

Explorers Edge Board Meeting Minutes: January 17, 2012

Location: Delta Sherwood Inn 1090 Sherwood Rd. Muskoka ON, P0B 1J0

Present: Jack Hay, Tony Armstrong, Gary Froude (Chair), Don MacKay (Secretary/Treasurer,) Dan Feasby, Andrew Ryeland, Michelle Berry, Jamie Hopkins, Dave Stewart

Staff: James Murphy, Barrie McAndrews

Call to Order: Chair Gary Froude called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m.

1. New Business to be added to agenda:

Tony Armstrong wanted to ensure there would be some time to discuss OTMP controlling RTO funding and the contract for stats which has gone unfulfilled. Gary Froude confirmed this was the sixth item on the agenda.

2. Approval of minutes

Motion: Moved by Tony Armstrong that the Minutes from December 14th, 2011 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Dan Feasby

Carried

3. 2012/13 Year 3: Budget presentation

James Murphy reviewed operational plan draft and changes recommended by Laurel Reid as well as budget line items starting on page 6 of the draft operational plan. Gary Froude mentioned that task for this meeting was to balance the budget so that we were not in a deficit.

The asset study line as this is being done in the current fiscal year. This would allow budget room moving forward.

Andrew Ryeland suggested putting office files on cloud rather than investing in an office server.

Michelle Berry asked about staff raises and salary James Murphy explained that a bonus structure had been discussed with the Executive and that staff wages were its own line item where last year this item was buried.

Directors and liabilities insurance could be possibly lowered and that EE would look for a new vendor through the RFP process in 2012/2013.

Don Mackay suggested that board budget should be left as is. This lead to a round table discussion about the benefits of having more webinars and that there are costs associated with doing webinars as well but could be more convenient for quick turnaround meetings.

Tony Armstrong asked about AGM budget and what items amounted to the assigned budget amount. It was suggested by Andrew Ryeland that we look to piggyback off other association AGMs to trim this budget. James Murphy advised budget for 2011/12 was a fraction higher. AGM awards were also discussed as well as how these awards would be given out; suggestions included Chambers or associations in the Explorers' Edge area.

James Murphy discussed research and suggested trimming the measurement tracking component. He also went into detail about the added line item of Visitor Tracking and Benchmarking which RTO 7 is currently doing at information centers; (Dave Stewart later corrected the table that this was being implemented by RTO 9,) this visitor tracking would be implemented as a guestbook type idea or app. Round table discussion ensued about how best to implement visitor tracking and benchmarking and what tools/partnerships were available to assist Explorers' Edge with starting this.

James Murphy discussed the budget line item workforce development and advised RTOs 4, 7 and 12 would put in a dollar figure to dedicate time to workforce development, the budgeted amount and associated cost still needed to be confirmed. Michelle Berry mentioned that there are so many other organizations providing training programs like this that she is not sure there is a need or value for this type of program. She mentioned that because of the wide array of businesses in the Explorers' Edge area that this type of program may not be applicable to all the operators represented by EE. She recognized the importance but thinks that we should leave this to the employment centers, colleges and other organizations that specialize in this. Daniel Feasby added that our focus needs to be putting "heads on beds" and visiting attractions. James Murphy summarized that this would be a good way to collaborate with other RTOs and communities to be engaging. Jamie Hopkins advised 2 years ago, when discussing the role for RTO 12/ EE was to market and while he recognizes the importance of workforce development he thinks that we need to continue to focus on marketing. Don Mackay added that there have been past comments that perceive this as part of our role. He also added that if we put together a workforce development strategy it would have to be done better than what is already being done. Andrew Ryeland suggested cutting this line significantly until we had more details on the program. Gary Froude advised that to keep with the agenda time we move to the next item.

James Murphy discussed the website and the current winter marketing, there was a discussion around the board table about when to start the spring campaign but it was decided this was a logistical decision and that the dates of starting the spring campaigns would be fine-tuned.

James Murphy reviewed product development and suggested we trim this budgetary line slightly.

Google Ad Words campaign was discussed. James discussed also including Facebook ads and mentioned the successes by EE. Each operator would have the words Explorers' Edge Naturally Adventurous – followed by the operator name. The discussion revolved around the benefit of doing an all-encompassing Google Ad words campaign that we could then track. Daniel Feasby explained another problem with focusing on Facebook ads is that they are less trackable as a member benefit and that some operators do not have Facebook business pages.

Photo/Image bank was discussed and James explained that there are sources for summer images but there is a deficiency of fall and winter images and that he didn't see this as a line item continuing in next year's budget. Jamie Hopkins confirmed that this was to help us fill gaps and that it would be accessible to everyone.

The online reservations system was discussed and James Murphy referred back to Jackie Leung's past suggestion of - if we are going to support a communal reservation system, we look for a system that works for a broader range of businesses. Daniel Feasby asked why we are continuing to invest in this when operators are not happy with the performance of this. Andrew Ryeland suggested that this be sliced from the budget. It was discussed whether the consumer prefers to go direct to the consumers site. Jamie Hopkins advised he would like to see some of this reallocated keeping a portion to match previous years and reallocate the remainder. James Murphy suggested taking this line to previous budgetary spends and reallocate the remainder.

James Murphy confirmed that reallocation from online reservations was being reallocated into marketing and social media.

Insurance was being changed from \$7,000 to \$3,500.

Research was changed from \$50,000 to \$20,000.

Workforce Development was discussed and Tony Armstrong suggested just adding a webpage and putting links online for different training programs available. With workforce development being accomplished through staff time this budget line was removed.

Don Mackay asked that we take \$14,500 from Google Ad Words and \$30,000 from Transacting.

Daniel Feasby confirmed that budget was now balanced. James Murphy is going to reconfirm the budget.

Jamie Hopkins confirmed that we can reallocate budget up to 30% for each line item without approval. He suggested that we refine the budget so that each line item is looking at what we may need to have for each line suggestion.

Motion: Jamie Hopkins motioned to approve the budget,

Seconded: Andrew Ryeland

Carried

Terms of reference was discussed by Tony Armstrong.

James Murphy discussed next steps which included circulating the budget as both an excel file and document. Draft terms of reference will be sent with draft operational plan. Tony Armstrong is going to come to the office and work with Kate Monk to see if this document can be shortened.

4. **Governance Committee**

Tony Armstrong also discussed governance and wanted to confirm length of time a member can serve on the board. Also wanted to discuss if a board can resubmit their name to serve a second term and that board selection process recommend new board members based on who is most qualified. He asked that the bylaw be sent for review by the board. This would serve to ensure the board maintains brain trust. He also advised that EE would need a nominating committee once the bylaws were reviewed.

5. Marketing and Communications Update

James Murphy reviewed the e-newsletter which launched yesterday evening and the reports tracking. Gary Froude wanted to confirm the design costs for the html coding. Andrew Ryeland suggested we add the share button for each point in the newsletter. James then reviewed the website changes. It was suggested that we stay open to selling ad space on the right side of the website pages. Andrew Ryeland wanted to bring up the search function that was removed from the website. He suggested we add a Google Search Bar which would make it possible for site visitors to search all words on the website.

6. OTMP Consumer Insight Feedback

Tony Armstrong discussed previous board meetings motion to discuss OTMP funding and request the money be returned for research report that has not been delivered by the specified date of 10 months. Don Mackay suggested we move forward and ignore future OTMP projects. Andrew Ryeland suggested dedicating some time at a future meeting to review the stats and benchmarks provided to him by Laura Hernando. Tony Armstrong wanted to propose an amendment to this motion that we recommend future boards not enter into this type of contract.

Motion: Tony Armstrong made a motion to amend this original motion that we express our concern of the time it has taken for this report to come to fruition and that we recommend that future boards not enter into contracts with OTMP.

Seconded: Don Mackay

Carried

7. Round table discussion

Tony Armstrong discussed possibility of lobbying to shorten school year. He mentioned discussing this with unions and Michael Lawley/Muskoka Tourism. Andrew Ryeland asked that a motion be sent to him so that it also be brought forth to chamber offices. Jamie Hopkins mentioned that this should also be brought forth to TIAO. Membership with TIAO was discussed. James Murphy advised that the next year's TIAO membership has been invoiced but not yet paid by EE.

Next Meeting: Gary Froude proposed next board meeting date as Feb. 14th 9:30am – 12:30pm at Kudos Kuisine.

James Murphy wants the agenda items for the next board meeting to be current financial standing on 2011/12 budget, update on marketing from Peter, and have Beth Potter (TIAO) present. Don Mackay

mentioned that we need to have next year's marketing plan discussed and have some initial feedback provided. Andrew Ryeland asked that Laura Hernando present for 15mins on stats.

Daniel Feasby also asked that we investigate more online meetings, when are we going to switch from winter marketing to spring and wanted to know if we are on track to spend budget by spring.

James Murphy advised that while triple checking the budget and allotted money from the ministry that there was some possible confusion over the amount being budgeted for, upon reconfirmation of the budget Don proposed it come from programs to keep things simple. Daniel Feasby advised visitor tracking and benchmarking would be the budget line to change in order to account for budget deficit, Jamie suggested we take a portion from marketing and visitor tracking. Don suggested removing visitor tracking and if necessary applying this program out of the marketing budget.

Tony Armstrong asked what happens if other RTOs don't spend their money what happens to this and asked if there was any possibility this could be offered up and divided among the other RTOs? Discussion ensued.

8. Motion: Motion to Adjourn by Michelle Berry

Seconded: Jamie Hopkins

Carried