



Naturally Adventurous

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Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Muskoka and Parry Sound
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**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Thursday May 8, 2014
Deerhurst Resort, 1235 Deerhurst Dr. Huntsville, ON P1H 1A9**

Present: Don MacKay (Chair), Tony Armstrong (Vice Chair), Andrew Vitch (Secretary/Treasurer), Jerry Feltis , Jackie Leung, Diane Wiber, Andrew Ryeland, Nicole Saulnier, John Miller, Anthony Rizzo, Hilary Chambers, Michelle Berry, Ken Turner

Regrets:

Staff: James Murphy

Resource: Laura Hernando – MTCS

Call to Order: Don MacKay (Chair) called the meeting to order at 9:30 am.

Approval of Agenda – May 8, 2014

Motion: moved by Diane Wiber that the Agenda for May 8, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Hilary Chambers

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Approval of Minutes – April 2, 2014

Motion: Moved by Tony Armstrong that the Minutes for the April 2, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Ken Turner

Discussion: N/A

Carried.

Financial Presentation

Discussion: Treasurer Vitch provided the Board of Directors with an update that included the following:

- a) Financial Audit is currently being completed by Harris, Gingirch & Fleming
- b) The yearend financials will be circulated prior to the AGM, the directors will need to review and provide an electronic vote in order to approve for AGM presentation.
- c) The MTCS have provided a first deposit of 600k
- d) The only projects approved and have deposits made include Research, Booking Referral Company and Spring Fuel and Fun

Consent Agenda Discussion / Decision

MacKay reiterates the role of the consent agenda, it is meant to move the meeting along in an efficient manner utilizing pre-reads and committee notes, the consent agenda is not to have the whole meeting pre-arranged ahead of time. With the consent agenda, any director can pull an item from the agenda for full board discussion. Berry has shared with the board caution in ensuring that items discussed at the board are not moved forward in the consent agenda process. Rizzo commented that consent agenda items can be pulled at any point and the consent agenda is a great way. MacKay acknowledges that there are many administration topics that the board may want to discuss in a meeting but the approach has been to address or sink our teeth into a significant issue at each board meeting. MacKay spoke to the weekly Executive Committee meetings and shared with the board the purpose of the committee, which is a filter and a sounding board for industry matters pertaining to day to day operations. Ryeland told the directors that he appreciates hearing from the ED and the train of thought that is guiding the organization, it is helpful to set the stage of the board meeting hearing from the ED at the beginning of the meeting. Vitch wanted to ensure board meetings were not too mechanical and that the meetings should attempt to inspire directors to think creatively. By offering a discussion and general business climate at the beginning of the meeting would help address this. MacKay addressed the board with the merits of the consent agenda and received a majority to keep the consent agenda moving forward. Leung, and shared with the board to have the ED update first in meetings moving forward.

In Camera

Motion: moved by MacKay that the meeting move in camera

Seconded: Andy Vitch

Carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

Motion: moved by Armstrong that the Consent Agenda items for May 8, 2104 be approved

Seconded: Andy Vitch

Discussion: Michelle Berry requested that the Transacting be pulled out of the Consent Agenda and inserted into the Agenda.

Carried.

Transacting Discussion - Feltis

Feltis shared with the directors that bookings were up over last year by approx. 40 totaling 290 bookings for spring 2014. Murphy followed with information related to the bookings themselves:

- Early spike in bookings
- Spike in bookings when marketing took place
- Operators that did well pushed out the program through their own channels
- EE staff provided outreach to operators who did well in previous years and did not have a strong showing in 2014

Turner asked about booking Fuel and Fun extensions and Feltis shared with the directors the logistics involved in the execution of the program. Vitch shared a couple suggestion with the board, have consumers book 30 days in advance. Feltis identified that this would be great discussion at the committee level.

Feltis provided the directors details on the Jackrabbit contract:

- Lodging search engine, Mobile and Facebook 5k set-up - 3year lease 29k per year
- Special Offers & Packages 2k set-up – 3 year lease 4k per year
- Attractions/Events 2k set-up – 3 year lease 5k per year

Turner enquired about the options for operators, Feltis provided info on Jack Rabbit that it will be applicable to all types of properties, regardless of operator's status regarding booking capabilities.

Leung asked about the timeline and Feltis shared with the board that it is a 60 minimum process. Murphy, told the board that it will be robust by the Fall 2014 travel season. Berry reiterated that is a 3 year lease.

Ryeland shared with the board that the committee should consider increasing the gas voucher amount from 50\$ to 75\$.

Ryeland spoke to advocacy regarding gas prices, what are the options for RTO12? MacKay spoke to the role that individual operators play in influencing politicians. Ryeland asked about the specific role of RTO12. MacKay said that advocacy needs to be scripted and presented and in many cases by a third party. TIAO should be the entity for advocacy and they are having a meeting at Christies Mill on May 29 – this is a good mechanism to share thoughts.

Armstrong spoke to the possibility of holding an all candidates meeting. Turner asked about the role of RTO12 organizing an all candidates meeting specifically for tourism. Ryeland suggested a meeting about a conversation with candidates on the topic of tourism.

MacKay suggested paying an advocacy company to hold, organize and execute this meeting. Hernando stated that Ministry funds cannot be used for lobbying, participating in a discussion is fine or funds outside of the Ministry Funding is fine. MacKay, as this is under consideration, will work with the ED to explore the options of an all candidates meeting.

Executive Director Update – ED Murphy

- **Planning** – MTCS draft final report in progress, TPA signed. Audit in progress with Brandy Harris.
- **Campaigns and Programs** – Spring Fuel and Fun
- **FedNor** – Completed two submissions for FedNor - Resorts of North Muskoka & Golf Muskoka.

- **Administration** – Onboarding of Tourism Operator Relations and Communications Coordinator, interviews for Administrative Coordinator (contract and offer being negotiated) & facilitated exit interviews for Randy Mitson and Margaret Gauge. Moved office.
- **Capacity Building** – District of Parry Sound Municipal Association, Tourism Economic Developer Breakfast & District of Muskoka Service Review.
- **Partnership Fund 2014 - 2015**– Review via committee of 17 applications, continuous industry engagement regarding process and required information.
- **Partnership Fund 2013 – 2014** – continued review and reconciliation of the 18 programs.
- **Governance** – Facilitated 3 committee meetings with applicable presentations and material.
- **RFP's** – reviewed a total of 19 RFP's for projects related to Marketing Strategist, Project Coordinator & Resorts of North Muskoka. Articulated eight more RFP's / Expression of Interest for Partnership Programs.
- **RTO Collaboration** – 'strategic' press release of work done to date and highlighting specific RTO successes. Facilitating a RTO & MTCS face to face meeting at Royal Botanical Gardens.
- **OTMPC** – Northern Ontario & Advisory Committee meetings – provincial marketing Free Standing Insert (FSI) feedback – enquired about the process with OTMPC to ensure content aligned
- **Industry Sessions** – TIAO, RTO12 AGM & MTMA AGM

Ryeland shared with the board his frustration with OTMPC and spending as it relates to their marketing plans, there is the perception of lack of strategy. The board would like to hold a meeting in RTO12 for all the RTO's.

Hernando looped back to the advocacy conversation and urged the board to review page 37 of the RTO Guide.

Murphy emphasized the TIAO information sessions and the opportunity for stakeholders to share success, challenges and opportunities with TIAO to grow tourism receipts. Chambers shared with the group that she will be attending a May 30 Sudbury session.

Partnership Committee Update – Vitich

Vitich shared with the board the recommendations from the Tourism Operator Relations Committee. The presented list requires further work between the applicant and the RTO office. Vitich assured the board that the committee is great stewards of the money. He wants on to share that an application process with a specific deadline will change moving forward so applicants will contact the RTO office with an idea and each enquiry will be tabled at a quarterly committee meeting. This will ensure applicants are more of partners and understand the business of the RTO.

Murphy stated that more emphasis will be placed on the regional tourism organization and communication of our brand positioning, what's in it for the RTO.

Vitich emphasized the unique products that came from Parry Sound and highlighted how the partnership(s) span the entire region.

Vitich also commented on how the RTO did receive various letters regarding the development of programs and that these scenarios will be addressed by the staff and brought forward to the committee.

The directors all supported the moving to next stages with the proposed projects.

Muskoka Tourism	Summer Marketing Campaign - objective to build mid-week occupancy & communicate sub regional experiences	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$12,000
Parry Sound Tourism	Digital Marketing Campaign	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
Resorts of North Muskoka	Three tier project a) strategic development i.e. brand messaging b) marketing & c) operator training - FedNor partnership	\$18,000	\$27,000	\$45,000
Bala Cranberry Festival	1) Increase visitors to the 30th Anniversary of the Bala Cranberry Festival by way of print and social media marketing 2) Encourage visitors to stay overnight and enjoy more of Muskoka 3) Build visitor and potential visitor list(s) for email marketing and other local campaigns	\$4,000	\$4,000	\$8,000
Gravenhurst Chamber of Commerce	Niche Marketing - LGBT Toronto Event	\$13,000	\$13,000	\$26,000
Golf Muskoka	1) develop a reservation platform for golfmuskoka.com (Jack Rabbit) 2) digital marketing 3) operator training and content development	\$30,000	\$15,000	\$45,000
Beyond (Santa's Village & Muskoka Steamships)	Digital Marketing Campaign	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$20,000
JW Marriott	Breakfast Television	\$6,000	\$6,000	\$12,000
ParkBus	Niche Marketing - LGBT Toronto Event	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$5,000
Parry Sound Chamber of Commerce	Mobile Tourist Information Centre	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Loring Restoule Business Association	Content Development - Portal	\$5,000	\$5,000	\$10,000
Totals:		\$109,500	\$103,500	\$213,000

Research Committee Update – Wiber

Wiber shared with the Research Committee completed a significant milestone since the last board meeting, the Tourism Indicator Framework is live! The framework was shared with the industry via our quarterly stakeholder communique on May 7, 2014. MacKay enquired about the third party and Murphy has let the board now that they will be contacted on a quarterly basis for monthly statistics. Ryeland shared with board that he has, through the Northern Committee, enquired about the HST. MacKay has spoken to the RTU and they informed him that they did not have the HST information. MacKay informed the board that if they wanted the HST we would need to coordinate with the Federal Government. Turner shared with the board the opportunity to reach out to Statistics Canada and they may be able to do custom research for us. Leung shared with the board her positive experience with Statistics Canada.

Leung asked to the staff to look into the password to access both the forum and dashboard.

Marketing Committee Update –Leung

Leung shared with the board the 2014 Winter Wrap Report which was presented to the committee on Monday May 5, 2014 via webinar. Leung also highlighted part of the committee meeting, information related to the conversations about our social media demographics. She also stated that the report puts even more emphasis on the need for content and our ability to push it out social. Murphy emphasized this with the dramatic spike in mobile traffic, he furthered this by sharing with the board that travellers not only search for content, travellers also discover information via social channels (checking Facebook on a mobile and then clicking through to our website while on their mobile. Murphy also shared with the board the low usage of the app, two active users and recommended taking the app of line. Leung supported this highlighting we will continue to be used and found on mobile but not through an app. Turner informed the board on his understanding on the usage of tablets vs. phones. Leung also drew the director's attention to the report and the cost per minute analytic while reinforcing our ability to market via search, discovery and niche.

Leung also informed the board the RFP outcomes of the Marketing Strategist, 5 responses, and Peter Coish was the successful candidate of the process. Vitch enquired about the demographics on Facebook, Murphy stated that he would follow-up with Vitch off line. Vitch commented that demographics change rapidly. Ryeland commented on how Parry Sound Operators or business operators meet every two weeks and discuss business tactics – it is about meeting frequently and trying to keep up.

The board supported the committee in its decision on the RFP marketing strategist outcome.

Governance Committee Update - Armstrong

Armstrong shared with the Governance Committee outcomes of the Nomination Committee meeting on May 7, 2014, they included:

- More Georgian Bay representation – Byn Inlet Marinas were mentioned – French River down to Parry Sound
- Algonquin Park Representation – while efforts were made this needs to be top of mind
- New board members and their understanding of process – Roberts rules of order.
- Parry Sound representation – not representative of all operators in the area – although they are the ones that get things down – this message will have to be delicately articulated.
- Board members – all year long we need to be networking and cultivate directors – get them into a committee at any time!

Ryland asked if there would be nominations from the floor. The process involves the presentation of the committee process, board discussion and a vote by membership at the meeting. Hernando enquired about the resource position for Algonquin Park. Armstrong informed the directors that this was discussed at the nomination committee and that he had names to follow-up with to seek interest in the resource role.

Board members saw a couple errors in the details of the list. Murphy let directors know that the Tourism Administrator will follow-up with board directors.

Armstrong encouraged directors to reach out to operators year round to get them involved in a committee.

Explorers' Edge
Recommended 2014 - 2015 Incoming Board of Directors

	By-law Term	Name	Position	Term	Regional Representation	Gender	Hub Representation	Business	e-mail	Phone Number	Mailing address
1	First	Anthony Rizzo	Current	1/2	Almaguin Highlands	M	Accommodation	Doe Lake Campground Rizzort	info@doelake.on.ca	(705) 382-2740	882 Ferguson Road PO Box 73 Katrine, Almaguin Region, Ontario P0A 1L0
2	First	Hillary Chambers	Director	1/2	Almaguin Highlands	F	Accommodation/Attraction	Sun Dog Gallery	hilary@pinegroveresort.com	(905) 383-3490	463 Pine Grove Rd Box 126 Port Loring, Ontario P0H 1Y0
3	Second	Jackie Leung	Director Marketing Committee Chair	1/2	Almaguin Highlands	F	Accommodation/ B&B	Fern Glenn Inn B&B	jackie@fernglenninn.on.ca	(705) 636-1391	1462 Fern Glen Road, Emsdale, ON
4	Second	Jerry Feltis	Director Transacting Committee Chair	1/2	Parry Sound	M	Accommodation/Culinary	Mill on Main, Rocky Crest Resort	jfeltis@clublink.ca	(705) 571-2259	* RR#1 Hamer Bay Road, MacTier, ON
5	First	John Miller	Incoming	1/2	Muskoka	M	Attraction	Muskoka Fleet	jmiller@realmuskoka.com	(705) 687-6667	185 Cherokee Lane ONT Gravenhurst
6	Second	Michelle Berry	Director	1/2	Parry Sound	F	Accommodation/Camping	Parry Sound KOA Campground	parrysoundkoa@gmail.com	(705) 378-2721	276 Rankin Lake Road, Parry Sound, ON
7	Third	Andrew Ryeland	Director	0/2	Parry Sound	M	Attraction/Outdoor Adventure	Bear Claw Tours	tarmstrong@muskoka.com	(705) 645-9352	80 Gibbs Road, Bracebridge, ON
8	Second	Andrew Vitch	Director Partnership Committee Chair	0/2	Parry Sound	M	Accommodation	Sunny Point Resorts, Cottages & Inn	andrewvitch@sunnypointresort.com	(705) 774-1143	41 Sunny Point Road Seguin, Ontario P2A2W8
9	Second	Diane Wiber	Director Research Chair	0/2	Muskoka	F	Attraction/Outdoor Adventure/Culinary	Winding Fences Farm	windingfences@gmail.com	(705) 769-1418	1102 Ambleside Lane Utterson, Ontario P0B 1M0
10	Third	Don MacKay	Director Treasurer / Secretary Community Relations Chair	0/2	Muskoka	M	Attraction/Golf	Muskoka Highlands	dmackay@muskokahighlands.com	(705) 645-1110	1040 South Monck Drive, Bracebridge, ON
11	Second	Nicole Saulnier	Director	0/2	Parry Sound	F	Attraction	Georgian Bay Airways	gba@georgianbayairways.com	(705) 774-9884	11A Bay street Parry Sound, ON P2A 1S4

12	First	Drew Rachar	Director	0/2	Parry Sound	M	Attraction/Golf	The Ridge at Manitou Golf Club	drew@ridgeatmanitou.com	(705) 389-2552	160 The Inn Road McKellar, Ontario P2A0B4
13	First	Kim Loader	Director	0/2	Muskoka	F	Accommodation	Port Cunnington Lodge and Resort	kim@portcunnington.com	(705) 380-0538	1717 Skyline Drive Huntsville, Ontario P1H 1A6
14	First	Jeff Suddaby	Director	0/2	Muskoka	M	Attraction/Culinary	3 Guys and a Stove	jeff@3guysandastove.com	(705) 783-8404	154 Golden Pheasant Frive Huntsville, Ontario POA 1K6
15	First	Curtis Dunlop	Director	0/2	Muskoka	M	Attraction/Culinary	The Griffen Gastro Pub / Muskoka Beer Festival	curt@thegriffinpub.ca	(705) 641-1332	255 Luckey Rd Utterson, ON P0B 1M0

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Roundtable/Discussion:

Tony Armstrong – his last meeting, he found that his Google Adwords increased traffic to his site and his numbers look good, paint ball is doing fine. He is also looking into Paint Ball equipment rental.

Jackie Leung - the winter was good for Fern Glen Inn B&B, revenues from the winter went right back into upkeep of her property. Spring is down but website is revamped and has advance bookings for the summer, which does not traditionally happen.

Hilary Chambers – rough winter on the property, several upgrades at this point. More bookings than usual this time of year, which is positive. New website and additional website for the nature trail. Naturetrail.ca

Dianne Wiber – life on the farm is busy. The summer outlook is busy.

Ken Turner – thanked the board and shared his retirement plans of R&R and consulting work.

Jerry Feltis – Movie crew has occupied the resort which is welcome news. Group business is up and the Muskoka Tourism `Nature is in our business project has had a impact.

Leung shared with the board that this was an EE, specifically Kate Monk, program handed over to MTMA Feltis continued and highlighted business success at his restaurant in Huntsville, Feltis chalks it up to food constancy.

Andy Vitch – six weeks behind on reservations. The phone continues ring and due to the long winter work is being completed to get the operators

Andrew Ryeland – due to the long winter and late start Bear Claw Tours has lost 10k in revenue, not sure if it will be recovered. Trails opened just last week. Very interested in corporate business and getting it out in the market place. Andrew has two side by side ATV's and the niche seems to be working.

Anthony Rizzo – concerned about the weather – Lake Nipissing is still frozen over in the north. Business is going to be great, overfilled and trying to get the business open on time. Almaguin Highlands, Burk's fall chamber of commerce is being changed to Almaguin Highlands Chamber of Commerce. Trying to get everyone on board and market Almaguin Highlands as one entity. Powassan Maple Syrup festival was a little off due to the weather.

Laura Hernando – the update is brief, the Ministry is in care taking mode due to the election. It was encouraged to attend the TIAO session.

Michelle Berry – shared with the directors her success with Constant Contact as an effective cost effective tool. Michelle also shared her frustration with `Flushables` and its negative impact on the camping and accommodation industry. Some of the early bookings have been cancelled due to the long winter and not being able to have the property open in time. This is the 25 season of KOA and there will be a pig roast on Aug 22, everyone is invited.

Don MacKay – on the golf front, it is a shrinking population, new ways to bring people on the golf course. Foot golf is taking shape and MacKay owns the rights to Canada. There is also ongoing communication with the weather broadcasts / forecasts. Taxes only do so much, people need to donate time and money to fundraisers. Tourism operators are great advocates in helping fundraisers and local charities.

MacKay shared with the board his pleasure serving as a chair for the last year, the board's participation and how he will miss chairing the board meetings. Armstrong also shared his sympathies and honour serving the board as this is his last meeting. Turner, as well, thanked the board for his time on the board.

Motion to Adjourn at 1:00 pm Carried.

Date and Time of Next Meeting: Annual General Meeting June 3, 2014 @ Grand Tappattoo Resort, Seguin ON (Parry Sound)

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