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**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Monday April 29, 2013
Stocky Centre, Parry Sound**

Present: Tony Armstrong (Vice Chair), Michelle Berry, Daniel Feasby, Jerry Feltis, Gary Froude (Chair), Jackie Leung, Andrew Ryeland, Ken Turner, Don MacKay (Treasurer, Secretary), Mike Laba, Andy Vitch, Nicole Saulnier, Dianne Wiber

Absent: Lois Barron-Ralph, Jim Murphy

Staff: James Murphy

Resource: Laura Hernando (MTCS)

Call to Order: Chair Froude called the meeting to order at 9:30 am

Approval of Agenda – Monday April 29, 2013

Motion: moved by Don MacKay that the Agenda for April 29th Board of Directors meeting be approved

Seconded: Andrew Ryeland.

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Approval of Minutes – Tuesday April 2, 2013

Motion: moved by Don MacKay that the Minutes for the Tuesday April 2, 2013 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Mike Laba

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Executive Director Update

James Murphy updated the board on work completed since the last board meeting, April 2, 2013 that related to;

- 1) Completed board work with committees, specifically the governance, Executive, Marketing and Tourism Operator Relations Committee(s)
- 2) Current Campaigns and Programs: these encompassed the Spring Fuel and Fun, Customer Relationship Management Software, Annual General Meeting and the Financial Audit
- 3) Interaction with different provincial government agencies: OTMPC, OTMPC – Northern Committee, Ministry of Tourism, Sport and Culture, Transfer Payment Agreement, TIAO

MacKay commented on the role of OTMPC supporting plans and strategies developed inter-regionally, stating that we should be cautious of our time making sure there is commitment from OTMPC before presenting a program/plan. Murphy re-iterated that the OTMPC has and is nurturing communication with the RTO's. Hernando updated the board on conversations between the Regional Tourism Unit and OTMPC stating that the RTU is challenging OTMPC to develop better communication and ask the question 'how can OTMPC better align with the RTO's. MacKay again confirms the need for commitment from OTMPC and what is in the best interest of RTO12. Armstrong supports the concept that any work with OTMPC needs to move tourism forward.

Ryeland shared with the board of the directors that Northern Ontario is still in the development stages of governance and establishing process. He went on to share his that the Northern Portal does not include Northern partners from RTO12 and his interest in developing partnerships with RTO12 (A) with regards to the transacting programs. In closing Ryeland would like to have or organization explore and initiate discussion with our northern partners regarding transacting programs. Murphy agrees that there are opportunities to collaborate with RTO13. Froude shares with the board that collaboration across all of Ontario will need to stay on our radio for all aspects of the RTO model.

Murphy thanked the RTU and Hernando in particular in helping our TPA move forward in a timely fashion.

- 4) Communication with other Regional Tourism Organizations specifically regarding the Partnership Program process and OTMPC Strategic Alignment.

Murphy shared with the board progress on the Partnership Funds and how our organization has been able to get funds out into the market place. Several attestation forms have been signed of and third party client service agreements are and have been completed.

- 5) Internal Communication Structure: updated organization chart

Kate Monk, has been promoted to Senior Communication Manager and will be responsible for the alignment of several components of the organization which include graphic design, transacting, social

media, digital tactics, digital images, website etc. The process will include Monday morning status meetings. The process will help identify red flags and work that may or may not be getting done.

Vitch commented on the role of Social Media, specifically the role of the position in empowering operators.

Armstrong reiterated that the board is ultimately responsible to the Ministry of Tourism and the ED is charged with making sure the work is completed as to the requirements of the TPA.

Mackay, after reviewing the organizational chart challenged the board, that, with all the work involved to we have the resources to engage the OTMPC. Both Froude and Leung shared the sentiment that if OTMPC is opening itself up to feedback and engagement we as an RTO need to make an effort (make our voice heard), making sure it moves tourism receipts forward, to engage.

Murphy updated the board on work currently taking place with OTMPC such as there publication, website and programs like the TBEX conference.

- 6) Of Note: Loring and Restoule FedNor request, Georgian Bay Country Interaction and Almaguin Highlands capacity development.

Murphy updated the board regarding next steps and outcomes to the Loring and Restoule strategic plan. FedNor has inquired if Explorers' Edge would be the lead applicant on the Phase One Loring / Restoule Digital Media Plan because the entity Loring and Restoule Business Organization can not apply as they do not have a registered business number.

Mackay clarified that Explorers' Edge would be a placeholder and provide oversight. Incorporation at this point would delay the process according to Feasby. Mackay stated that one of the stipulations upon acting as a placeholder would be that Loring and Restoule Business Organization establish a business number and incorporation.

Feasby stated that expertise and oversight from Explorers' Edge be needed on this project. Mackay highlighted that this needs to been seen as a pilot as we encourage tourism organizations to operate within their own governance and process at an arm's length.

Turner commented that in order to develop capacity in the small rural communities to support tourism momentum that exceptions are required in order to move the needle. Turner would support the pilot idea in establishing identities in sub-regions.

Laba asked for clarification regarding guidance over execution regarding next steps. Murphy shared with the board that the work would be done by a third party and would report directly to the ED.

Mackay enquired about the financial contribution from Loring and Restoule and Murphy shared with the board the draft budget where Loring and Restoule would be finically contributing to the project. Mackay then states that the organization would need to incorporate ASAP and then in due time EE would hand off the project to the new incorporated organization in due time.

Vitch sounded in stating that the Explorers' Edge need to take a more active role while Leung sees this as teaching an organization how to navigate through organizational growth and process. Laba recognizes and agrees with MacKay in that we hand this over to Loring and Restoule once the project is moving forward.

MacKay shares with the board the at this point in time Explorers' Edge will need to continue to develop capacity and work with the established organizations in place.

Feasby:

Motion: To act as an entity/agency on behalf of Loring and Restoule Business Association, in a pilot capacity, to move forward a Phase One application for the development of an Online Visitor Information Centre project.

Seconded: Jackie Leung

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Murphy updates the board on meetings and important dates moving forward:

- Annual General Meeting – August 28, 2013
- Board Governance Presentation – onboarding of new board – June 17, 2013
- July/August – possible board meeting
- Destination Development Plan & Operational Plan – tentative full day meetings for early September.

Froude moves the meeting along asking for committee Reports

Marketing Committee

Leung touches on the recent committee meeting on the 25th of May and how the committee is re-committed. The committee has changed from 22 members down to 12 members. The marketing plan was presented and feedback from the interviews was shared at the committee level. Leung re-iterated the regional approach to the committee. Leung shared with the board the improvement of representation of our partner organizations on the committee.

Governance Committee

Froude spoke to the nomination committee. A total of nine nominations were submitted for seven Director Positions. Noted observations from the nomination committee were that there is a need to have and or groom better representation from Algonquin Park. Another criteria that was noted, is that future nominations and board members work with the organization, Explorers' Edge and the committee level to better understand the organization. Vitch asked if there was any concern with the low number,

or perceived low number of nominations. Armstrong stated that this is on par with last year while Froude noted that current board members may want to take a more active role in recruiting and mentoring future board members or those in the community that want to be more involved. This will help strengthen an understanding of the organization in the region.

Armstrong:

Motion: To accept the slate of incoming board of directors as put forth by the nomination committee. The incoming 2013/2014 Directors includes: Andrew Ryeland, Andrew Vitch, Anthony Rizzo, Diane Wiber, Don MacKay, Gary Froude, Hillary Chambers, Jackie Leung, Jerry Feltis, John Miller, Ken Turner, Michelle Berry, Mike Laba, Nicole Saulnier, Tony Armstrong,

Seconded: Dan Feasby

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Armstrong thanked Froude for his work and the committee for reviewing the slate moving forward.

Armstrong proposed a Governance Presentation that will coincide with a Board of Director On-board meeting. The session will include a governance presentation followed by an on-boarding presentation. Armstrong proposes June 17, 2013 – Bracebridge 9am – 2pm.

Armstrong spoke to succession planning to the executive. Armstrong proposed that once signed on as Treasurer/Secretary the individual would move to Vice Chair, to Chair, this would be a four term commitment. MacKay stated that the by-laws may need to change. Feasby addressed this proposed succession stating the bylaws state a max of three consecutive terms. Vitch proposed to change the terms from two to three years. Armstrong addressed Vitch by stating that this would and could be possible. Feasby proposed that the succession rotation would be only around the Vice Chair and Chair, when you sign on to be a Vice Chair the position would succeed to the Chair. This would elevate changing of the bylaws. MacKay concurs with this proposal and notes that we need to have regional, geographical representation. MacKay notes that since Armstrong has only filled the Vice Chair role for one year he would fill in for Chair next year in order to provide continuity. Armstrong therefore nominations for the executive, post AGM would be open for the Treasurer/Secretary. MacKay again observed that the executive should not be Muskoka centric and would a current returning board member from outside Muskoka consider nomination for the Secretary/Treasurer for 2013/2014.

Transacting Committee

Feltis prefaced the committee updated with sharing the success of the Spring Fuel and Fun – the booking numbers have doubled. The participating operators have also doubled. Feltis shared breakdown of accommodation type and geographical booking for the board as well as information gathered during bookings. The second run of the Spring Fuel and Fun, according to Murphy, captured

how operators started to own the Fuel and Fun program. Feltis shared with the board the high level Explore the Edge program. He also shared with the board that this will go back to the committee at a meeting on the 13th of May. Between the board meeting and the 13th the staff of Explorers' Edge will contact regional attractions to gather further feedback on the program.

Ryeland spoke to the transacting programs and questioned how our success of the RTO12 is only tied to overnight roofed accommodation. Ryeland furthered his statement by addressing the need to track not only overnight roofed accommodation but take into account the success of attractions. MacKay noted that a barometer of success needs and should be tied to HST returns. Hernando share with the board that roofed accommodation is only but one factor that accounts for the success of tourism in a region. MacKay wants to know how we get more relevant information. Saulnier shares with Hernando and the board that the Executive Director is charged with increasing tourism by making sure more overnight accommodation is booked as that is how the proportional funding is established. Saulnier states that the Ministry needs to base the proportional funding on more than just roofed accommodation statistics.

Hernando shares with the board that the TPA has many indicators that speak to tourism. Murphy reiterates that indicators in the TPA speak to how we manage the organization and wisely utilize the funds. The proportional funding is based on overnight roofed accommodation. Saulnier would like to better understand the equation or make up of the proportional funding component.

Turner asks if campgrounds and rented cottages are part of the equation. Hernando shares with the board that there is room to do a better job at managing the information. MacKay challenges the Ministry of Finance to help tourism operators navigate and make better decisions. Hernando asks if an official request has been made to regarding HST. MacKay will follow-up post board meeting and work with the ED to better articulate some of the performance indicators. Vitch shared with the board the need to create a base of operators to help with performance indicators and data collection.

Murphy reprises the information that has been presented by the research committee and shares with the board that the research committee is charged with the development of the indicator framework.

Murphy shares with the board that the Explore the Edge program will be delayed by one month and is estimated to launch July 1, 2013.

Partnership Committee

Vitch updated the board 4 partnership programs are moving forward. The committee will reconvene in the coming weeks regarding next steps as there are still funds available.

Tourism Product Development Fund

Feasby updated the board regarding the Fund. A reconciliation report has been developed, vetted by the committee and will be submitted to MTCS for review. Feasby continued stating that the timelines moving forward include new applications being submitted by June 29, 2013 – the committee review process will take 4 weeks with final recommendations being made by July 31, 2013 and successful

applicants being informed of the outcome by August 15, 2013. This would move applications into Fall and Winter programming 2013/2014.

MacKay enquired about the matching component of the fund. Murphy responded that the program was unlike the partnership fund where the partnership fund is 50/50 matching and the Tourism Product Development Fund was 75/25 with the applicants portion being in-kind were applicable.

Ryeland share developments with the ATV trail system and that exciting news will be coming soon. He also thanks the organization for the support of Park to Park trail.

Feasby continues with his update, 600 operators are in the database, the forum will be piloted with board members and launching it at the AGM. The CRM training will be taking place over the next two weeks.

Froude:

Motion: To move the meeting in Camera.

Seconded: Don MacKay

Board comes out of camera.

BREAK – moving to Kudos Cuisine

Round Table

Ken Turner: reservations are steady, spring is not looking good. Bookings are rolling in for the May long weekend. Summer and fall look like last year. Ken is looking forward to the strategic planning session for the Almaguin Highlands.

Tony Armstrong: business is steady and is surprised by the number of last minute bookings taking place this spring. Facebook has been great for our marketing and his business is being found by Google searches. Armstrong also spoke to his laser tag program.

Laura Hernando: Busy working with stakeholder groups, summer experience program, celebrate program and developing capacity in the region.

Michelle Berry: reservations are up and bill boards are going back up on the highway. The new definition of billboard allows three additional billboards to go out on the highway. Concerns over the negative publicity over the flooding and the need to have EE staff counter this with a possible press release and media plan.

Jackie Leung: her business is up over 50%, Fuel and Fun yielded 9 bookings with two booking for future visits.

Mike Laba: growth has been unprecedented at Muskoka Brewery and number look good. With the new location in Bracebridge the brewery has plans to move forward more education at the brewery and

partner with other tourism operators for a greater experience. The brewery has gone national and with that there has been growth in the team.

Gary Froude: Muskoka Chautauqua is growing its presence, engaging youth as a result of its past programming in the schools over the last decade.

Nicole Saulnier – Lois Barron-Ralph has joined Georgian Bay Airways as their office manager. There is a new plane joining the team, so the company is back up to three planes. The aviation industry is turning around and the training course at GBA has tripled with its trainees. Nicole also is interested in the highway signage and shared the opportunity with EE.

Dan Feasby: the spring has been a challenge as the water is high and the frost is still in the ground which makes it difficult to open up cottages. With the long weekend booked they are all hands on deck.

Froude: Thanks Feasby for his last two years on the board.

Don MacKay: it has been a quite spring due to the weather. Golf rounds have been down as a result. Highlands has initiated a great social media program tied to the course, he wants to get away from discounts and back to more value for the experience.

Andrew Ryeland: we have had the best April ever. The group and corporate business has been good to Bearclaw tours.

Jerry Feltis: This year numbers and bookings have been good. At the Mill on Main, business continues to grow and the heated patio will help extend the season.

Froude

Motion: meeting adjourned

Carried