

Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 4, 2012
Best Western Muskoka Inn, Huntsville

Present: Gary Froude, Tony Armstrong, Andy Vitch, Michelle Berry, Diane Wiber, Nicole Saulnier, Dan Feasby, Andrew Ryeland, Mike Laba, Lois Barron-Ralph, Jackie Leung, Randy Mitson, Don MacKay

Absent: Jerry Feltis, Ken Turner

Staff: James Murphy, Erin Wilcox

Guests: Laura Hernando (MTCS), Jim Murphy (Algonquin Park)

Call to Order: Gary Froude called the meeting to order at 9:41am

Approval of Agenda- Tuesday, December 4, 2012:

Motion: Tony Armstrong

Seconded: Dan Feasby

Discussion: n/a

Carried

Approval of Minutes- September 18, 2012

Motion: Tony Armstrong

Seconded: Nicole Saulnier

Discussion: n/a

Carried

Financial Presentation- Treasurer MacKay:

Financials presented for April 1, 2012 to November 30, 2012. The organization is working within the budget and programming laid out in the Transfer Payment Agreement. ED address past meeting comments regarding a perceived payroll discrepancy, this was a matter of having two pay periods not reconciled by the bookkeeper. Treasurer MacKay spoke to the TPA reporting categories and buckets that RTO12 was reporting to the government. MacKay stated he asks questions before signing checks and reviews invoices and that he, on behalf of the board, does not believe in spending money for sake of spending money, if a budget line looks like it will not be spent RTO12 will reallocate as necessary. MacKay reassured the board that money allocated is being spent and accounted for.

Motion: Dan Feasby

Seconded: Tony Armstrong

Executive Director Update- James Murphy:

ED Murphy provided the board with a update that is a continuation for our last board meeting, September 18. In his report the ED started by highlighting the 75+ outreach sessions over the last two months, Regional outreach included:

- Social Media workshops with Bala Cranberry and Burk's Falls Art Organization.
- Organizational presentations and Q&A with University of Waterloo & Georgian College.
- Chamber after hours communication, community & stakeholder engagement
- Partnership Fund education, spoke to operators & organizations about the funding model

Coordinating with outreach ED Murphy updated the board on work involved in managing the Tourism Product development Fund i.e. managing applicants, meeting with applicants, and continued interaction with those coordinating budgets. During the last two months the ED stated that work was also completed in the region with regards to:

- Celebrate Ontario, program with Ministry, engaging with the program, 7 organizations writing references and engaging.
- Board work- operational planning session, updating Laurel Reid. James spoke to committee model, ongoing communication, use of mail chimp.
- Committee chairs interaction, ongoing engagement with them, keeping everyone on the same page.
- Marketing, the ED oversaw marketing campaigns, winter and fall, monitor and review, develop and launch, reutilize winter photos and images.
- Transacting, the ED spoke to closing of Fuel and Fun, work on follow up with operators.
- Fall photography and video, Virginia and Scott.
- Government Process, TPA reports, incorporate their feedback and make changes. 400K in the bank, RTO12 is operating like a well oiled machine.
- MTCS communication, monthly teleconferencing discussing the partnership model, tourism performance indicator model in Toronto.
- OTMPC, specifically consumer insight, RTO advisory committee, expanding on the industry conference in London ON, where Diane Wise and the deputy minister facilitated presentations on way finding and TPA requirements.
- Advocacy for Rideau Canal, maintenance of waterways, not a big issue in our region, does not affect us as fully as other RTOs.
- Enquiries from throughout the province on procurement, membership (hot topic), reservation system, human resources.
- Human resources and industry contracts with Cloud, Bloom strategic solutions, etc (list on slide).

- Explorers Edge staff and the review with FedNor also highlighting the posting of the Social Media manager job description and role in order to have someone in place by April.
- Administration, bookkeeping and accounting, board ask James to let go of some of accounting, pass to Erin Wilcox, weekly financial review, no red flags to date.
- RTO12.ca website the ED mentioned that bi-weekly updates on the site take place and reports numbers are consistent, people are using the website, double uptake over past two months.
- Ed again touched on time involved regarding the tourism product development fund applicants which require constant oversight, some completed, some ongoing and some completed.
- Traffic on vimeo, flicker, ED spoke to operator analytics where in some instances EE is #2 on hits from site, we are the only unpaid referral, operators looking at analytics and seeing value in the free service of EE, great feedback to share.

Joining other organizational committees, the ED highlighted that if time can be made to sit on other organizational committees it would be beneficial to the organization. He spoke to action items moving forward, needs subcommittee for partnership funding, in January gather feedback from committee, February programs circulated to Board. Included in 2013 TPA business plan.

When the presentation opened the floor to questions, Jim Murphy asks to expand on Trent Severn waterway, speaks to Parks Canada and visitor experience. National historic site, do RTOS want unified approach. ED responded not a high priority for him at this point, would love feedback from Jim, ED said not prepared to speak to this at this time but would keep a group of interested board members in the loop outside of the board meeting, no correspondence has been signed off on in which the Chair Froude spoke to not being far enough along to get involved, which he also spoke to being added to distribution list if you require further information. Jim spoke to importance of national historic site, marketing and promotion of this. Laura spoke to GB. Don spoke about how GB is being impacted by water management plan, how water management is creating issues for those using it, ie golf courses, how to conserve, how it is affecting shipping routes, how people are getting into Parry Sound harbour, how is shipment coming in, it is impacting us. Chair Froude spoke to the great lakes committee he sits on, Don responds about supply chain, indicator of cutbacks by government, does not want to pay anymore. Jim replied about downsizing, how it can be better administered by municipalities or sector. Opportunity here to let government know about whose values, some issues we can control, some we cannot. In Jim's time at Algonquin they have had highest snow load, sign of times to come. Wanted to comment on how we should be involved going forward with water.

Chair Froude moved the meeting along by asking board member if anyone would like to put their name forward to join the Partnership Fund committee. ED Murphy spoke to what will be included in that committee, i.e. timeline

- Circulate high level partnership plans and information, before Christmas,
- January the committee will meet to look at what is in the budget, review proposed strategies, see how it fits in with budget and strategy, what fits best with what we are trying to achieve

Currently RTO12 has 15 interested entities, a few great ones that will set benchmark and stated that there is a degree of confidentiality around business submitting competitive business plans for review. Andy Vitich, Lois Barron-Ralph, and Don MacKay offer to take part in committee. Don speaks to this committee should be regionally diverse. Dan offers to take part as well, possibly Jackie Leung expressed interest.

Chair Froude continued the discussion speaking to the tourism summit, having the summit change hands from OTMPC to TIAO. He cited there may be more opportunity for the RTO's to shape what the next conference might look like. Andy asked Chair Froude what the difference between the two is. Laura responds one is agency of government of marketing of province, OTMPS, TIAO works to industry conference, TIAO is funded by multiple sources, membership funding, Don asks about base funding, Laura responds she doesn't think so. Don speaks to challenge in early days to fund TIAO, are now past that, question value of relationship with TIAO and what they bring to the table.

Committee Updates:

Community Relations Committee- Don MacKay: 10:16am

Don spoke to draft operational plan reviewed by our partners. Called meeting last week and four people showed; Perry Harris, Michael Lawley, Jane Templeton, and Cheryl Kelly. Our operational plan was presented and we explained what we were doing. Questions were raised on how the business plan relates to our TPA with the Ministry, specifically the five pillars. It was expressed by the committee chair that we need their input, need to know where we spend our money and how they spend theirs. We need to relate to each other without overlapping.

Don speaks to revised operational plan. On page 24 is the overall philosophy moving forward for the next operational plan, how we will operate and the last page shows where we will spend money. This is how year fiscal ending 2012, March 31, 2013, spend of 1.3 million. Moving down the budget, salaries and benefits going up, shows fixed cost of operating; Don would like to see that number go down while speaking to the big spend going into the market place rather than administration.

Andy asks Don about page two chart, visits and visitor spending and does not understand why we are so low, apologizes to missing last meeting, would like to know what components of other RTOS are that they have more business than us. Randy responds comparing business to spending, break it down to number of people who come and how much they spend. Andy replies how do we not have as many visitors as Simcoe, what is bringing them there that we do not have? Nicole speaks to distance it means to be a traveler, 40km. Jackie replies VFR is part of this, more population in southern Ontario, driving an hour to see family counts as tourism.

Andy asks if we have too many small operators from 1950s who have not progressed, should we help them with an exit strategy in order to encourage new fresh young proprietors in. Nicole replies problem is lack of volume. Tony looks at it not as a problem, but as an opportunity. Don says it is a good wakeup call, need to work harder to get bigger piece of the pie. Don spoke to going forward, meeting again in late January. We need to put onus on us to coordinate marketing in our region, we need to band

together and consolidate our view of tourism for the region. There is an appetite to see GBC and MTMA. James replied Parry Sound Chamber not involved in marketing, they are in workforce development and training, need to coordinate across all pillars to make sure spending is not overlapping with other entities.

Tony spoke to transacting and research going forward, why their budget is larger. Jackie asked is marketing is being cut and transacting is going up, does transacting then cover marketing? Don replied that it is essentially one pot. Don spoke to how research is paramount, how to evaluate and measure what we are doing.

As the board progressed into an operational planning discussion Jackie asks to take five, board breaks.

Upon resuming Don calls for a board meeting in January (January 14, 2013) as it is not prudent to move to a resolution, for the January 31 TPA submission required by the ministry until the board has ample time to reflect and digest the operational plan. A revised operational plan will be circulated at least one week prior to the Jan 14, 2013 board meeting. During this time James has been asked to coordinate other operational plans from other organizations in time for the Jan 14 meeting.

Transacting Committee- James Murphy:

Jerry sends his regrets for not being available. Fuel and Fun closed November 15, operator and consumer survey will be sent out to get feedback on F&F, responses will be compiled and feedback brought to committee on January 7th in Parry Sound. Not much to report, reconciling, recommendations moving forward. James mentioned that is important that we brainstorm in order to tweak tipping point programs and address the need to include more attractions. Andrew spoke to attractions industry; he is in making the program attraction focused, incentive, believe that day tripper and VFR segment are huge and not included properly in current programming. Bottom line putting something in attraction focused, come to take part in attraction and get the vouchers. James reassures the board that the committee will provide a solution for the next committee meeting.

Andrew continued highlight that details will need to be ironed out, but idea that this will incentivise attractions, while still encourage staying over, but will turn day trippers into overnights. Says people come as day trippers more than overnights. Does not want to get rid of other side of Fuel & fun, but think attractions need a boost. People do not come to stay at a hotel, they come to participate in something. Attractions suffer from operating dates, close for winter, thinks he would be selling gift certificates right now if that was the case. Andy spoke to F&F best thing EE does, thinks attractions and accommodators should be mutually exclusive. Do not take funds from F&F for Play & Stay. Perhaps there is a third program, December based gift certificate program, discounted gift certificates.

James addressed the importance of the committee structure and the need to have discussion happen at the committee level before making it to the board level. Tony asked how to make input, go to transacting committee meeting at Log Cabin Inn in Parry Sound January 7, 2012.

Governance Committee- Tony Armstrong:

Tony spoke to organizing a governance workshop so if the operational planning is taking part on January 14th could a governance workshop also take place that day. Two hours for operational plan, three for governance workshop. Don asks what is purpose of governance workshop. Tony spoke to organizations work best when everyone understands the governance. Tony spoke to how we are strong because of a mutual understanding of governance. Dan asked will there be a meeting in June. If we are getting half a new board, should plan to have whole new board on same page regarding governance, workshop to make sure all members are on the same page. Don asks that board policy should be that governance workshop takes place at beginning of all new boards. James spoke to how new board will change, nominations, etc. Dan asks do we need a workshop in January if we are having one in May. Tony spoke to nomination time, in theory half of the board will be leaving at end of March, anyone wishing to stay on submit at end of March, new people come forward to fill spots, committee will short list those wishing to step forward. Tony asks what is the time line, must be in time for AGM. Will circulate beforehand so anyone who wants to be at that meeting has that option.

Marketing Committee- Jackie Leung:

Jackie spoke to seeking feedback working with agency of record, branding and seasonal campaign. She reviewed the summer campaign that built audience, awareness of EE, promotions with contesting, in conjunction with marketing fuel & fun. Results, some data not yet available, can arrange a webinar to get full fall wrap in early January or coincide with a presentation at the January 14 meeting.

The winter 2012 tactical objective to fill beds, key message raise awareness of key activities in the region, research shows people think of our region as summer only, aim to change those perceptions. Operator program, FB deals tab, operators can promote special offers, most traffic comes from special offers. Online targeting to GTA. James spoke to the use of b-roll as 10 second banner ads, reuse the videos, on websites in Toronto, weather network, etc. Winter video and photography, incorporated into operator pages, ie Santa's village, white squall. Jackie urges to check flickr and use images to promote your business.

James spoke to increasing brand recognition, starting to see our pictures show up. Jackie's asked about usage guidelines, do not crop out watermark. James to double check on guidelines. Next steps, marketing committee meeting in New Year, presentation of 2013 marketing plan, no dates yet, anyone welcome to join. Chris Milner from OTMPC has requested to join, great to have him, how we can dovetail with what OTMPC is doing as well.

Andrew asks about search bar on website, James will speak to it when the Tourism Operator Relations Committee presents. Andrew asks who is signed up for e-newsletter, Jackie replied have added 2000 since summer, James will provide stats on January 14th. Andrew asks about android app. Not on our radar yet, James spoke to people using app when campaigns are up. James will give update on app on January 14th. Dan spoke to tactical objectives, heads in beds, Jackie responded Cloud created the ads to direct traffic to EE site.

Andrew asks about Buy Now button, Jackie responds Muskoka Tourism filtered businesses with online reservations have been aggregated, bring to list of anyone who takes online bookings. James responded we are not in the business of closing a sale for operators; we are here to market the product and direct the guest to where they can purchase while also offering tools, expertise and tipping point programs.

Research Tracking & Measurement Committee- Diane Wiber:

Diane spoke to research component of this committee. The initial workshop in September was completed on where research could possibly, more importantly where we want to go. Sat with subcommittee, what spending we would like to have and what to do with it. Steve Smith from the University of Waterloo has been contacted to sit in on meeting, where specific questions will be put forth: what do we want to measure in order to better identify what performance measures should be, how is it related to the organizational structure in place and how this committee, then influences what we are doing. The committee will reconvene in January as James spoke to the importance of having information for each committee.

Don asks about Deloitte research, came from province. Don spoke to waiting on the province. Don spoke to being stuck in administrative quagmire, we have enough data points to move forward, dependent and independent variables. James asked why we want that information. Don spoke to regression analysis, what we can control vs what we can't, those things vs us. How to relate one to predict the other. Andrew replied no one told us to use FB, statistics not that helpful, doesn't care about forecasting, and cannot forecast tourism. James responded details will be discussed at meeting in January. Andy spoke to validity of what Don speaks about, how variables are useful.

Tourism Operator Relations Committee- Dan Feasby:

James spoke to the committee; the committee needs two way communications with operators. To accomplish this we need to develop a communications plan as we are only communicating one way i.e. the newsletter. Strategies that are outlined in the plan include the development of a CRM program that would track relationships and leverage the membership model (current outlined in the RTO by-laws). The plan would also help communicate to our target audiences, RTO members, B2B mailing list, operators identified by us who are in the region "unknown". Tactics of outreach plan would be to establish CRM database, track operators and their contact date, their involvement in programs, becomes foundation of communication. Incentivise membership, encourage interaction and optimal engagement. Do not want to duplicate what other groups are doing with membership, we wish to create optimal engagement, essentially giving a voice to the operators. The communication plan matrix targets several key audiences and includes key messages, call to action & tactic. Additional recommendations that the TOR committee assume ownership of workforce development pillar of the operational plan, based on ability to survey membership, for example; what types of workshops would be useful. The budget outlined for this project will be 18K (broken down on slide). This plan would strengthen the EE membership model for optimal engagement. The value in membership will not come at lost revenue for other entities, rather for one dollar you get a voice at the table, participate in forums, surveyed seasonally, bi-monthly communication post board meeting, TOR committee acts as a member

liaison with board and other committees. James spoke to how this is a wise spend, industry led, gives operators ability to get information and it offers real two way communication – we can go back to operators for information. Internally the Communications Manager roll moves away from social media, towards communication with operators, execute plan and works with TOR committee. James opened the table to questions.

Motion: Made by Dan Feasby relocate 18K from reservation line to Communications Program

Seconded: Don MacKay

Discussion: Jackie agrees, thinks is awesome, puts us on good footing to move towards revenue generating. Laura and James will work on amendment, has to go through process. Andrew points out you cannot participate in programs unless you are a member.

In Favour: 13

Opposed: none

Abstained: none

Motion Carried

Ministry of Tourism, Culture & Sport Update- Laura Hernando:

Laura updated closed program Celebrate Ontario and presented an RTO guide to the board. The document has been in the works for quite a while, recognize language help with new director & staff onboarding, summarizes regional approach, mandate 13 regions, key priorities, what is expected and what opportunities are, as building operational plan information may be helpful.

James spoke that this is available online. Laura continued presenting outlining that the document highlights:

- Workforce development and training, descriptive of what that means.
- Governance administration i.e. training under that umbrella, having an AGM, being accountable to funds allocated. TPA clarifications
- What ministry looks for in business plan highlighting that improvements that have been made and quality has been improved
- Marketing plan, what is needed for that.
- Procurement, single and sole sourcing, what RTOs have asked for over the years
- Terms and conditions of funding, HST information, audited financial statements
- What logo is appropriate for what purpose
- Who to contact at RTO officers, sample templates.

Laura spoke to the possibility of a RTO to submit a multi-year TPA. The board welcomed this news and Don strongly encourages two year TPA. Don also spoke to the amendment factor, how things could be changed if necessary. With the support of the board James was encouraged to take the operational plan back and amend it to include a two year time frame, including TPA information in time for the January 14, 2013 board meeting. James stated this will be done and that all components will be prepared and circulated one week prior to the Jan 14, 2013 meeting.

If there is interest in what is happening in other regions, aka RTO7 survey stakeholders, will have a report in the next month what they could be doing, information out there that could be of use with us. Although landscape seems competitive, there is value in working together..

Round Table/Other Business:

In camera.

Board Reconvened

Motion to Adjourn: 1:16pm Andrew

Seconded: Don

Approved