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**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes  
Wednesday, January 15, 2014  
Log Cabin Inn, Parry Sound, Ontario**

**Present:** Don MacKay (Chair), Tony Armstrong (Vice Chair), Andrew Vitch (Secretary/Treasurer), Jerry Feltis (ONLINE), Jackie Leung, Michelle Berry, Andrew Ryeland, Ken Turner, Anthony Rizzo, Hilary Chambers (ONLINE)

**Absent:** Diane Wiber, Nicole Saulnier, John Miller

**Staff:** James Murphy (Executive Director), Margaret Gage (Scribe)

**Resource:** Laura Hernando – MTCS

**Call to Order:** Don MacKay (Chair) called the meeting to order at 9:40 am.

**Approval of Agenda – January 15, 2014**

**Motion:** moved by Jackie Leung that the Agenda for January 15, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

**Seconded:** Michelle Berry.

**Discussion:** N/A

**Carried.**

**Approval of Minutes - December 11, 2013**

**Motion:** moved by Tony Armstrong that the Minutes for the December 11, 2013 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

**Seconded:** Ken Turner

**Discussion:** Ryeland noted that there was an error in the Board Contact List being circulated.

**Carried.**

## **Approval of Financials – Period ending December 31, 2013**

**Motion:** moved by Andrew Vitch that the Financials dated for December 31, 2013 be approved

**Seconded:** Jackie Leung

**Discussion:** Vitch clarified two items on the Income Statement. i) \$50,000 of flow through funds with a Local Partner for Harris Decima, and ii) \$68,000 for Ride the Edge FAM Tour from OTMPC. In both these instances, Explorers Edge acts as the Treasurer of Record giving EE the power to oversee and veto the project if need be. Discussion ensued surrounding the possibility of EE charging a handling fee to manage the funds. It was noted by the Chair that managing these funds is part of the RTO mandate under the agreement with OTMPC and that charging a fee would be double dipping

**Carried.**

## **Approval of Consent Agenda**

**Motion:** moved by Tony Rizzo that the Consent Agenda items for the January 15, 2014 be approved

**Seconded:** Andrew Vitch

**Discussion:** Andrew Ryeland asked to have the Tour Operator Relations and Partnership Committee moved to discussion

**Carried.**

## **Transacting Discussion – ED Murphy with Committee Chair Feltis**

An overview of past programs was presented along with the challenges of the Meridian Reservation System. The original goal was to get 60 operators using the program, when in actuality they only obtained 30 operators. Other RTO's invested heavily (RTO 6-Central Counties and RTO 4-Stratford) and then abandoned system. Turner noticed very different market in those RTO's. He was not impressed by Meridian and commented that it does not allow for a Per Person Rate. Feltis commented that an RFP process would be considered, that any program must be equally applicable to all operators regardless of size. The goal is to provide a system that allows us to meet performance measurements determined by our organization.

Staff of EE have explored initial Online Booking and Referral Systems and outlined that Online Booking and Referral System would be a big push for the region alongside our Tipping Point Programs (Explore the Edge & Fuel and Fun). Leung noted that in her conversations with Bed and Breakfast operators from around North America, that a system would be beneficial in making it easier for a consumer to choose our destination.

Murphy asked the board that we continue down the road of investigation into an online Booking and Referral System. The annual fee for the software licensing of this Booking Referral System would be in the neighbourhood of \$30,000. The board is behind the Transacting Committee through the EE staff in pursuing a RFP process, as such it will be another avenue for bringing customers to our stakeholders.

On the topic of transacting Leung asked if the operators were going to be charged a portion of the proceeds of coupons instead of being reimburse full value. Discussion ensued. Feltis said the consensus was to maintain status quo for the Spring Fuel and Fun and revisit the transacting philosophy in order to develop a fall and winter program.

## **Governance Committee –Armstrong**

Armstrong noted that if a board member was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of a 2 yr term, they should re-consider a nomination application. There is also a need to solicit new members to the board. If a board member is leaving, they are encouraged to find or suggest a suitable candidate to that would fill any empty spots giving consideration to a board that is diverse in gender, geographic location and skills ability. The bylaws allow for 3 consecutive 2 year terms on the board. Turner identified that he would also be retiring from the board due to the sale of his business.

The timeline for having a new slate of board members is:

- Nominating Committee puts out call at beginning of February
- Presentation of Slate of New Board by end of April
- Annual General Meeting scheduled for end of May/beginning of June.

A call for applications to the board will go out in the newsletter and on the website along with an ad in the paper. It was agreed that the best avenue for obtaining qualified board members was personal networking.

## **Workforce Development Discussion - Murphy**

Explorers' Edge has been delivering Social Media Presentations to the operators both in group settings and on a one-on-one basis. As a follow-up based on industry feedback Murphy recommends that, using the remaining budget and through a RFP process, EE provide workshops on Google Analytics, Trip Advisor and working with OTEC on delivering a Culture of Service Excellence for key managers and owners. Moving forward into the 2014/2015 fiscal year it is recommended that EE will, through an internal process, identify 10 – 12 operators for annual one-on-one training. The annual program will include training, monitoring, assessment, identifying challenges and then a component that shares the case studies with regional stakeholders. Leung supported the proposed communication component and highlighted that participants in the program report as panelists on their success, this there being an opportunity for the panel to be at the AGM.

## **Consent Agenda Item moved to the Agenda – Partnership and Product development**

Mr. Ryeland proposed that the “Ride the Edge” brand be used for all motorized or action-related programs promoting the region. i.e. Motorcycling, Snowmobiling, ATV riding and that the “Ride the Edge” logo be added to existing video where appropriate and that it be animated if possible. Murphy noted that a process is in place for using branded LOGOS that gives guidelines for using EE logos appropriately. He will look into animating the “Ride the Edge” Logo.

**LUNCH BREAK (Murphy asked those present to sign up for the Explore the Edge Program launching on January 20<sup>th</sup>. Gage has agreements with her)**

## **Roundtable/Discussion:**

*Don MacKay* – 93 days to Golfing. His countdown sign is back up. His goal for Explorers Edge is to elevate game for next year.

*Tony Armstrong* – Transitioning into Laser Tag from Paint Ball. Has a biathlon event organized between schools with another possibly with Town of Huntsville. Has a relationship with billboard advertising company that is offering 5 for the price of 3. Sees this as a possible opportunity for EE.

*Andrew Vitich* – Sunny Point Resort closed until May. Last year the best ever for the resort.

*Hilary Chambers* – Attending trade shows in February. The Sportsman Show in Toronto is an important one for her operation.

*John Miller* - Muskoka Wedding Show coming up on the weekend.

*Anthony Rizzo* – Doe Lake closed early in November due to early winter weather. On vacation for the month of February. Bookings and inquiries have already started for the coming year so it looks like a good year ahead. Noted that the snowmobilers are not really out yet in Almaguin Highlands.

*Laura Hernando* – Update RTO guide sent out this week. Mentioned the Partnership Review, Performance Measurement Training taking place and TODS review. Thanked the board for participating in the survey. Excited about working with the RTO over the coming year.

*Ken Turner* – Looking forward to retiring. Moving to Bracebridge. Now into dog sledding. Has seen an increase in booking already for the coming season. Noted that Private Cottage Rentals are affecting the industry and that it is unregulated so far. There was some discussion about this. (Laura Hernando to attend meeting later this week about this very issue)

*Andrew Ryeland* – Sales up 25%, (gift certificates sales) - bookings are up 13 %.

*Jackie Leung* – Asked Laura Hernando to look into “Air B & B” issue. The Christmas Holidays were down as a result of ice storm and power outages. However, seeing interest from the snowshoeing and dogsledding crowd. Rest of the year is up. Moving forward with transactions. Wants to develop a bucket list of programs.

*Michelle Berry* - Noted that snowmobilers are now spread out all over Ontario as a result of the amount of snow. Attended a convention in Texas for KOA operators. Won Top award – Founders Award (for top 10% of North America) Celebrating 25 years in business with anniversary celebration event planned for 3<sup>rd</sup> weekend in August. (August 26<sup>th</sup>) Seeing an 18% increase in camper night, 30% revenue increase. Attributes this to Provincial Parks going downhill. (ie. lack of amenities, customer service and poor water quality). KOA is closed until May. Lots of trees down due to storm.

*Don Mackay* mentioned that the Gary Froude concert raised about \$20,000 to \$25,000. The money is currently sitting with Gayle Dempsey in a segregated account for Gary.

**Motion to Adjourn** by Tony Armstrong. **Carried**

**Date and Time of Next Meeting:** March 2014

**Date and Location TBD**