



**Town of Provincetown  
The Visitor Services Board  
October 13, 2020, 1:00 p.m.  
Town Hall, Judge Welsh Room  
260 Commercial Street, Provincetown, MA**

**The Visitor Services Board:** David Burbank, Chair; Regina Cassidy, Vice Chair; David Wilson, Clerk; Susan Avellar; Andrea Sawyer; Stephen Hooper; Erik Borg

**Attending:** David Burbank, Chair; Regina Cassidy, Vice Chair; David Wilson, Clerk; Susan Avellar; Andrea Sawyer; Stephen Hooper; Erik Borg

**Staff:** Anthony Fuccillo, Director of Tourism; Nina Cantor, Assistant Director of Tourism

**DB – 1 p.m. - Call to Order**

**AF as moderator:**

**NOTE: THIS IS A REMOTE PARTICIPATION MEETING**

Pursuant to Governor Baker's March 12, 2020 Order Suspending Certain Provisions of the Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 30A, §18, and the Governor's March 15, 2020 Order imposing strict limitation on the number of people that may gather in one place, this meeting of the Provincetown Visitor Services Board will be conducted via remote participation to the greatest extent possible. Specific information and the general guidelines for remote participation by members of the public and/or parties with a right and/or requirement to attend this meeting can be found on the Provincetown website, at <https://www.provincetown-ma.gov/>. For this meeting, members of the public who wish to watch/listen and participate in the meeting may do so in the following manner:

1. Watch on PTV GOV Channel 18, as well as an online livestream of PTV GOV at <http://www.provincetowntv.org/watch.html>
2. To listen and participate in this meeting, dial **(833) 579-7589**. When prompted, enter the following Conference ID number: **771 623 520#**. When prompted, state your name, then press #.
  - Keep your phone muted at all times when not talking
  - Do not use speakerphone
  - Do not use Bluetooth devices
  - Mute all background noises
  - Mute PTV on the television or computer and use only the phone audio
  - Please do not speak until the chair or the meeting moderator asks for public comments or questions.

**No in-person attendance of members of the public will be permitted**, but every effort will be made to ensure that the public can adequately access the proceedings in real time, via technological means. In the event that we are unable to do so, despite best efforts, we will post on the Provincetown website an audio or video recording or other comprehensive record of proceedings as soon as possible after the meeting.

### **1. Public Statements**

#### **Robert Sanborn, Executive Director, Provincetown Business Guild (PBG)**

- RS invited the VSB to the annual PBG meeting
- Stated that he sees the VSB needs to reallocate funds –the last VSB Chair, stated in the last meeting that between the \$100,000 and rollover from FY20 there should be more money. I hope they will be flexible with reimaging the tourism grants. Many grantees used some money to salvage the season and will also be giving back money. Specifically carnival which was never canceled. It was just reimaged. Specific large scale events didn't happen but we created a virtual love letter to Ptown which went viral. By most accounts the town was sold out that week. That week was also



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more LGBTQ than the rest of the summer. We believe we met the objective of the grants. We should not be penalized for spending money.

**Radu Luca, Executive Director, Provincetown Chamber of Commerce**

- Echo the thoughts of the previous speaker. Welcome to Erik. He's a great addition to the Board.
- Our annual meeting will be 11/10 at 4pm via zoom so please attend and participate.
- The town was busy this weekend and was good for business.

**2. FY21 Grant Discussion**

- DB - With the approval of \$100,000 from Town Meeting last month. We currently have a balance \$8,827 from FY19 which can be utilized. The VSB does not normally access funds from the prior year budget for grants. There is FY20, \$31,500.24. Normally that would be held until FY2022 and I would suggest caution dipping in to that fund to much because we have no idea what FY2022 will look like.

As a reminder:

- **Event Marketing Grants:**  
**Funds are to be used to market an event that brings visitors to Provincetown for the purpose of enhancing the Town's economy. Funding will be awarded to events promoting and enhancing the shoulder/winter-seasons.**
- **MATCHING Marketing Grants**  
**Purpose:** Funds are to be used to provide marketing through advertising and/or the creation and production of other forms of marketing for the purpose of enhancing Provincetown's economic base.
- It boils down to heads in beds. There were some events that went virtual since the beginning of FY21. We need to come through a few scenarios of how we should allocate the funds. A few we came up with:
  - Applications will be funded beginning January 1 and the past events should not get funded. Since Town shut everything down from May through December 31, 2021. If we move forward with the current grant award structure in place we would be able to cover the budget with a short fall of \$250.00 or we can re-allocate the funds through the normal grant process.

**Open for discussion:**

- SH – If we look at the events from Jan-June there would be a shortfall of \$250? DB – yes. SH - I think what you are proposing makes the most sense. Since events could not take place, I think the issue comes up with what happens with virtual events. I'm in favor of doing what you suggested. What would the total of those who submitted virtual events?
- NC – I know that Music on Sunday's went Virtual, Carnival went virtual, Tennessee Williams was part virtual, and Women's Week. I would have to reach out to every promoter.
- Some events did reach out and ask if they could shift to virtual. At that time no approvals had been made regarding reimbursements.
- RC – asked NC what she told everyone.
- NC reported:
  - A letter was sent to all applicants on May 31, which stated not to count on funding until the budget is confirmed. Excerpt: *The FY21 Tourism Budget must be voted on and pass at the Annual Town meeting which has been moved to September 21, 2020. At this time, each Town department has been tasked with reviewing their FY21 budgets and applying cuts should we need to do so. We are hoping our budget won't be impacted but at this time we just don't know.*  
*So please keep in mind as you are making your marketing plans that until the FY21 budget is passed and award letters and grant agreements have been processed, we are not able to guarantee funding.*



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- NC - As with any grant program, we are basing the funding on applications that have been submitted and is what decisions should be based on at this time.
- RC – I had seen the letter. Having sat on both end of the grant process it is really difficult decision to make. Everyone is struggling. We should go back and look who went virtual we are actually going against what was submitted. The process moving forward – is there a way to include in the application if the event ends up being canceled and goes virtual?
- NC – My suggestion for FY22 is to add options in the agreement should an event were to go virtual, the applicant can submit for a percentage or up to a certain amount of the grant award.
- SH – If we were to go back to look at grants can we implement that now?
- NC – For FY21 you would have to go back and review all 53 applications and re-designate the funds. Or you can start in FY22.
- SA – Do we know how many of our grantees actually had virtual events? NC – No. I think the decision needs to be made for next year. The VSB would have to go back and re-evaluate all the grants with the new budget that was assigned. The awards from last February’s meeting are null and void. Right now the awards are based on the applications submitted. This is a very difficult decision and a tough conversation.
- EB – Does it matter if the virtual event actually drove tourism? In person in Ptown?
- NC – Yes, it does. The purpose of the grant was to bring people here to get heads into beds.
- AF – It is difficult. And now we will also receive tax money from rentals. A big part of our role is to increase the tourism fund so we are able to do more marketing. And that is the goal of the grants - to bring people town. In addition, we want people to come and spend money in our stores and restaurants and museums and attractions. Are they providing awareness to the Town? Yes. But are they bringing people here and boosting our economy at the moment? How do we back up something that wasn’t part of the original grant discussions and the applications were for a whole different purpose.
- DB – It is very important that the awards are based on the applications submitted. When we gave the awards, we had no idea that Covid 19 was going to cause such a disruption to our town. It is important to hold on to that fact. It is important to keep the matching marketing grants because that is the marketing of the town and hope we are able to bring people back in to town especially in the spring.
- NC – Another thing to consider is if the events were to be canceled, that money goes back into the grant fund. It doesn’t go away and can get used in the future as events get stronger.
- AS – How many entities contact you about doing virtual events before they did them? NC - Four
- SH – If Town gave direction that no events could be held until the end of December, all the events that were canceled, in my mind, even though people did virtual, you did give them notification, and we are supposed to look at this grant programs as they were applied for and no one mentioned that they may go virtual. So for the process of making things easy for everyone, and the most fair, I think we should at events that have not taken place before December 31<sup>st</sup> and they should not get anything.
- Bob Sanborn of the PBG – (Point of order) - The VSB approved tourism grants and they were further approved by the Select Board and they were subject to funding that was approved by Town Meeting in September. The amount was less than what the VSB and Select Board approved in the form of the grants. In my mind, this is an exercise in recalibrating the funding for the 53 grants and when I hear people making decisions across the board policy decisions, that no grantees should be funded prior to December 31<sup>st</sup>, I think that requires a public hearing and goes beyond the scope of just recalibrating funding for the 53 grantees. We had planned to have elements of Holly Folly in terms of the Shop Hop and carolers on Commercial St. and now I’m hearing that discussion that the VSB is saying unilaterally that there are no events before December 31. I have not heard of any official Town Mandate that there are no events before the 31<sup>st</sup> and if that is the case I want someone to present that.



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- AF – The Select Board did motion and vote that there wouldn't be any events that take place on Town property or large scale events such as 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade, Carnival Parade and other activities. The ability to have gatherings until the phases change. But the ability to gather in Town was diminished purposely. And that was a vote of the Select Board.
- NC - The Town Manager asked us to keep a running spreadsheet on our website off all the events that were canceled. I understand your frustration but all that can be done for FY21 is based on the applications at hand. People are asking what is happening at Halloween and I tell them that there are no Town events and individual business owners may choose to do something and as long as it is within the regulations of the State.
- BS – Point of Order – the SB did not cancel all events. At a point of time, they withdrew all applications for use of Town Property and to re-apply under the ground rules. When the applications were approved to use Town property, they were based on certain crowds and the State has diminished those crowds. So the Town encourage people to re-apply (and I don't think anyone did), but just for clarity, the Town did not cancel all events. The Town does not put on events. It was up to the event producers to make decisions about events. All events were not canceled. We just had the monumental yard sale.
- DB asked BS for the VSB to be able to continue with their discussion. BS was able to speak at public comments. There is more coming with this meeting and let us continue our discussion please.
- DW – Besides for the Town Events, were any applications that were approved for the VSB for an event, did any events take place between June and where we are now.
- DB – the only live event was the Tennessee Williams Festival, which was limited, and also there was from FY20 there was the CabaretFest.
- NC – The only other was the Swim for Life. People did swim in Ptown but there were no other events with it. The rest was virtual.
- DW – For example, if Tennessee Williams was awarded \$5,000 (made up number), did the event match the grant and was actually on the application? That would be the only way we could look at it. NC – But we didn't grant them any amount since there were no award letters or agreements. Everything was put on hold because the budget wasn't passed.
- RC – Bob brought up a point, there are a couple of events in November and December, there are events that are probably not going to happen but if you take a look, that is still a possibility that could go off, as well as the Canteen. It is a minimal amount of money they are looking for. Do we automatically say across the board that we shouldn't fund them? I'm fine with not going back for virtual or for the ones coming up. If we were to say nothing before 12/31, we won't be going back and re-looking at these grants or should we take a look at what is happening in December and allocate the money or do we go ahead and just put this on hold and get input from council or just vote on it.
- DB – On July 23<sup>rd</sup>, the VSB had requested additional funding. We can increase their matching grants if we want to pull money from FY20. The PBG does a lot of promotion for the Town, especially for the LGBTQ market which is part of the reason for the request. We can increase their matching grant which will assist in marketing the Town in December. They did a tremendous job with Carnival and their love letter to Provincetown. Canteen is not doing their holiday market this year. And we are looking Winter Weekends and that additional funding would help PBG with that marketing.
- RC – So if just went from January 1<sup>st</sup>, we could increase some of the matching marketing grants? DB – That is what I would propose.
- SA – Good point BS, that some of the events of Holly Folly could take place. So in a sense, the grant that we provided to the PBG to put on Holly Folly should be looked at differently because people could come down and stay in the inns and shop in the stores. Not in the same as we would like, but I think it's important that the PBG have funds for that particular event to go forward.



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- AF – we have a budget of \$100k that was approved at Town Meeting for grants. You rolled back the \$8,800 and the total of the events for January through June events and Matching Marketing grants is around \$110,000 so you are still a little bit short. This is where you can use some of the unused money from 2020 grants to put toward these grants. There was a mention of increasing the PBG’s Matching grant and you would have to get the funds from there as well. There is around \$31,000 remaining in FY20. So a few motions would have to take place. A good place to start would be to fund grants beginning January 1<sup>st</sup> through June 1<sup>st</sup> for fiscal year 2021

DB proposed a motion to fund grants beginning January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021 as approved and also the full funding of Marketing Matching grants.

SH 2<sup>nd</sup>.

**Discussion**

- RC – All set
- RL – (Point of information) Does it have to go before the Select Board for approval? AF – that is correct. Once the motion is made, it will go before the Select Board.
- SA – none
- AS – Can we vote to spend money we don’t have?
- DB – We can vote and if there is a shortfall we can make a second motion to fund it. NC – The extra funds needed are available from FY20. They can be used to make the FY21 grant budget whole. AF – We would have to roll back some of the grants to make that happen.
- DW – I support the motion and no comment
- SH – The report of the rooms tax give me the feeling that there will be potentially more money down the road so I think we can safely take some of the money from FY20 to fund what we are proposing. DB – the room tax is a nice thing to see.
- EB – If we are to approve them starting January through June 30<sup>th</sup>, we should then include virtual? DB – The purpose is heads in beds. Virtual does a great job promoting the Town. EB - Then should we state that virtual can’t be included? NC – we can include that in the agreement since the others were not given that option. And then in FY22 the VSB can review the agreement to see if you would like to include a percentage or number that an applicant can receive if they were to go virtual.
- NC - Is there a particular amount that should be rolled back from FY20? AF suggests we look at the events from the earlier part of FY20. NC – if we just need a small amount, perhaps we would just roll back one or two grants.

**Motion to fund FY21 grants beginning January 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021 as approved and also the full funding of Marketing Matching grants.**

Motion: DB 2<sup>nd</sup> – SH Vote: 7-0-0

**Roll Call**

RC – YES; SA – YES; AS – YES; DW – YES; SH – YES; EB – YES; DB – YES

DB - With that in place we have a shortfall of \$2,250 and I would like to make a motion to increase the Matching Marketing Grant for the Provincetown Business Guild from \$17,000 to \$22,000.

2<sup>nd</sup> - SH

**Discussion**

RC – NONE

- SA – We are not allowing any other applicants to know we are doing this for one organization so I vote no
- DB on July 23, we reviewed this and many were in favor
- AS – I agree with the previous speaker. I don’t think it’s fair. And there are no events scheduled.



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- DB - It is to help the town to have a strong presence for the LGBTQ market which was absent this past summer.
- RL asked for a point of order which was denied by the Chair.
- AS – There should not be outside people speaking during a vote. DB – I agree.
- DW – We are speaking about \$17,000 increasing to 22,000? DB – Yes. DW – no discussion on my part.
- SH – I support this motion. This year felt like Jersey Shore instead of Provincetown. We need to keep marketing LGBTQ. I cannot stress it enough.
- EB – Yes I support it. It's not a question of what is fair or not fair. It is vitally important that we continue to market Provincetown as an LGBTQ destination.
- DB – The PBG is a strong marketing group along with the Provincetown Chamber of Commerce. They promote the town to different markets and cross over here and there but it is important that the PBG receive extra funds to keep focusing on their marketing strategy with the Tourism Office and Chamber to let people know we are doing things safely and to keep coming to Town.

**Motion to increase the Matching Marketing Grant for the Provincetown Business Guild from \$17,000 to \$22,000**

**Motion – DB                      2<sup>nd</sup> – SH                      Vote: 4-2-1**

RC – abstain (I do want to say that I am having a problem with this vote simply because I know it wasn't in the procedures for Radu from the Chamber to speak and because of that I was going to vote yes, until I heard Radu from the Chamber plus I do agree with some of the other members. I want the PBG to have this money but I also think we should have taken a look at the others. I am going to abstain.

SA – No – we don't have a level playing field with all of the others

AS – No – I agree with the previous speaker

DW - Yes

SH - Yes

EB - Yes

DB – Yes

- DB – We are at a short fall of \$7,250. Can we pull that out of FY2020? NC – we can pull it out of events that were canceled in FY20 and we can pull that just from one grant. In FY20, the International Film Festival did not use all of their funding and there is a remaining amount of \$9,065.69. DB, you can roll at number back into the budget and then allocate the amount you would like to use.

DB made a motion to roll back \$9,065.69 from the Provincetown International Film Festival from the FY20 grant.

**Discussion:**

None

**Motion to roll back \$9,065.69 from the Provincetown International Film Festival from the FY20 grant**

Motion – DB      2<sup>nd</sup> – SH                      Vote: 7-0-0

**Roll Call**

RC – YES; SA – YES; AS – YES; DW – YES; SH – YES; EB – YES; DB – YES

- AF – This will be presented to the Select Board for voting on the new recommendations.

**3. Department Report**

- AF reviewed upcoming ad campaign which is doing well. Media placement and creative strategy has moved into the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. We are pushing late summer, early fall and the ads are scheduled to go live in October. The entire quarter is about shopping and highlighting the Monumental Yard Sale and holiday gift buying as well as outdoor activities and museums, dune tours, and sailing. The winter ads will take on a different look but will still push shopping. January will begin the promotion of spring/summer visitation and early bookings.

**Search Engine Optimization**

- We have reached over 165K users through keyword search impressions since July



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- Google continues represents 75% of the audience reached
- The July-September Click Through Rate (CTR) is 11.2%
- The average SEM CTR across all industries is 3.2%
- The average SEM CTR for Tourism industry is 2.2%
- Users have clicked through our ads 17,426 times
  - July 4,335 clicks with a CTR of 10.8%
  - August 7,235 clicks with a CTR of 11.5%
    - September 5,056 clicks with a CTR of 10.1
- PR has been receiving a lot of earned media. Press coverage generated during the month of September, either as a direct result of the press release or other related connection:
  - Barnstable Patriot
  - Edge Media
  - Fathom
  - Travel Awaits
  - Trips to Discover
- We also had Social Media Influencer @27Travels, a lesbian couple, visit town for a familiarization trip (FAM) Sep 18 – 20, 2020. We met them at the New York Times Travel Show last January. PBG provided comped accommodations at the Rose & Crown and we arranged attractions for their stay including PMPM, PAAM and a morning-chartered sail. They have 28,500 Instagram followers. They posted and shared to their Story which we in turn shared and received great Instagram traction.
- As a late summer and fall activities merge, the October press release “Annual Monumental Yard Sale Celebrates Unique Shopping in Provincetown” was distributed on September 23, 2020 to ConranPR’s curated database for Provincetown.
- The Sunday Boston Herald contacted ConranPR and published a feature story in the Lifestyle/Travel section as a direct result from our October press release about shopping and outdoor activities. The story was written by Moira McCarthy. All the key retail messaging was included with an emphasis on Monumental Yard Sale.

### **Tourism Administration**

#### **Five-Year Plan 2022 – 2026**

- VSB is recommending using the \$915,000 budget draft for initial discussions
- Will request the Tourism Fund Capacity estimate from Director of Finance prior to completing, voting and submitting to the Select Board.
- AF Briefly touched upon the room tax deposit which went up from 1.1 million last year to 1.9 million. This year did include the taxes on the short term rentals. 35% of that will go into the Tourism Fund. The food and beverage saw a 58% decrease.

#### **Public Service Announcement for Halloween**

- **COVID-19 Operations Committee**
  - Working with Leslie Sandberg
    - Preparing PSA for Halloween to publish tomorrow October 15, 2020
    - Support PSA with an ad linking to Town website information
- Leaderboard at the top of the Provincetown Magazine and Ptownie website’s home page



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DB made a motion to authorize \$502.00 for Provincetown Magazine for a Covid Halloween PSA  
AS -2nd

No discussion

**Motion to authorize \$502.00 for Provincetown Magazine for a Covid-19 Halloween PSA**

**Motion – DB 2<sup>nd</sup> – SH Vote: 7-0-0**

Roll Call: RC – YES; SA – YES; AS – YES; DW – YES; SH – YES; EB – YES; DB – YES

DB made a motion to authorize \$500 for Ptownie for a Covid-19 Halloween PSA  
SH – 2<sup>nd</sup>

**Discussion:**

None

**Motion to authorize \$500 for Ptownie for a Covid-19 Halloween PSA**

Roll Call: RC – YES; SA – YES; AS – YES; DW – YES; SH – YES; EB – YES; DB – YES

- DB asked if the PBG and Ptown chamber can pass along the PSA

**4. Board Statements**

RC – Welcome Erik – you came into a meeting of all meetings! Welcome to you.

SA – Welcome Erik!

AS – Welcome Erik!

DW – Welcome Erik!

SH – Welcome Erik! I think it was difficult meeting and I hope it would be considered fair. We don't know what next year will bring. We do need to be nimble and pivot and the business community did ok. It is important for me to push the gay agenda.

EB – thank you for your kind words and I would like to meet you in person one day.

DB – Welcome Erik. Thank you for your continuing contributions as we continue to navigate through the pandemic and what it all means. Here's hoping FY22 will allow more tourism back to Provincetown to get heads in beds.

DB Made a motion to adjourn at 2:54 p.m.

**Motion to adjourn at 2:54 p.m**

Motion - DB 2<sup>nd</sup> - SH Vote 7-0-0

Roll Call: RC – YES; SA – YES; AS – YES; DW – YES; SH – YES; EB – YES; DB – YES

Respectfully Submitted,

Nina Cantor

Assistant Director of Tourism