

Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, September 18, 2012
Glen Burney Lodge, Parry Sound

Present: Tony Armstrong, Lois Baron-Ralph, Michelle Berry, Daniel Feasby, Jerry Feltis, Gary Froude (Chair), Mike Laba, Jackie Leung, Don MacKay, Jim Murphy, Andrew Ryeland, Nicole Saulnier, Ken Turner, Andy Vitch, Diane Wiber

Absent: Randy Mitson

Staff: James Murphy, Erin Wilcox

Guests: Laura Hernando (MTCS)

Call to Order: Chair Gary Froude called the meeting to order at 9:50am

1. Approval of Agenda - Tuesday, September 18, 2012:

Motion: moved by Don MacKay

Seconded: Nicole Saulnier

Carried

2. Approval of Minutes - June 19, 2012

Motion: Moved by Michelle Berry

Seconded: Andrew Ryeland

Carried

3. Financial Presentation to August 30, 2012 – Don MacKay (Treasurer)

Don MacKay presented financials. He indicated that EE is a simple organization to be treasurer of because of extensive checks on programs and the pre-approved budget for the year. He indicated that EE has spent \$646,000 of allotted budget (2/3 spent so far). Dan Feasby asked how much has been spent to date. James Murphy clarified that there are 5 transfer payments per year; the gap in spending represents payments received already. Jerry Feltis requested a check on payroll expenses. James Murphy replied we are on budget. Don Mackay clarified this year's vs. last year's TPA

Motion: moved by Don MacKay that the financials to September 30, 2012 be approved by the Board.

Seconded: Jerry Feltis

Carried

4. Executive Director Update- James Murphy:

James Murphy updated the Board on work that has happened since the last Board meeting on June 19, 2012, including specific outreach workshops, ED attendance at 3rd party events, ED presentations to tourism stakeholders, ED assistance with procurement, and operator engagement. He reported

on committee work that had been accomplished. He gave updates on the Summer and Fall campaigns, and on the Fall edition of Fuel & Fun (F&F), which was developed and deployed entirely in-house. He reported on all interactions with MTCS including TPA reports, product development report, fall marketing report, progress report, and the new partnership model. James Murphy also reported on his meetings with OTMPC on regional marketing (BB and Toronto), the consumer insight research project, and how to better work with OTMCP for programming. He reported on his meetings with other RTOs, including monthly conference calls and in person meetings in Toronto. He reported on Human Resources initiatives, including the creation of contracts for services delivered by Barrie McAndrews, Virginia Hastings, Scott Turnbull, Tyler Morrison, and Andy Hansen, and monthly reviews with staff for Kate Monk and Erin Wilcox. He gave an update on the office move to 11A Taylor Road in Bracebridge. He reported on the administration of first round applications/programs for the Tourism Product Development.

Mr. Murphy informed the Board of upcoming meetings requiring Board participation, including October (governance workshop, operational planning workshop, OTMPC consumer research webinar); November (Community Relations Committee and board session, operational plan feedback); December 4, 2012 board meeting, budget allocations. (The December Board meeting set for early December to take into account family and holiday time.) No other specific dates will be set until availability of Board is further determined.

Don MacKay noted it would be beneficial to ask other RTOs for their wins. Jerry Feltis indicated he speaks to fellow members on the Resorts of Ontario Board and not a lot of operators outside of RTO12 are happy with their RTOs. Operators from RTO12 who are present speak to success of RTO12 as an operator-positive entity. Nicole Saulnier noted that she has followed RTO since its inception and applauds this organization for having operators take the lead.

5. Committee Updates:

Transacting Committee - Jerry Feltis, Chair

Jerry Feltis reported on the meeting of the Transaction Committee and noted that Georgian Bay Country's Anna Marie Harris participated as a member. He indicated the results of Spring F&F were discussed in order to develop a Fall edition of the package. The committee considered the implications of the program and potential to make F&F the signature package for EE. Andrew Ryeland requested alternate versions of logo for each type of business. Jerry Feltis discussed the preliminary results of the Fall campaign (395 packages claimed) and the sub-regional distribution (24% Almaguin, 36% Parry Sound, 38% Muskoka, 0.9% Algonquin). Andrew Ryeland asked if there are ways to encourage participation in lower utilized groups such as hotels and motels. Jerry Feltis responded that resorts will always be biggest draw due to amenities. James Murphy noted that with regards to hotel chains, some are franchises and held to standards and policies set by corporate policy. Jerry Feltis noted that if F&F becomes a brand program for EE, other accommodations categories will see growth. Andy Vitch pointed out that F&F helped sell out first two weeks of

September for him. He remarked that the promotion is fantastic, a government-sponsored program that brings business; he said it is also great to use as a closing tool.

Andrew Ryeland requested that moving forward the committee consider using another gas card company as the current supplier does not supply gas in Parry Sound. He asked if the program could be experience-centred instead of accommodation-centred. Says people do not come to the region to stay at a hotel, they come to go on an ATV tour and fly in a plane. Jerry Feltis responded that the committee will take comments, but that the requirement for accommodation being minimum two-night stay keeps guests in the region to spend that money on the experiences. Mike Laba asked if experience providers cannot hook up with accommodations to link themselves to them. Andy Vitch noted that travellers come to resorts to go to experiences/attractions; they come to hotel/motels to go to an event. He also indicated that travellers ask accommodations where to use those vouchers, what is good in the region. Jackie Leung agrees partnering with accommodators is best way to increase reach. Andrew Ryeland noted 90% of his business is day trippers. Gary Froude asked the Board members to keep the discussion to the committee level. Andrew Vitch noted that the program is working as is, and suggested considering another aspect that more benefits experience providers. Andrew Ryeland asked to be included in that that meeting.

Jerry Feltis indicated the next steps for the committee include reviewing voucher redemption, assessing future programming, meeting with representatives from Air Miles, and considering the program in conjunction with upcoming operational planning.

Governance Committee - Tony Armstrong, Chair

Tony Armstrong said the committee's most important item is governance training workshop, and that the committee is finalizing which consultant will facilitate this and the timing of the workshop.

He indicated the committee had had a discussion about the composition of the Board and the possible need for 2 resource seats to be added to the Board composition. The committee requested a Board decision regarding opening two positions on the board for resource people, similar to Jim Murphy from Algonquin Park, with a representative from the Chambers of Commerce and one for DMOs in the region. The discussion was open and frank, with opinions expressed both for and against the notion. In the end, the current structure was viewed as vital to the success-to-date of the Board. The notion of "skin in the game" was repeatedly viewed as a successful vision for this Board and should be continued. All Board members were engaged for an hour or so, with the entire discussion too lengthy to report in detail.

Motion: Made by Dan Feasby that the Board of Directors for RTO12 keep the status quo composition of the Board.

Seconded: Andrew Ryeland

Dan Feasby withdrew his motion that the Board of Directors for RTO12 keep the status quo composition of the Board.

Motion: Made by Jerry Feltis that two non-voting resource seats be added to the Board composition consisting on one for Chamber of Commerce and one for Destination Marketing Organization Representation.

Seconded: Don MacKay

Discussion: Tony Armstrong stated that if people want to be on this Board, they need to make their intentions clear. Jackie Leung stated that individuals can earn the right to be on this Board through strong work at the committee level. Tony Armstrong thanked the Board for input and stated he will take it back to the committee.

In Favour: 2 members

Opposed: 11 members

Abstained: 1 member

Motion Denied.

Marketing Committee- Jackie Leung, Chair

Jackie Leung gave an update on the results of the Summer campaign and the launch of the Fall campaign. Michelle Berry pointed out that the last webinar slides were silent until halfway through and that the webinar did not allow for participants to see comments from others. Jackie asks if we can figure out how to hear comments.

Summer wrap report included in package given at meeting. Summer objective, expand reach on FB FOR THE fall marketing strategy. We have more fans than Ontario Tourism FB Page. Jackie Leung shared that she received bookings through Algonquin Outfitters FB page, as well as through EE FB page. She noted that reach goes up for operators when EE shares their pictures or posts. She pointed out that you can't run a FB page like an island, that you must network with others. Andrew Ryeland spoke to Kate pointing out negative comments to relevant operators, which provides an opportunity to interact with fan and come to own defense.

Summer campaign showed that our best performing Facebook ads are sponsored stories, which is what Steve Irvine of Facebook had pointed out. Cost effective to interact with not only our fans, but all of their fans as well. Glad Steve Irvine came to reiterate that to us.

James Murphy offered to send out snapshot of how a sponsored story works with the minutes to help understand how payments, sponsored stories, reach on sponsored stories, etc. works. He offered to send out a Google Ad sample with minutes as well.

Fall campaign currently in market, launched September 4, 2012. Fuel & Fun being promoted in print in North only to drive traffic to north end of region. Ken Turner asked for feedback on how print ads are succeeding. James Murphy said he would report on that later.

Jackie Leung noted that each operator should be social, utilize their pages, share the EE Tyler Morrison videos, share what applies to you, keep the ball rolling and share what EE is doing with your own audience. James Murphy pointed out that the Tyler Morrison videos are operator driven. These videos allows us to meet with operators, engage with them, and have them tell the story of their region, what they are passionate about, and share what they know to encourage travellers to the region. Brings operators out of the woodwork to take an interest in their business, not only encourages travellers, but makes operators feel like they are a part of EE. Important to overall fabric of the campaign, but almost more importantly to operator relations. Shows EE cares about operators and wants to help.

Jackie Leung said that photos and videos are available on RTO12.ca for operators to use.

Research Tracking and Measurement Committee - Diane Wiber, Chair

The committee is working on two projects.

1. Park to Park Trail Association has been contracted to deliver a questionnaire to operators along the trail to get a better understanding of trail usage and benefits, best practices for operator engagement, and to provide an outline of trail performance indicators. Diane Wiber spoke to how operators along trail are utilizing it for their own benefit. The info gathered will help other trails and our operators to use our trails to their advantage for tourism purposes.

2. Development of a Tourism Indicator Framework: Had a presentation on Monday by Consultant Robert Wong. Tourism performance Indicators (measures current trends in tourism), discussion ensued regarding activity measures (staff actions supporting organizations mission), performance measures (tied to goals set by trends, define the results of activities), productivity metrics (measures relationship between performance and resources, helps manage resource cost effectively). The committee spent a bit of time look at a case study in Carolina; in order to move forward we need to know who leads, over what time frame, how will it be used, what level of investment, what indicators are to be included, what are expectations of primary vs. secondary sources and reporting. (see slide). Make information available to key players within our region to assist with their decision making. I.e. Chambers, DMOs, etc. We become go-to folks with the information, good use of our investment to see others utilize info without reinventing the wheel.

Next Steps:

- Digest and review outcomes of the workshop
- Development of strategy (RFP Process, identify indicators, budget, resource requirements, time frame)
- Complete in time for operational planning

Jim Murphy spoke to what should be included in indicator framework. Diane Wiber spoke to historical precedent, what needs to be there to move forward. Jim Murphy spoke to the overwhelming aspect of that committee presentation, how can this information be brought down to layman's understanding. Andrew Ryeland spoke to Club Class trends through Georgian Bay Country program. Lois Baron-Ralph offered to share the Club Class template with the Board of Directors.

Community Relations Committee - Don MacKay, Chair

Neil Colburn from MTCS attended the last committee meeting to explain the new partnership fund model. Don MacKay reported that the model seems similar to the funding at OTMPC whereby stakeholders give us the money and EE runs the program. Don MacKay suggested that a sub-committee of the Board rather than a third party consultant decide the successful applicants. Dan Feasby agreed and said the ED should receive the proposals, make a summary for committee members to consider with a webinar presentation as well, and then the committee will bring recommendations to the Board.

Motion: Moved by Don MacKay that partnership funding will be vetted by a sub-committee of the EE Board of Directors.

Second: Dan Feasby

Discussion: Mike Laba asks who will head this venture. James Murphy responded that the committee will look at what aspects of programs.

Carried.

Tourism Operator Relations - Dan Feasby

The Committee considered eleven applications for the Tourism Development Fund in June and approved funding for six of them. Approved applications came from Friends of Algonquin Park, Canador College, Park 2 Park Trail Association, the Charles W. Stockey Centre, Huntsville/LOB Chamber, Town of Bracebridge. The Town of Bracebridge event that received funding has since been cancelled, therefore the money will go back into the pot.

The next round of applications were due September 11, 2012.

Jackie Leung asked if there is a way to encourage engagement from more businesses. Andy Vitich noted that operators are inundated with information and that it often takes another operator they know to open their eyes to programs. He suggested Board members talking to operators they know. Mike Laba speaks to Ontario Craft Brewers Association, and makes links between how engagement can grow when coming from other operators.

6. Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport Update, Laura Hernando

Communication between the RTOs and the Ministry has become regular. The Ministry is working closely with RTOs to protect the \$40 million investment and to ensure the money being spent wisely. Program benchmarks will not be at the local level but provincial level. Laura Hernando said that \$20 million in Celebrate Ontario funding will be launched for applications soon.

James Murphy asked for an MTCS presentation of Celebrate Ontario process at the Community Relations Committee to ensure the program is widely understood. He noted that Muskoka received almost \$500K in Celebrate Ontario funds but Parry Sound and the other sub-regions did not receive any.

Laura Hernando said that 5 applications were received from within the Explorers' Edge region for the Tourism Development Fund. She will inform the EE Board who is successful in their application.

OTMP has Sector and RTO committees in place. Scott Davidson of Bethune House part of Sector Committee.

TIAO worked with OTEC, provincial strategy that RTO was asked about, workforce development and training. Can participate in program, identifying partnerships.

She stated that most of the spending by RTOs has been in marketing, as well as photo and video, social media, contesting, apps, mobile booking systems. Consumer website alignment and links, seasonal campaign development, targeting key markets, niche products and market. Newsletters, updates, destination development plans. Extensive industry engagement for RTO12. More focus on performance and return on investment. RTOs conducting valuable research. Workforce development and training, to prepare for labour shortage coming.

James Lynn presenting Tuesday, notes to be supplied for investment attraction piece.

Jerry Feltis speaks to decision to not join TAIO, where is tourism on water safety private members bill (waterfront), gratuity private members bill....both being fought by groups. Laura does not speak to Ministry about these issues.

Round Table/Other Business:

Ken Turner: measuring benchmarks, information would be invaluable.

Jackie Leung: disappointing July

Tony Armstrong: paintball slow in July, heat impacts business. Looks at new options, new programs, and starting biathlon program for winter. Asked guests and they are all staying in personal cottages not at accommodators.

Don MacKay: golf courses in receivership in many regions of Canada and some in Ontario, golf is in for a rough ride through next few years. Found Muskoka to be quieter than in previous years. Revenues up, rounds down

Nicole Saulnier: business down for summer. Too hot to get into an airplane. School year ending later slowed first week of July. August was very profitable. Fall is shaping up to be busy. Henry's closed early this year which affects her packages.

Mike Laba: exciting year at the Muskoka Brewery. Moved the brewery to a new facility in May with associated challenges.. August biggest month in company's' history. Working to make Muskoka Brewery a tourism destination in the region. Looking into creating a Craft Brewery Experience in the region (LOB Brewery, Saw Dust City, etc.).

Andrew Ryeland: down 60% in July. Becoming a service business, reaching out to corporate groups. Honda put BCT in the Honda Ride Guide, goes to each Honda Dealership. Movie being filmed on site.

Andy Vitch: had a great year at Sunny Point, second highest revenue ever (and only open 6 months as opposed to 12). Pet friendly is huge part of business, very few other places allow pets. Rated #1 on Trip Advisor.

Lois Barren-Ralph: Great summer, doubled restaurant size. Asks for board to mentor and reach out to others on how to deal with negative feedback, gives value to operators to how to respond and how to react to negative feedback. Review in Toronto newspaper for the restaurant coming out.

Jerry Feltis: July and August overall down 2%. June up 15%, September up 22%. Restaurant up 30%.

Jim Murphy: Visitation up 2%, fire restriction issues. TedX event brought Adam van Koeverden, becoming ambassador for the park and the region. Oasis TV coming to the park (a park for all seasons). CBC coming to film Wild Canada. CTC filming and still photography on Public Wolf Howl program.

Dan Feasby: great summer at Wright Point Resort.

Motion to Adjourn: Moved by Dan Feasby

Meeting adjourned at 2:05 p.m.

Next Meeting: December 4, 2012

Location: University of Waterloo site, Huntsville