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**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday March 24, 2020**  
**Webinar**

**Present (Webinar):** Jeff Suddaby, Michael Simonett, Brenda Scott, Don MacKay, Scott Doughty, Angela Pollak, Hilary Chambers

**Resource:** Laura Ross, Regional Development Advisor, Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

**Staff:** James Murphy

**Regrets:** Eric Miglin, Curt Dunlop

**Welcome and Chair Remarks:** Chair Suddaby began the webinar at 9.30am, thanked the directors for joining the call remotely.

**Round Table Discussion:** Directors discussed business challenges and scenario planning associated with the COVID-19 crisis. Directors noted that this is uncharted territory and that decisions are being made on a day-day basis.

**Conflict of Interest:** N/A

**Approval of Agenda – March 24, 2020**

**Motion:** Michael Simonett

**Seconded:** Scott Doughty

**Discussion:** n/a

**Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2020**

**Motion:** Brenda Scott

**Seconded:** Angela Pollak

**Discussion:** n/a

Suddaby turned the meeting over to treasurer Simonett who presented the financials. Noted that the organization has received a funding letter and have signed off on our 2020-2021 Transfer Payment Agreement. Simonett spoke to the income statement particularly the overage on payroll and expense which is offset with revenue lines of Program Contribution and FedNor Revenue (Internship) brought the

meeting to order speaking to the exciting year we have ahead. Administrative and overhead is over budget as well due to additional expenses related to a unique year of operation i.e. commercial airline launch, bus dispersion, and additional partnership programs.

**Motion to approve the Income Statement, Balance Sheet for the period ending March 15, 2020**

**Motion:** Michael Simonett

**Second:** Hillary Chambers

**Discussion:** n/a

**Carried**

MacKay enquired about ability to pay outstanding commitments. Murphy noted that preliminary work has been completed with Muskoka Community Futures regarding bridge financing for \$100,000.00 in short term financing.

**Motion to approve Bridge Financing via Muskoka Community Futures related to short term bridge financing in the amount of \$100,000.00**

**Motion:** Don MacKay

**Second:** Angela Pollak

**Discussion:** n/a

**Carried**

**Governance Update**

Governance chair Scott outlined the process where as in December she requested to strike a committee to oversee the board recruitment process. In January the committee was struck consisting of:

Michael Simonett	Parry Sound/Muskoka	Accommodation	Director/Treasurer
Gail Burrows	Parry Sound	Attraction/Golf	Director
Angela Pollak	South Algonquin	Accommodation	Director
Jackie Leung	Almaguin Highlands	Accommodation	Past Chair RTO12
Brenda Scott	Almaguin Highlands	Accommodation	Director/Gov. Chair

Identified in January that our Board currently has 10 Directors and of those, three are retiring.

Jeff Suddaby	Muskoka	Attraction/Food
Curt Dunlop	Muskoka	Attraction/Food/Entertainment
Eric Miglin	Algonquin	Accommodation/Attraction

The committee identified and held discussions as to gaps, skills and assets that were needed, such as; Indigenous, Legal, Insurance, Attractions, Trails, Food etc.

Chair Scott highlighted that in January a notice of open call for RTO12 Board, on RTO12 website and through mass emails. All Directors were asked to share with regional stakeholders and community partner groups and the deadline for applications was posted as Thursday, February 20, 2020.

The deadline yielded 11 applications by deadline and 2 that were filed late. Those 2 late were contacted and made aware that they had missed the deadline and asked if they wished to be kept on file. An enthusiastic Yes from both.

During the final week of January the applications were sent by email to each of the selection committee members and they were asked to personally assess the candidate applications as per our board policy for skills, assets, industry gaps and needs, regional representation etc. and rank them in order 1 - 11.

The application committee agreed that with the excellent response and the level of skills these candidates brought forward, we should not only fill the empty seats, but consider maxing our board 11 members. Unanimous Agreement.

The committee then reviewed and submitted their rankings. These were charted and shared by email and on Tuesday, March 2nd we held a 2 hour phone conference to discuss and debate the merits of our selections and the best vision for the RTO12 Board going forward. Following this intense and respectful process, each committee member was then asked to re-submit their top 5 candidates and these would be scored from 1 - 11 by total votes giving us our top 5.

Thank you for Michael for his input on scoring and methods to continue to improve the process and to Angela for her excellent charts that improved and simplified our group process. Scott heartily applaud and thank each and every one of the committee members who dedicated their time and sincere effort to this process on behalf of the Board of RTO12.

**Scott noted the Results in Alphabetical Order:**

**Anderson, Dave**

**Parry Sound**, Attraction/30,000 Island Cruise Lines

Boating/cruise, large operator, MBA, Board Experience, likes working with people, strategic thinking, comfort with change, monitor trends

**McRae Luckasavitch, Christine**

**Algonquin**, Indigenous/Waaseyaa Consulting & Tours

Brings indigenous ideas and 'cultural sensitivity' may create and foster further cultural liaison with our regions Indigenous communities.

**Smith, Darren**

**Muskoka**, Attraction/Food & Beverage

Board experience, Social media experience, Youthful perspective, A lot of competencies, grounded in work experience

**Strong, Mike**

**Muskoka, Attraction/Food & Beverages**

Arts, Music, heritage sector

**Alternate: Rusynyk, Andrew**

**Muskoka, Accommodation/Attraction/Winter**

Experience with incorporating larger programs (like Disney) into our environment, Lots of board experience, Experience in Alberta context (ski & winter experience)

**Motion to approve presented slate of directors**

**Motion:** Hillary Chambers

**Second:** Angela Pollak

**Discussion:** Governance chair Scott noted that the  
**Carried**

ED Murphy and Senior Director Monk updated the board on COVID-19 Crisis processes, strategies and communication. The board was provided a timeline of the crisis development:

March 2, 2020

- Identified & began monitoring Covid-19 crises
- Mobilized RTO Council

March 6, 2020

- Tourism Round Table with Federal MP Terry Sheehan, Parliamentary Secretary The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Economic Development and Official Languages
- RTO Council Round Table – Outline RTO12 intentions to gather industry intel
- 5 out of 13 identified that they would be isolated from Covid-19

March 7, 2020

- Dr. Frederick Dimanche, Dean Ryerson University
- University Competition & Covid-19 Discussions

March 9, 2020

- Porter Airlines Status Meeting
- Strategist Status Meeting

March 10, 2020

- Provincial MPP Lisa MacLeod, Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism & Culture Industries
- Enquired about a plan and industry support

March 11, 2020

- Board Communication
- Crisis Communication Framework
- Media Talking Points
- Deployed Industry Survey

Bill Moreau via TIAC & TIAO Covid-19 Solutions March 14 2020 included:

- Supporting Small Business
- Supporting Hospitality & Tourism Employees
- Incentivize Travellers
- Hospitality & Tourism Graduates

Senior Director Monk outlined the communication strategy:

- Five Crisis Constituents
  - SME's
  - SME Employees
  - Traveller / Consumer
  - Students
  - Staff
- Three area's of activation
  - Problem Solve
  - Communicate
  - Motivate

During the week of March 16 – 22, 2020:

- FedNor Industry Canada, Muskoka Parry Sound Community Network, Muskoka Community Futures, Municipalities, DMO & Chambers
- Business Operator Outreach
  - Executive Committee, working group, business webinar
- Board Correspondence - March 17, 2020
  - Updated Crisis Communication & Media Talking Points
  - Webinar Development & Communication
  - Municipal Economic Developer Outreach
  - MP Scott Aitcheson Meeting
  - Identified Regional Business Consultant
  - Two Minister Conference Calls
  - Fostering Morale and Traveller Retention Content Development

Both ED Murphy and Senior Director Monk shared with the board what they heard:

- Serious Distress (nearly 1/3 small business will close – 2,000 businesses in a month)
  - Muskoka / Parry Sound
- Need for Liquidity
- Deferred Taxes
- Immediate access to EI for laid off employees due to work shortages, easing of requirements for EI, waiting period, etc.
- Increase daycare subsidies for laid off tourism workers with children (so they can train)
- Paid sick leave for precarious workers without benefits
- Pay for training or re-training for those who have to go on EI so they don't leave the sector all together (we are already in short supply); partner with provincial colleges and universities for online training for short term or certification agencies
- Give Line of Credit (LOC) and great-rates small biz loans to keep businesses afloat
- Give biz grants to small, local businesses to put e-commerce or booking widget functionality on their websites site while social distancing is happening - so they can compete against big box retailers like Amazon and Walmart etc. (this could be a priority for the Parry Sound Network that just got \$1million)
- Extend tax deadline for business
- Give tax incentives or payroll grants/bridge financing to companies that keep workers on payroll despite decreased revenue

ED Murphy and Senior Director Monk stressed that immediate action items were required right away. Including,

- Rapid Fire Response Alert – Working Group & Communication Group
  - Moving away from videos & surveys
- Member Forum
- Wednesday Weekly Webinars
- One on One Business Support & Assistance
  - Daily, Ongoing 24-7

In addition it was noted by staff that operators require consultation in the form of:

- Networking and Best Practices
- Marketing & Communication
- Scenario Planning
- Navigating the glut of Information

Operators also need guidance and assistance in the areas of:

- Traveller Retention
- Traveller Motivation
- Prime the Pump Program

ED Murphy shared with the board work being completed to leverage RTO funding with FedNor to help with identified areas of consultation and marketing.

Finally ED Murphy noted that it would be ideal for the board of directors to make an official statement regarding tax relief in order to help with business liquidity. Chair Suddaby addressed the board supporting the support letter, directors unanimously supported the tactic.

Suddaby thanked the board for taking the time to engage and continue to make decisions during this time.

Motion to adjourn

**Motion:** Hillary Chambers

**Discussion:** N/A

**Carried**