

Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, December 9, 2014
Log Cabin Inn, Huntsville

Present: Curt Dunlop, Don MacKay, Jerry Feltis, Michelle Berry, Anthony Rizzo, Andy Vitch, Hilary Chambers, Diane Wiber, Jackie Leung, Nicole Saulnier, Andrew Ryeland, Jeff Suddaby, Jackie Leung, Kim Loader, Drew Rachar

Regrets: John Miller, Laura Hernando – MTCS

Staff: James Murphy

Welcome and Introductions: Jerry Feltis called the meeting to order at 9:32am

Approval of Agenda – Tuesday December 9, 2014

Motion: moved by Nicole Saulnier that the Agenda for December 9, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Michelle Berry

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Approval of Minutes – September 9, 2014

Motion: moved by Anthony Rizzo that the Minutes from September 9, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Nicole Saulnier

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Financial Presentation – for period ending August 31, 2014

Discussion: Treasurer Vitch provided the Board of Directors with a brief update. Feltis asked when next funding comes in and questioned payroll for employees; ED Murphy spoke to the completion of the progress report and final report from previous fiscal year being completed and that the payment was in transition.

Approval of Financials – for period ending November 30, 2014

Motion: moved by Hilary Chambers that the financials presented at the November 30, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Drew Rachar

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

a) Transacting Committee

- b) Research
- c) Tourism Operator Relations (Partnership Funding)
- d) Marketing
- e) Community Relations

Motion: moved by Michelle Berry that the Consent Agenda for the December 9, 2014 Board of Directors meeting be approved.

Seconded: Dianne Wiber

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Round Table & Other Business

Curt Dunlop: The pub and craft beer events were successful over the 2014 fiscal year. The winter offers downtime and a chance to plan for 2015.

Andrew Ryeland: April and November were lost due to the weather and overall business was down as a result. Honda Canada still works closely with Bear Claw Tours.

Michelle Berry: just returned from the KOA conference where Parry Sound KOA received two awards. The Founders award is based on customer service and puts Parry Sound KOA in the top of North American franchises.

Kim Loader: Port Cunnington is celebrating 125 years in business and the winter serves as a time to budget and plan marketing. Great year for Port Cunnington, up year over year as it relates to profit.

Nicole Saulnier: Marketing and gift certificate sales. Georgian Bay Airways will be travelling to the Bahamas to provide business research on a similar business. Parry Sound Tourism is gaining momentum. OTMPC has also recognized Georgian Bay Airways as a Signature Experience.

Jerry Feltis: Rockey Crest the resort was up in 2014 while golf took a hit and did not meet goals, weather was a factor. Mill on Main – Renovations took place at the restaurants and business continues to grow

Anthony Rizzo: The weather has been a source of frustration and dialogue with the MNR has been testing the patience of business owners. The early snow has also halted late fall work. The chamber in Almaguin Highlands is weeks away from incorporation.

Drew Rachar: Business is in planning mode for 2014. A couple projects at the course are dependent on weather and are moving forward.

Dianne Wiber: The farm and riding is quite this winter. Trails are difficult to maintain in the current weather patterns. Dianne shared her regrets with the board of directors regarding her time with the RTO, she will be stepping down as a director.

Jeff Suddaby: The board was addressed regarding the recent Huntsville Chamber ongoing. After a decade of successful events the Chamber encountered shortcomings for the first time this year as it

relates to events. The Chamber is strong and there are no significant changes, the board is still committed to events. As it relates to the 3 Guys and a Stove, OCTA has just accredited for the FEAST ON program.

Hilary Chambers: Overseeing a renovation this winter while continuing to develop a social media presence. Romantic getaways are beginning to drive enquiries for winter business. Hilary shared with the board her role with Northern Ontario tourism.

Don MacKay: The golf industry is continuing to figure something out to try and gain back some lost rounds of golf.

Andrew Vitch: Sunny Point was down a little over last year, noting that last year was the best year ever making 2014 the second best year. Vitch shared concerns with the board as it relates to the price of oil and how this will affect tourism and the Canadian economy in general.

Jackie Leung: Up 15% in 2014 with three weeks left in the fiscal year. Packages are driving winter business for Fern Glen Inn.

Executive Director Update – ED James Murphy

Outreach/Networking: RTO attended the TIAO and Northern Ontario Summit, during session meetings and presentations RTO12 was deemed not only on par but moving the needle forward. Feedback to the board included information as it related to packages and social media.

The Northern Ontario meeting allowed the RTO to better understand our role and alignment with Northern product. Leung was surprised in the difference between product and challenges building travel receipts. Discussion arose regarding how best to align the RTO with OTMPC as it was made clear that RTO12 may be better served aligning with Toronto, Niagara and Ottawa. Leung mentioned that we have different product and selling points from Northern, Ontario.

TIAO has also completed a report card on the Sorbara Report, it not only included a state of the union but recommendations moving forward. The overarching message was the need for an Ontario Strategy. The recommendations may not serve RTO12 and our philosophy of moving forward all stakeholders not just a few demand generators. Leung shared with the board her take on the report, specifically the importance of a strategy for the province but did not take the notion of demand generators working for our RTO. Ryeland also notes that the role of TIAO is another layer of tourism when they state that they are now going to organize the industry. Vitch shared with the group that if TIAO were to go with demand generators the RTO would need to align with Toronto, Niagara and Ottawa.

Murphy updated the board on:

- The numerous speaking engagements that have taken place in October and November.
- Tourism Stakeholder Survey: RTO12 has garnered a 75% approval rating with 85% having partnered with RTO in some capacity or another.

- OTMPC FSI Development, Board now has seen all 4 FSI's in the province. The Northern FSI which cost 25k includes newsletter, social and digital that complement the printed FSI.
- Website analytics and how we have experienced 100% + year of year growth since 2012
- Content strategy and content that is currently being used.
- Tourism Indicator Framework Q2-Q3 report was presented to the board. Murphy shared with the board the negative affect that weather has on our industry. The business index does not have a large enough sample size to pull reliable information from it.
- Ministry of Tourism Culture and Sport statistics were share with the board of directors, the committee highlighted our regions reliance on the tourism industry as it relates to impacts of tourism on regional economies. Ryland share with the board inconsistencies with the MTCS statistics, specifically to substantiate the numbers. Dunlop asked about research as it relates to other third party tourism groups such as Air B&B. Wiber noted that this is accounted for in the MTCS research.
- Transacting as it relates to Jack Rabbit is still being refined, the process requires review and updates of over 600 listing. Feltis spoke to the listings and how seasonal business are captured. Leung asked about live listings and availability, she raised concern ensuring as many live listings as possible.
- Community relations committee met in early December, Ryeland shared with the board interactions at the committee level pointing out that the Town of Huntsville is supporting the Iron Man Canada.
- Operator Forum, updates will be made to take down the log-in information and membership will be incentivized before the AGM.
- Partnership Committee funding, the RTO is has still not allocated its full amount of partnership funding.
- Product development is on track with the final RFP's being circulated in early January, 2015.
- Workforce Development boot camp will take place in late February, 2015.

Operational Plan Presentation

The Executive Director presented the 2015-2016 Operational Plan to the Board of Directors. The ED Murphy highlighted:

- Continuation of the Content Strategy that was developed in 2014
- Transacting to include Spring and Fall Fuel and Fun while continuing to refine Jack Rabbit
- To compliment marketing and transacting RTO12 will develop packages over the course of the fiscal year. The ED shared with the board the work that staff will embark on to facilitate the development and communication of packages.
- In the development of packages staff will also facilitate in the development of experiences as a add-on to an overnight accommodation. Ryland mentioned that the RTO would need to really kick start and provide the mechanism for private business to develop packages.
- Workforce development is currently in limbo as the RTO works through a partnership program, the first being with Muskoka Futures and MCN and the second being with RTO13 and FedNor

- The RTO will continue to work with regional economic development agencies to facilitate the communication of investment opportunities.
- Product Development was presented, specifically the development of product in Georgian Bay, winter non-motorized product, paddling and craft beer.
- Partnerships for the following year have yet to be articulated, several conversations are happening with regional stakeholders.

Ryland shared with the board an open data project that would have individuals participate in a “hackathon”. This is an event in which computer programmers and others involved in software development, including graphic designers, interface designers and project managers, collaborate intensively on software projects. Ryland outline <http://hackthenorth.com/> that is taking place at University of Waterloo. MacKay shared with the board the importance of some of the data that is behind our 60,000 Facebook fans, not only is the relationship with those fans important but so is the information we can garner from them.

Rizzo is excited about the packaging that the RTO will embark on next year.

Operational Plan – ED James Murphy

Motion was put forth for approval of the 2015 – 2016 Operational Plan.

Motion: That the RTO accept the 2015 – 2016 operational for submission to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Support as the basis for the Transfer Payment Agreement for fiscal funding and operations.

Motion: moved by Andrew Ryeland that the plan be accepted

Seconded: Curt Dunlop

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion: Diane Wiber

Seconded: Curt Dunlop

Discussion: n/a

Carried.