

BARNEGAT LIGHT TAXPAYERS' ASSOCIATION
Trustees Meeting Minutes
January 9, 2021

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

I. President's Opening Comments

o Approval of Minutes – Barbara Truncellito

Barbara Truncellito called the Trustee Conference Call meeting to order at 10:03 a.m.

Barbara reiterated that, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, we did very well last year in terms of collecting dues, and communicating with the people in town – which is the purpose of the BLTA. We also received compliments from the JCTA, former president John Tennyson, and others on the website rehaul. Congratulations to everyone.

The Trustees approved the minutes from the November 14, 2020 Trustee Meeting. Motion made by R. Brodman seconded by J. Byrnes.

II. Reports

o Membership Report – Rich Brodman

Rich noted 541 members at end of year 2020 versus 564 at end of 2019 – 23 less members in 2020. This includes lifetime members. Lifetime members total 87. Additionally, some lifetime members do send in a contribution anyway.

The open rate on the January 4, 2021 Constant Contact email introducing the website overhaul (as of 1/8/2021) was 68% open rate. 52% click rate, which is good – it means 52% of the people clicked and looked at the new website. The December 2020 Holiday card had a 71% open rate. Click rate is number of people who actually click and look at a link.

o Treasurer's Report – Bill Chnelich

Bill presented (use written one from Bill)

The year-end Treasury Report is included for your review. The results are similar to the forecast that we discussed at our meeting in November. After approval today, this report will be posted to our newly revamped website.

A few items to note:

1. Dues income is up by about \$1,800, principally as a result of increasing our dues rate to \$25 from \$20.
2. Contributions for the JCTA COVID-19 Fund from our members totaled \$7,000, up by \$300 from the last report. BLTA added \$1,000 of its funds to this cause bringing the BLTA's total 2020 donations for this cause to \$8,000.
3. IT Costs are up by \$900, principally related to extra work to add PayPal and Stripe to our payment options. Other improvements were also made. More reliance on IT also resulted in a \$1,000 reduction in printing and postage costs.
4. Meeting Refreshments are down by \$1,000 because we held no inperson meetings.
5. Donations included \$500 each for the First Aid Squad, Fire Department, and the Garden Club. We also purchased an air purifier for the Post Office.

The final annual result is that **we increased our Fund Balance by \$1,790, ending with \$14,023 in the bank.**

Motion to approve treasury report by R. Brodman, second by K. McDonnell. Motion passed.

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

FACEBOOK Data (November 9, 2020 to January 7, 2021)

- 291 Members (*up 8 members*)
- 291 Active Members
- 38 Posts (*down 16% most likely due to the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holiday*)
 - Posts continue to be seen by well over 150 people. Pictures posts continue to draw the most activity. Comments are 99% positive, when made.
 - People asking to post items continue to be monitored and are often denied as their post question is something that the BL Borough or another entity needs to answer (i.e. water meter questions, etc.) – an email is sent to them offering a suggestion for how they can get their question answered. This way we don't turn the Facebook page into a running comment page.

WEBSITE:

Barbara stated that the website's new look is outstanding visually, easy to navigate, etc. and that we've received good comments already.

WEBSITE Data

October 2020

- **Users: 260**
- **297 Sessions** (down 53.5%)
- This month 60.9% of visitors were direct as opposed to 26.9% organic search – a switch from previous months.

November 2020

- **Users: 144**
- **178 Sessions** (down 40%)
- This month 65.7% of visitors were direct as opposed to 19.6% organic search – a continued switch from previous months.

December 2020

- **Users: 751**
- **871 Sessions**
(These numbers seem skewed; perhaps due to Marie doing her rehaul of the website)
- This month 59.9% of visitors were direct as opposed to 35.3% organic search – still a good trend of people going to our website directly which probably indicates a repeat user.
- The website has been rehailed by our webmaster, Marie, after Betsy shared with her the vision of what the new look should be. Marie also shared some of her recommendations and, together, the site was transitioned from posting mainly articles and events from The Sandpaper to a website that is more informational and a resource for Barnegat Light residents and visitors. Our goal being to enable users to go to the website often, find the information they are looking for quickly and use the site as a reference to find activities, websites, answers to homeowner questions, etc.
- The secondary goal applies to the Social Media team – although the site needs to be monitored throughout the month by a member of the team, that individual only needs to provide a monthly update to Marie – this will be done the last week of January (for February) and so on. (previously that individual was needing to send an update weekly to Marie, which was very time consuming).
- The website went 'live' the end of December; however, we did not formally announce the new look until January 4, 2021 through a Constant Contact email sent to all email addresses in our database. It was also announced on our Facebook page. We've received positive comments so far.
- We took suggestions and recommendations from Board members and made some changes already. We will continue to work to add information and links to the new website – so please send your thoughts to the social media team as you peruse the site. The goal is to have the information well in hand by the end of March. We have also welcomed the website users to submit their suggestions.

○ Borough Council – Barbara Truncellito

The Barnegat Light Borough Council had their reorganization meeting this past Wednesday, January 6th. This coming Wednesday, January 13th is the regular council meeting, held on Zoom. The council is going to have all their meetings on Zoom at least until spring. Board members are encouraged to attend. There will be a lot going on this year and the mayor is anxious for the BLTA to gear up and have general meetings again. Barbara will still try to get an updated number on what we (the town) still owe for the open space purchase of Coast Guard property (where the Pavilion is located).

○ School Board Election– Barbara Truncellito

Have three new members - all young, well educated women. The Board will be making an announcement soon on the next phase of strategic planning and what the dollar amount would be vis a vis selling the Ship Bottom property and adding on to the Surf City school. Nothing concrete has happened as of now but the plan, after 10 years of discussion, is to sell the Ship Bottom property - the dollar amount for this sale will be substantial. The Board is hoping that the money from that sale will cover the cost of renovating/adding on to the EJ School.

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

Barbara reported on the meeting of the Board of the JCTA. The JCTA agrees on the issue of concern about the increase in coyotes on the island. They will be sending a letter to the editor regarding the coyotes - it will be an advisory as what to do if you find a coyote in your backyard. There has been many more sightings on the island - everyone is talking about it. They are often seen at 8:30 in the morning just crossing the street. Concerns include potential issues that could arise with someone's child or small pet.

The JCTA is going to have a "BIG" check made showing the money we've all donated to support the St. Francis Food Bank and SOCH during this past year of the pandemic. There will be a 'photo-op' on this to better publicize what the local taxpayer associations have contributed.

The JCTA is trying to work with Surf City and Ship Bottom to encourage them to become members of the JCTA.

Regarding the current COVID-19 Fund: the JCTA has continued to disperse funds incrementally - they held up on the hospital donations for the moment as SOCH doesn't need meals for their employees. SOCH has formed a sub-group called "Circle of Compassion". Any monies from our past donations are now in this fund and it is used for front line healthcare workers who are having issues paying their bills as they are working longer hours, thereby paying extra childcare, etc. Going forward the JCTA may put additional money into that fund. The current COVID-19 Fund will be kept open for the next few months. St. Francis Food Bank continues to get money from this fund as they continue to have a need. Although the BLTA is not asking right now for any additional money to be donated towards this fund, anyone can still donate money through the BLTA, earmarked the JCTA COVID-19 fund, and the BLTA will forward it to them.

Barbara has seen a lot of progress with the JCTA and more issues will be on the table for 2021 including flooding, school boards, and tax bill dollars (i.e. where they go - what do we get specifically on the island in terms of services, etc.) Having Ginny Haines speak at our past BLTA general meetings has been

positive – she has been instrumental in helping Barnegat Light get the bay beach cleaned up, the storm drains cleaned more often, etc. She also continues to be involved with the Open Space program in Ocean County.

○ Newsletter

The 2021 newsletter

Various topics were discussed for the feature article for our 2021 BLTA Newsletter. We settled on **“Wild Life in Barnegat Light” or a similar title**. R. Brodman commented that during this past year of quarantine, there have been many ecological happenings with regard to wildlife – examples include: Rich’s involvement in rescuing a baby seal that ended up on our beaches; a pod of whales and dolphins who frolicked off the beach last May for over an hour; many residents helping turtles as they crossed Bay Avenue or the Boulevard to lay their eggs; the increase in turtle nests this past year as more folks were in Barnegat Light earlier in the spring and there were more sightings and rescues – the turtle nesting sites were full; the Osprey nest where the female laid 3 eggs and all of them hatched; the young ones all fledged; the dead whale that washed up on the beach near Barnegat Inlet; the new Piping Plover nesting area near the lighthouse and the other wildlife that you can find there as well, including swans. All of this will be turned into a feature article sharing with our members what we’re seeing here in BL and how folks might support or get involved in local wildlife programs.

- We will remind the Borough representatives that their information for our newsletter is limited to one page.
- **The 2021 Newsletter will be mailed in early April 2021** (hopefully by then we will have been able to obtain the most definitive information for our upcoming summer programs)
- **We will separate the newsletter mailing and the membership renewal form** Discussion of separating the newsletter and the renewal membership form. We will keep the same number of pages for our newsletter.
- Let’s try to include some good current wildlife/ecological pictures in our articles.
- **Board members** writing their articles should send the write up to MaryAnn, copying Barbara and Rich. **Articles are due the first week in March 2021**
- Membership Renewal campaign in 2021 will have several approaches as we continue our push to go digital:
 - A QR code will be added to the newsletter which takes them to membership renewal page on website.
 - A separate email will be sent to members through Constant Contact asking for their renewal and following up with those who do not respond.
 - A snail mail membership renewal will be sent to all those who don’t provide email addresses.
- **A Constant Contact email** will be sent in February explaining the separation of the newsletter and the membership renewal ahead of time.

○ Survey Ideas

Survey Monkey

We’ve done many surveys in past years so should we pursue one in 2021?



After referring to the list from our November Board meeting, it was decided that a survey should be sent regarding our communication:

We now have 3 forms of communication - Facebook, Website, Constant Contact Monthly Newsletters. Let's ask our membership which mode of communication they prefer, or which mode they use most to access information from the BLTA. B. Chnelich will work on this. It would be sent out around the same time as our winter newsletter.

III. New Business – Items for Discussion

○ Wild Apricot Update:

K. McDonnell discussed her progress with transitioning us to Wild Apricot, which would serve our needs for a database, website, and emailing capabilities - all in one program. She shared with the Board what some of the pages may look like and what information we can collect, reports that can be generated, etc. Discussion continued as to whether we should try to run Wild Apricot parallel (but in the background) in 2021 (a beta run) as a way of testing the program.

It was decided that Kay would work with the appropriate board members (R. Brodman, P. Kahn, and B. Chnelich) to confirm that we are good with how the program is looking and working for us before we decide to start using the Wild Apricot database in conjunction with our current database for 2021.

○ General Meetings and Speakers for 2021

R. Brodman feels that we will have general meetings in 2021, hosting all of them outdoors at the Pavilion. We do need to start thinking about speakers for these meetings - especially finding speakers who do not need to use video or projection, etc. Additionally, we should also plan for hosting our Wine and Cheese party outdoors - perhaps in June. Possible speaker recommendations include *Ginny Haines, Freeholder; The Coast Guard; new Businesses in town such as Agnello Market; A speaker for the Barnegat Light Fishing Industry; Windmills as it pertains to the BL Fishing Industry; and the LBI Garden Club.*

IV. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:04 p.m. The next Trustees meeting will take place on Saturday, February 13, 2021 at 10:00 AM via Zoom. K. McDonnell will send out the invitation.

Recorded and submitted by:

Betsy Aras
Substitute Recording Secretary
January 9, 2021