

**NEWPORT COUNTY CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU
BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 2005**

MEETING MINUTES:

The meeting began at 12:10 p.m. Chairwoman Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano called the meeting to order and welcomed the following new five board members: Gregory Fater, Lisa Gross, Pieter Roos, Laurie Stroll and Harlan Tyler.

IN ATTENDANCE WERE:

Chairwoman Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano, Gregory Fater, Lisa Gross, Rocky Kempenaar, Donna Olney Kohler, Karen Oakley, Len Panaggio, Pieter Roos, Susan Samson, Mark Stenning, Laurie Stroll, Harlan Tyler, Councilperson Charles Vaillancourt and Katie Wilkinson

STAFF PRESENT WERE:

Evan Smith, Cathy Morrison, Debbie Gatta, Martha Sheridan, Kathryn Farrington and Mary Ann Kelly

GUESTS PRESENT:

Rep. Paul Crowley, Ken Bianchi, Nat Binns and David Hansen

I. PREVIOUS MEETING MINUTES:

The previous meeting minutes were reviewed. A motion to accept the minutes was made by Councilperson Charles Vaillancourt and seconded by Mark Stenning. The motion passed unanimously.

II. TREASURER'S REPORT:

Evan Smith read the treasurer's report. City tax was up 2.41% and Regional Tax was up 12.55% for a combined growth of 4.94%. A motion to accept the treasurer's report was made by Councilperson Charles Vaillancourt and seconded by Chairwoman Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano. The motion passed unanimously.

III. BOARD ELECTIONS:

Rocky Kempenaar made a motion to elect Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano as Chairwoman; Councilperson Charles Vaillancourt as Vice Chairman; and Mark Stenning as Treasurer. It was seconded by Katie Wilkinson and the motion passed unanimously.

IV. STAFF REPORTS:

Each Staff Report will now reflect the figures of the previous month's activity.

A. CONVENTION & TOURISM:

Martha Sheridan, Vice President Sales, explained the convention sales reports that are included in the board reports sent to board members each month. The Sales Department is monitored on how much convention and leisure group business they bring to our destination. The Sales Department operates on the fiscal year (April 1-March 31). The numbers are tracked on a year to date basis and month against month previous year. Martha also explained terms to board members, such as bookings, leads, room nights, business booked and lost business. The Sales Department has a limited budget for advertising, but makes up for this with numerous outside sales calls. Martha also explained the Tourism monthly report. The Tourism Sales Manager tracks tour operator leads, room nights and the potential economic impact to Newport. Martha, once again, invited board members to join her sales staff for the luncheon at the

Capital Grille on November 15th. The Sales Department is also working on booking business to Newport in the off season with their Winter Meetings Promotion. The Sales Department has partnered with six downtown hotels to provide incentives to encourage meeting planners to book Newport as their meeting destination between November 15th and April 15th.

B. MARKETING:

Kathryn Farrington announced to board members that the Marketing Department has hired Annie Colella as their new Advertising and Special Projects Coordinator. Kathryn also explained the Winter Package Program that was created by the bureau eleven years ago. The package contains over 45 participating inns, hotels, and bed and breakfasts. Kathryn also expressed appreciation to the sponsors of this year's Winter Package: Hyatt Regency, ABC 6, WCRI Radio and Newport Chocolates. New with the package this year are 4 free issues of Newport Life Magazine. All information about the Winter Package can be found on our website, www.GoNewport.com. The Marketing Department is in the process of printing the 2005 image brochure. The Marketing Department is also getting a new promotional video in December. Steven Feinberg, head of the Rhode Island TV and Film Bureau, is having a press conference to introduce a new movie, Hard Luck, that will be filming throughout Rhode Island.

Kathryn shared some of the recent publications that have featured articles on Newport.

C. OPERATIONS:

Cathy Morrison explained that the downstairs helps about one million visitors a year. The last questions asked each visitor are: Where are you from? How many people are with you? That is how the downstairs get its visitors count, which is tallied and entered into a data base. The downstairs has been a construction site the entire summer. The Newport Marriott has been very gracious in offering their restroom facilities to visitors who are averse to using the port o johns. The ladies' room will eventually be doubled in size and the men's room and part of the bus station will be renovated. A new heating and HVAC system were also incorporated into the bid. The work was done by GEM Plumbing. The Bureau is also replacing the roof. The building is eighteen years old, therefore, updating is necessary. The overall project is a \$450,000.00 grant from RIPTA. The Bureau's portion is \$45,000.00 and the city's portion is \$35,000.00. The Bureau has committed \$20,000.00 to the roof and the city has committed \$22,000.00. The construction project is sixty days behind schedule. RIPTA is holding them to the fines for everyday they are behind schedule.

V. NEW BUSINESS:

A. Chairwoman Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano recognized guest, Ken Bianchi from the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority. He was given an award for being a partner in many of Newport County's industry events. Under Ken's leadership, the Rhode Island Turnpike and Bridge Authority has displayed banners at their toll plaza announcing events in Newport County; also advertised on and supported the CVB web site; and provided grant funding for the CVB video and DVD. Ken has personally recruited several conferences to Newport. Ken has been a strong ambassador and a champion of the Newport travel industry and an avid supporter of the arts.

B. Rep. Paul Crowley reflected on the origin of the Newport County Convention & Visitors Bureau for the new board members. Rep. Crowley first introduced a bill in the legislature to establish a local hotel tax in 1981. With the passage of the local tax, the Newport Convention Authority was established. Eventually a consistent form of funding was established. The most recent legislation, with separation of powers, is what established today's board of directors. Rep. Crowley shared some of the reasons that he felt the Bureau was so successful. He said it was due to a highly qualified and stable staff, the fact that it is a non membership organization, it serves both the tourism and local community, and all materials and publications are high quality. He encouraged new board members to stay the course, but not to be afraid to try something new and to be open to ideas and suggestions.

C. Chairwoman Councilperson Jeanne Marie Napolitano asked for volunteers to work with Len Panaggio on a subcommittee to write the center's by-laws. Please email Evan Smith if you would like to volunteer. A subcommittee should be set up by the next board meeting. Once the by-laws are written, they will be reviewed by the entire board.

VI. OLD BUSINESS:

There was no other business discussed.

VI. ADJOURNAMENT:

A motion was made by Len Panaggio to adjourn and seconded by Councilperson Charles Vaillancourt. It passed unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 1:10 p.m.