

BARNEGAT LIGHT TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION

Trustees Meeting Minutes
November 14, 2020

<u>Attending:</u>		<u>Excused:</u>	
Barbara Truncellito	Mary Ann Crutchlow	Tom Zesk	
Rich Brodman	Philip Kahn	Patty Francfort (Committee Member)	
Bill Chmelich	Betsy Aras		
	Kay McDonnell		
	Jack Byrnes		

I. President's Opening Comments

- Approval of Minutes – Barbara Truncellito

Barbara Truncellito called the Trustee Conference Call meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Barbara commended everyone on the Board for the hard work and all that we accomplished this year, especially considering the circumstances.

The Trustees approved the minutes from the October 17, 2020 Trustee Meeting. Motion made by Rich B., seconded by M. Crutchlow.

II. Reports

- Membership Report – Rich Brodman

Rich noted 540 members. This time last November we had 558 members, so we are 18 behind. The final for 2019 was 564 - we're close. Discussion of membership drive for 2021 - thinking that we may not be able to meet publicly until July 2021. Having a meeting outside in 2021, with people socially distancing, would possibly work - but it will be dictated by the status of the virus and a vaccine. We should consider going ahead and looking for speakers for these 2021 outdoor meetings and be sure the speakers are flexible as to not needing video or slides to go along with their presentation.

The concerts went well this past summer so it's possible we could do the same with our meetings; the mayor is open and encouraging of us using the Pavilion for our gatherings - even possibly hosting the Wine and Cheese event there - perhaps in July if need be.

Bill suggested another way to attract members might be to ask our current members to refer someone for membership and then give the referring person a small rebate on their membership.

Rich feels that our best ability to engage our members again is to have some physical presence. Scheduling a rain date for these potential 2021 outdoor meetings would be prudent.

○ Treasurer's Report – Bill Chnelich

Bill presented a Forecast of our results for the year 2020, forecasting that we would end the year with a Fund Balance of approximately \$14,000. The year's results were characterized principally by no spending on General Meetings or a Wine & Cheese Social, offset by \$2,750 of charitable donations for the JCTA Covid-19 Fund, the First Aid Squad, the Fire Dept, the Garden Club and an air purifier for the Post Office. In addition, almost \$7,000 of member donations to the JCTA Covid-19 Fund were passed through the BLTA.

Bill also presented a Draft Plan for 2021. The Plan assumes:

- a small increase in membership,
- continuation of a Printed and mailed Newsletter,
- reinstatement of three General Meetings and a Wine & Cheese Social
- contributions to charity of \$1,500 (to be further delineated)
- spending approximately \$2,000 to set up the Wild Apricot membership and communication system. This system will replace the aging Excel database system and the Constant Contact communication system and Swipe (credit cards) as Wild Apricot has its own payment system that must be used to avoid unacceptable fees. There are expected to be financial cost savings but not until 2022. The savings should come from dropping Constant Contact, Swipe and a reduction in IT consulting costs.
- an ending Fund Balance of \$14,500.

The biggest 2021 Plan variable is whether we go with Wild Apricot in 2021. Bill feels we should forge ahead with our pursuit of Wild Apricot because our current membership database is aging and because members' expectations of electronic communications keep increasing.

We do continue to have a few people who refuse to provide email addresses (50 to 100) so we probably will need to continue to snail mail some materials; however, this would not be to a lot of people – a small expense. Phil feels that we still need to be careful about putting everything online as folks still seem to engage more with getting a physical newsletter in the mail – there's something about having the actual item in your hands. Most members agreed with this.

Bottom line – it's most likely that for 2021, we will continue with our current system as we begin setting up Wild Apricot for going live with Membership Renewals in the Spring of 2022.

○ BLTA Website and Social Media – Betsy Aras and Kay McDonnell

Betsy updated the group on the website and social media:

Facebook continues to be popular with 283 members; 260 active members; and 34 posts over the past month – up 143%. Posts are seen by well over 160 people.

The Website numbers continue to be flat with 204 Sessions and 542 page views. New visitors to the website number 76% of the traffic while returning members account for 26%. The Social Media team feels that we need to do a little rehaul of the website to make it more accessible to specific information that our members need – links and resources for homeowners and not articles from The Sandpaper.

Barbara explained that the website history shows why it was built the way it was and how we have now evolved, adding Facebook and Constant Contact to connect with our members. The website worked back then but it's time to adjust it now.

Rich commented, after looking at the Holgate website, that streamlining our website so it takes a lot less clicks to find pertinent information would be a big improvement and may encourage the public to use the website more as a tool.

The decision was made to go ahead and revamp the website. Betsy will work with Marie on this.

○ Borough Council – Barbara Truncellito

The Borough Council held a live meeting on November 4th (*moved to first Wednesday due to Veteran's Day*). Rich B. attended. The significant topic was the Water Meters. Date has been moved to December 1st as deadline to pick up your water meter. The town is grappling with what type of financial penalties to put in place for those who do not pickup and get their water meter installed – most likely having the homeowner pay for the cost of the water meter; and, if the town has to install it, the homeowner will be charged by the borough for this installation. Letters were sent. Phone calls will be made, etc.

○ School Board Election– Barbara Truncellito

Three new members were elected to the Long Beach Island Consolidated School District BOE – one from Long Beach Township, Ship Bottom, and Surf City. The strategic plan was put on hold by the Governor until January 2021; therefore, the discussion of the grammar schools is on hold.

○ Joint Committee of Taxpayer Associations (JCTA)– Barbara Truncellito

Barbara reported on the meeting of the Board of the JCTA. Bill C. gave a presentation at the JCTA meeting about options for their tax status. Bill put together a memo ahead of time about non-profits; everyone had read it and they were very receptive to the information presented. No decision has been made but they are moving forward.

The JCTA has a new logo – it was agreed that while we would most likely post it on our website at some point, we would not use it in our communications to avoid confusion.

- Survey – Should we do one in the Spring? What topics? – Barbara Truncellito

POTENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- We now have 3 forms of communication – Facebook, Website, Newsletter. Ask our membership which mode of communication they prefer or which mode they use most to access the BLTA.
- Would our members be willing to attend 2021 General membership meetings outside at the Pavilion? We would include a Rain Date for these meetings.
- Ask people to share about their water meter installation? What was their cost (in a range?), etc.?
- Should the Borough Council meetings be offered on Zoom so more people could attend?

- Holiday Card and/or Newsletter

The 2021 newsletter – format should stay the same, but we will shoot for an April mailing date. MaryAnn agreed that this would be much better. Barbara would like to see one page scheduled for information from the Borough Council. Additionally, for articles coming from board members – everyone should ‘stay in their lane’, and not try to comment on other people’s articles to the point where that article gets rewritten.

Holiday card: The picture of Barnegat Lighthouse and Gazebo with the writing on bottom was chosen. It will be sent through Constant Contact the first or second week of December to all email addresses. There will be no written newsletter accompanying it.

III. New Business – Items for Discussion

Bill C. wondered if we should approach the town to determine what goes on with our water department? Not much is published about it – should we ask for the audited financials? We could find out what the cost was to purchase the meters. We could be better positioned to share this information with our members.

Barbara had expressed condolences to the Wasilewski family on the death of Kip, from herself and the BLTA Board. There will be a memorial service at some point as well as an obituary.

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:08. The next Trustees meeting will take place on Saturday, January 9, 2021 at 10:00 AM via Zoom. Kay will send out the invitation.

Recorded and submitted by:

Betsy Aras
Substitute Recording Secretary
November 14, 2020