

TOWN OF PROVINCETOWN

VISITOR SERVICES BOARD

MEETING MINUTES OF OCTOBER 3, 2000

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Meeting Held in Judge Welsh Room, Town Hall

Members Present: Steve Melamed (Chair), Barbara Rushmore (Vice-Chair), Joan Lenane, Dana Henricksen, Rob Tosner, Hunter O'Hanian

Members Absent: None

Others Present: Mr. Bergman (Town Manager), Pat Fitzpatrick (Tourism Director), Michelle Jarusiewicz (Grant Administrator), Rachel Crosby (Recording Secretary)

Call to Order: Chair Steve Melamed called the Meeting to order at 7:00 P.M.

PUBLIC HEARING

on

Proposed Five-Year Financial Plan for Tourism Fund Expenditures

Chair Steve Melamed explained the purpose of the Hearing and the process to be followed.

PUBLIC STATEMENTS –

- Mr. Walter of Crowne Pointe Guesthouse –the room tax is a “bed” tax and that the revenues should be going more to benefit those that pay it. Mr. Walter objected specifically to using the Tourism Fund to fund the public restrooms, which are primarily used by the bus tour patrons. Mr. Walter approved of spending on beautification & marketing efforts.
- Robin Evans of the Beautification Committee – explained how the money from the Tourism Fund would be spent on Beautification projects, stating that there needed to be places, other than shops, for tourists to go.
- Roger Chauvette of Town Building Committee – explained that the Building Committee had not intended to fund the Pier bathrooms from the Tourism Fund, that that idea had been suggested by Town staff. He said it was optimistic to put the Pier bathrooms in the Five Year Plan.
- Mr. Bergman explained the staff recommendations to pay for various bathrooms from the Tourism Fund, and that two were based upon Town Meeting votes. The money for the Pier bathrooms may not need to come from the Tourism Fund if other funding is obtained from federal sources.
- Mr. Bergman, Steve Melamed, and Mr. Chauvette discussed when the debt service for the Pier bathrooms might begin, concluding that it was scheduled for FY 2003.
- Mr. Beard of Captain and His Ship Guesthouse – spoke against using Tourism Funds for capital expenditures and for public bathrooms in particular.
- Mr. Vetrick of the Ampersand Guesthouse – clarified some of the history of the use of the room tax and spoke against using the funds for municipal capital expenditures and/or routine maintenance purposes.
- Rob Tosner stepped down from the Board and spoke as a member of the PBG, noting that other resort areas spend much more on marketing, emphasizing that Provincetown needs to be competitive. Mr. Tosner also objected to establishing a reserve fund, claiming it might be used for municipal purposes. He said that the PBG is in support of the Visitor Services Board’s recommendations.
- Len Bowen of the Chicago House Guesthouse – asked if data had been gathered on marketing expenditures by other similar tourist areas. Pat Fitzpatrick responded with information on the Key West marketing efforts, stating that their expenditures were currently in the neighborhood of \$500,000. Steve Melamed said that Palm Springs is spending approximately \$750,000 annually.

- Mr. Hart – asked about current Tourism Fund revenue and expenditures and Steve Melamed provided detailed figures. Joan Lenane said that the Board was assuming conservative revenue estimates for planning purposes.

Board Comments:

Barbara Rushmore said that the Tourism Fund had originally been created to enhance off-season tourism and explained how the final expenditure decisions, including those for public bathrooms, were made by the Selectmen. Ms Rushmore offered several motions for the Board’s consideration and read a prepared statement which included the motions. Steve Melamed advised Ms Rushmore that, in the interest of time and because the motions had not been seconded, it would be preferable to reconsider these motions at the regular meeting of the Board.

Steve Melamed said he felt that, due to the recent efforts by the Town Manager and the Town staff, the Board was being recognized as an official, functioning body and that relationships between the Town administration and the Board were much improved.

- Pat Patrick of Marine Specialties – spoke in favor of using funds to improve public bathrooms. He complimented those who have helped market the shoulder seasons, but said that the Fund is not just a guesthouse fund, that it should be used to enhance the overall tourist experience.

Steve Melamed spoke about the Board’s emphasis on “heads in beds,” as this would increase Tourism Fund revenues. Rob Tosner agreed with Mr. Patrick that the Town should create a positive tourist experience, but that that the Tourism Fund should not be used for such a high percentage of municipal projects.

- Chuck Anselm(?) – said that the current marketing budget was extremely small in compared with what is needed.
- Chuck Turley of the Pilgrim Monument and Provincetown Museum – said he had noticed an incredible increase in the number of foreign tourists. He also asked that the Monument be added as a stop on the Shuttle’s route. Mr. Bergman and Mr. Turley had a side discussion about the possibility of moving the Heritage Museum to Monument Hill.
- Candace Collins-Boden of the Chamber of Commerce – spoke about the origin of the room tax, the formation of the Municipal Advertising Committee, and the creation of the Tourism Fund and the Visitor Services Board. She said the competition for tourist dollars was intense among resorts worldwide. She said that the Plan was a good compromise effort, but that a bigger portion of funds should go to marketing.

Pat Fitzpatrick spoke about keeping the emphasis on the Grants Program, which provides funds to organizers who create events that bring people to Town. She said that non-profit events should be continued to be funded over a longer period of time.

Dana Henricksen said that the actual amounts devoted to Marketing and Promotions amounted to only 10% each of the total amount received from the room tax, that the Tourism Fund only receives 45% of the total amount. She objected to the recent imposition of Town fees for certain types of garbage pickup.

- Len Bowen said that items which benefit the public at large should be paid for out of general funds, not the Tourism Fund.
- David Sanford of Crowne Pointe – suggested conducting a survey to see how many guesthouse guests use the public bathrooms versus bus tourists. He spoke about the possibility of having a head tax on those that visit Town.

Barbara Rushmore spoke as a non-business owner, saying that people like her had to bear a large tax burden created by the municipal needs of seasonal residents and tourists. She said that the Town Meeting had voted to approve the use of Tourism Funds for Municipal Projects.

- Bob Vetrick spoke about the fact that 55% of the room tax already went into the Town’s General Fund.
- John Worthing of Prince Albert guesthouse – said that without expenditures for marketing tourism, no one would come to town.
- Mr. Patrick spoke about who might or might not use the public bathrooms.
- Mr. Beard spoke about the “us versus them” atmosphere in Provincetown and said he felt that Town Meeting was a farce. He said he was using this public hearing as a means of getting his viewpoint heard.
- Mr. Chauvette said the Town seems to have lost a sense of the common good and said that the best marketing was

word of mouth.

- Mr. _____ of Utilities – spoke about the problem of finding bathrooms in tourist and urban areas and said that the Tourism Fund should not pay for bathrooms.

Dana Henricksen said that the Visitor Services Board is only an advisory body and needed more teeth to be able to have a more significant impact on how the Tourism Fund is expended. Mr. Bergman clarified that Town Meeting established the Visitor Services Board and its role as an advisory body and said that Town Meeting would have to act to increase the Board’s power.

- Michael _____ of White Wind Guesthouse – said his guests had reported that Town appeared to be much prettier and cleaner this year.
- Mr. Church of the Inn at Cook Street – more money needs to be spent on marketing.
- Ms Collins-Boden said that bottom line is that the Tourism Fund is public money and that all parties had to work together in making decisions on its use.

Hunter O’Hanian responded to questions about how to change the Visitor Services Board’s role and said he would be willing to speak with people with questions on that issue. Hunter O’Hanian asked for a show of hands on various questions.

Mr. Bergman said that he felt the Public Hearing was an important step in working together to make decisions on Tourism Fund expenditures. He said that the Visitor Services Board could now go to the Selectmen with recommendations which were backed up by public input.

- Mr. Harrison spoke humorously about the history of government in Provincetown.

ADJOURNMENT

Dana Henricksen moved to adjourn at 8:21 P.M. and it was so voted unanimously.

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These minutes were approved by a vote of the Provincetown Visitor Services Board at their meeting on _____, 200__

Respectfully Submitted:

Visitor Service Board Signature

Title

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Rachel T. Crosby, On-call secretary