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**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 31, 2022
Webinar**

Present: Michael Simonett, Don MacKay, Angela Pollak, Hilary Chambers, Darren Smith, Gail Burrows

Resource: n/a

Regrets:

Staff: James Murphy, Kate Monk, Erin Smit (taking minutes)

Call to Order and Chair Remarks: Chair Michael Simonett called the meeting to order at 9:33am.

Welcomed the board to the first in person meeting in two years (some board members attending virtually). This will be Michael's last meeting as he has aged out on the board – excited to see where the board takes the organization moving forward. Is happy to continue on a committee if needed, and noted he likes this format of aging out to keep the board fresh.

Conflict of Interest: n/a

Approval of Agenda –

Motion: Darren Smith
Seconded: Don MacKay
Discussion:
Carried.

Approval of Minutes – February 8, 2022

Motion: Don Mackay
Seconded: Hilary Chambers
Discussion:
Carried.

FINANCIALS – James Murphy

CIBC Online Banking Agreement

- Electronic Funds Transfer
- Interact E-Transfer
- Allows for second person to verify transfers (Not for Profit – two signatures)

Accounts Payable

- Kuration - Research Projects
- Hold back as we had unknowns due to 2022 transfer Payment

Audit

- Review in Progress
- List of follow-up questions
- Complications as a result of the four simultaneous contracts / TPAs

Financials show first 60 days of this fiscal year. Murphy discussed set up of online banking agreement – allows us to send EMTs and be more efficient. Cheques will no longer require two signatures (with board members across the region this can be difficult and not always timely) but will still be approved by board treasurer with app approval. Audit is taking more time this year with the numerous TPAs in place, was also flagged with tagging vouchers as an expense (this was inputted differently this year – held back more money as accounts receivable for those vouchers to be redeemed). Waiting on Receiver General HST cheque.

Motion to Approve Draft Financials with Current Surplus– May 30, 2022

Motion: Don Mackay

Seconded: Hilary Chambers

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

PORTER AIRLINES

Monk discussed early launch with Porter for marketing at the end of February. Strategy was tweaked after year one learnings. Challenges for EE – contract states set number of flights which has been increased with additional seats on each plane (more seats to sell); limits tracking comparable growth year over year.

- Two additional round-trips this year, with additional seats opened each way
- Total seats for season (both ways) is 3432 for 2022 vs. 2960 for 2019
- 472 additional seats to sell in 2022
- Outbound looking good, this will help enormously with overall load factor increase (inbound was high in 2019)
- Outbound & Inbound packages working with Hammond Transportation
- Shuttle Service offered once again

Outbound Marketing – Explorers' Edge Corporate Branding

- Display ads / outbound landing page (regional catchment)
- Moose FM (including give-away before launch)
- Muskoka 411 (June/July)
- Banners at Muskoka Airport (x 2)

Inbound Marketing – Great Canadian Wilderness Branding

- Porter Airlines contribution (lists, etc)
- New landing page to better track conversions and to build our own database for ongoing marketing
- Display ads / inbound landing page (prospecting/retargeting)
- Content marketing – 1st service piece launched, 2nd pending
- Content marketing – shuttle service
- Branding & dispersion marketing at airport
 - GreatCanadianWilderness.com “Explore More”
 - Digital display of 6 sub-regions
- 3D bench artwork
- Welcome to Muskoka branding for Muskoka Tourism (door entry way)
- Re-launch of lead nurturing program (Wednesday)
- Media Release / program re-launch

Monk noted the three year contract with RTO12 and Porter was always meant to prime the pump for other entities to take over and move the service forward. MTMA branding will be present at the airport this year. Don mentioned a proposed meeting with the District and Airport Staff to present financials on the service so they understand the business case of takeover moving forward to prepare for it. Board discussed the possible shift in responsibility with the service at the time (marketing, dispersion, packages, etc).

SOCIAL MARKETING: APRIL 1 - MAY 30

All social posts (unpaid)

- Impressions: 2.2 million
- Reach: 1.9 million
- Overall engagement 2.5%
- 1,800 link clicks

Display Advertising

- Impressions: 7.2 million
- Clicks: 8,590
- Average CPC: \$4.04

Content Paid

- Impressions: 6.9 million
- Clicks: 60,894
- Average CPC: \$1.00 (skewed while we tested Porter)

Total

- 16 million impressions
- 71,284 link clicks
- 113,724 page views

It was noted the marketing investment for EE right now is with Porter – but organic content is working hard as we analyze what content is resonating with readers and can be refreshed and reused. Lead nurturing will also be relaunched following the pause during the pandemic and new and targeting content will be engaged for that. KM mentioned the job bank marketing – this has a separate budget line with Kuration for promotion.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY & INCLUSION

- DEI policy first draft (submitted for review by Kyra Cole)
- LGBT Chamber of Commerce Workshop in Parry Sound (2SLGBTQIA+)
- RAISE Indigenous Cultural Awareness & Competency Training took place in Bracebridge with Chrystal Tabobandung from Wasauksing First Nations.
- Generation Seven: introductory meeting

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT: EDUCATION

RTO12 got involved with a number of institutions to find out what is happening with students on the ground (this is where the integrated and work based learning component came into play).

Toronto Metropolitan University Sustainable Tourism Integrated Learning Component

- 30 students
- Intense one-week course with EE case study
- Regenerative Package Development
- FAM tour with Canadian Adventure Expeditions including authentic Indigenous teaching
- Presentation of “pitches” to ED
- Met with Deerhurst HR director with presentation by sales staff
- Presentation by Algonquin Outfitters staff (Oxtongue)

Humber College

- Tik Tok team winter promos (Muskoka)
- Returning in June (Parry Sound)
- Kate & James appointed to the Program Advisory Committee for the NEW Hospitality & Tourism Operations Management graduate certificate (3-year term)

Georgian College

- End of Year FAM Tour(Muskoka)
- Returning in September 200 + Students

- Kate & James asked to provide input to curriculum development and in region delivery of the new **Sustainable Hotel and Resort Operations** program

EXPLORERS' EDGE INDUSTRY WORKFORCE AWARDS: BIG APPLAUSE AWARDS

Transferable Skills (build awareness of opportunities with a tourism career)

- **Exceptional Communications**

Recognizing an employee who consistently demonstrates exceptional communication skills with guests/patrons and fellow staff, including: courtesy; clear and concise speaking or writing; positive body language; and active listening.

- **Above & Beyond Customer Service**

Recognizing an employee who consistently goes above and beyond when dealing with guests/patrons, resulting in a positive response/feedback for the offered experience and for the company's overall reputation.

- **Innovative Problem Solving**

Recognizing an employee who demonstrated effective and innovative problem solving that resulted in an improved offering or service for the company, or which positively impacted a guest/patron experience that might otherwise have had a negative outcome.

Contribution (honour dedicated staff)

- **Employer Applause Award**

Recognizing an employee who exemplifies dedication to and exceptional performance in his/her/their role within the organization, contributing significantly to the overall success and development of the company.

- **Guest/Patron Applause**

Recognizing an employee of a regional tourism property you visited (accommodations, attractions, events, restaurants, shops, etc.) whose positive customer service and interaction with you made your visit particularly enjoyable.

- **Fellow Staff Applause**

Recognizing a fellow staff member at a regional tourism property (accommodations, attractions, events, restaurants, shops, etc.) who demonstrated positive and helpful characteristics consistently, which led to greater enjoyment of the work environment by other staff.

Other: Secondary School development

- **The Future of Tourism – Regional Secondary School Hospitality Student**

Recognizing a hospitality and tourism student at each regional secondary school who demonstrates a keen interest in the sector and who positively contributed to the class environment.

Secondary Schools in the RTO12/Explorers' Edge catchment include: with hospitality courses

- Almaguin Secondary School
- Parry Sound High School
- Huntsville High School
- Bracebridge & Muskoka Lakes Secondary School
- Gravenhurst High School
- St. Dominic's Catholic Secondary School

The winners will be awarded at Regional Tourism Summit. All nominees honoured and there will be a celebratory lunch at JW Marriott The Rosseau Muskoka Resort & Spa (JW wants to support additionally). The nominations are rolling in. The judges for the awards will be Adam Morrison from OTEC, Lori Braun, independent HR executive consultant as well as Hilary Chambers, Don MacKay and James Murphy. Deadline for applications is June 9.

REGIONAL DATA HUB DEVELOPMENT

- Phase 1 Survey (Business Confidence Index) deployed
- Just short of 100 responses (thank you) from tourism business owners across the region
- Responses being analyzed by Environics
- Will trigger second survey to current, past and potential employees

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Assessments have taken place by GreenStep regarding 87 questions/awarding of certification. Participating business are: Clear Lake Brewing Co. & Muskoka Beer Spa, Diamond Waters Sailing, Muskoka Highlands, Muskoka Steamship & Discovery Centre, Harmony Outdoor Inn & Ontario Sea Kayak Centre and Sail Parry Sound.

- Couple still waiting on GreenStep (they don't have enough staff)
- EE brought group together in April without GreenStep
- Preliminary learnings
- Start creating the tracking framework to build the business case
- Kate to do more outreach with operators

MHSTCI-FUNDED TRAINING: *The RTO12 Rural Tourism Certificate & Experiential Learning*

1. Introduction to the Rural Tourism Certificate Training
2. Welcome To Rural, The Great Canadian Wilderness Just North of Toronto
3. The Rural Tourism Revival
4. Developing Tourism Products & Experiences: A Rural Approach
5. Work & Play in the Great Canadian Wilderness
 - Modules completed and being loaded to new corporate website

- Humber College Tik Tok Team has been engaged to test them on the Learning Management System before greater deployment
- Differentiate us in the extremely competitive recruitment industry / job recruitment with lead nurturing
- Act as a gateway study for integrated learning students moving forward
- Initial round was a learning process for the team.

RTO12/EXPLORERS' EDGE CORPORATE WEBSITE

- Development finalized this week
- Additional content loaded Monday (copy for headings etc.,)
- Learning Management System for micro-credential tested next week
- www.ExplorersEdge.ca will re-direct to RTO12
- Explorers' Edge branding becomes consumer-facing brand

ADDITIONAL DELIVERABLES

- Lawyer - Review of Notes and Documents & Zoom discussing next steps and outlining deliverables
- TICO Application - Completed - Four week turn around
- Final Report - TPA 1 Core Funding – In Progress, TPA 2 Workforce Program – In Progress, DO / DC Partnership – Completed
- Fed Nor Funding
- Transfer Payment Completed
- Staff Upskilling: Workforce Development & Housing
- Congratulations to Kate Monk, Senior Director of Regenerative Tourism Development & Communications on receiving her Certificate of Achievement from the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association for the successful completion of the in-depth "Ready, Set, (re)Build" course

2022 – 2023 PARTNERSHIP OVERVIEW

- FedNor, Regional Marketing / Communication Program
- Bracebridge BIA, Signage Program
- Muskoka Chautauqua, Digital & Content Marketing Program
- Festival of the Sound, Content Marketing and Signage Program
- Muskoka Arts and Crafts, Visual Arts and Content Marketing Program
- Huntsville Festival of the Arts, Video Development and Marketing Program
- Town of Parry Sound, Cruise Ship Membership & Dispersion Program
- Muskoka Tourism, Digital & Video Fall Marketing Program

REGIONAL OUTREACH

- Muskoka Tourism Marketing Agency Strategic Plan

- Muskoka Watershed Council strategic planning assistance (Kate)
- Ontario Trails Association Strategic Plan Assistance
- Great Lakes Cruise Association Opening Plan Development and Input
- Bracebridge BIA Strategic Plan Input
- Tourism Sub-Committee / TSNO Muskoka Updates and Input
- Township of Lake of Bays – Community Improvement Plan
- Township of Muskoka Lakes Grant and Tourism Sub – Committee
- Regional Tourism Unit Planning and Reporting Updates / Changes

GOVERNANCE – ANGELA POLLAK & HILARY CHAMBERS

Five new applicants, two late. In line with previous policy and intake the late applicants will not be considered but will be kept for committee work if appropriate. New members provide succession planning – recommendation is that all five applicants be accepted. One previous Chair is returning (Jackie Leung) which helps with new board members coming on board.

Draft Slate 2022 - 2023 Board of Directors					
Angela Pollak	Treasurer / Secretary Director	South Algonquin	F	Accommodation	Four Corners Algonquin Camping and Glamping
Darren Smith	Director	Muskoka	M	Culinary	Lake of Bays Brewing Company
Dave Anderson	Director	Parry Sound	M	Attraction	30,000 Island Cruise Lines
Didier Dolivet	Director	Muskoka	M	Accommodation	JW Marriott The Rosseau
Gabriela Hairabedian	Director	South Algonquin	F	Accommodation	Four Seasons Algonquin Cabins
Hilary Chambers	Vice Chair Director	Loring Restoule	F	Accommodation	Lost Fox B&B
Jackie Leung	Director	Almaguin Highlands	F	Accommodation	Fern Glenn Inn
James Roberts	Director	Parry Sound	M	Attraction	Learn to Kayak Inc.
Michael Martyn	Director	Parry Sound	M	Attraction	Festival of the Sound

Motion to Move Recommended BOD Members to be Announced at AGM

Motion: Angela Pollak
Seconded: Darren Smith
Discussion: n/a
Carried.

Motion to Move Meeting In Camera at 11:01am

Motion: Michael Simonett
Seconded: Gail Burrows
Discussion: n/a
Carried.

Motion to Adjourn

Motion:

Seconded:

Discussion: n/a

Carried.