channel where it’s doing well.

WW: There’s been a growth trend in recent years, a steady upward...

Lyons: From 2011 or 2012, we’ve had about an annual 6 percent increase in visitation, on average. Expenditures have gone up, as well. It’s been a very successful campaign, when we started this new “Maine Thing” campaign, which we started in 2012.

WW: Some of it can be attributed to this campaign, but is it also pent up demand?

Lyons: I think it’s a combination. Certainly, our campaign has been very successful. It’s got very specific goals, going after first-time visitors. Since we’ve had that goal, our first-time visitation has increased substantially.

We’ve also moved our marketing around a little bit. We still focus on eastern Canada, New England and the mid-Atlantic states, but we’ve put a little heavier budget down in the mid-Atlantic states because we find that those people are staying longer and spending more money. It’s also where the bulk of our first-timers are coming from.

WW: I know first-timers are so important because research has shown that once they come, they tend to return in very strong numbers, right?

Lyons: They do. It's something like 90 percent of the people return if they've been here. And that's very high. We get some raised eyebrows sometimes from other states (skeptical of the numbers).

WW: When you're talking about the mid-Atlantic states, are you talking about New Jersey and south?

Lyons: New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, D.C. And we actually have expanded out as far as Charlotte, N.C. We started that last year.

WW: I've heard it said that those people have to book in advance, they can't watch the weather and make a last-minute decision to go elsewhere.

Lyons: It's difficult to track that, but I think it has played out that way. If you have people coming from further afield, obviously they have to make that commitment. They're less apt to cancel.

I think that's one of the reasons we're doing so well in the mid-Atlantic markets.

We used to focus a lot of attention on the Boston and Massachusetts markets, and we still do—it's an important piece of what we do—but everybody in Massachusetts has been here before.

I was down to the *Boston Globe* travel show a few weeks ago, talking to people, and they say, "Oh yeah, we love Maine. We go there all the time." It's not as necessary to spend as much money there.

For us, if we're going to spend our money wisely, we want to move into those markets where people may not be as familiar with us and generate, again, first-timers.

WW: Who would you say are Maine's chief competitors in the tourism market?

Lyons: When we look at our market-share numbers, we compete very heavily with the other New England states.

But people travel a little more widely now than when I first started 19 years ago. With international travel being easier, a lot of travelers like to go to a place, try it, and then try someplace new the next year. So while we're still getting people returning, it might take a little longer for them to come back than it once did.

WW: The tourism office has moved away from the demographic-based marketing approach to the experience thing. Do you feel that was a good move?

Lyons: Yeah, I do. What we're talking about is a life-style brand. It's getting more toward the emotional connection with the state of Maine, as opposed to people coming from Massachusetts, or New York, just to get away. The "values" approach makes people have an emotional connection with an identifiable life style. Like, "I really want to live in Maine."

Someone said to me the perception is that Mainers have "figured it out," that life-work balance thing. People here are doing what they're passionate about. And they want to share that with other people, and they're living this life style in this beautiful place. We're trying to get people to aspire to that.

WW: If somebody gave you \$1 million for a one-time marketing expenditure, where would you spend it?

Lyons: We'd probably try to do broader domestic U.S. coverage. We're only covering the East Coast, and not even all the way down the East Coast.

If we had \$1 million, we would probably get out to the Midwestern states and some of those other states that pop up in our research. If you look at our website, VisitMaine.com, there are a lot people from Florida, Texas and California browsing the site. It may be that their populations are high (and so are better represented).

But we would probably expand nationally.

We actually had a big increase in visitation from Canada last year, even though their dollar was low. But it's a lot more costly to advertise in international markets.

WW: Last question: I know Washington County leaders are doing a lot to promote their region. What might be your advice to them to boost their tourism?

