

**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, May 30, 2017**  
**Log Cabin Inn, Parry Sound**

**Present:** Jackie Leung, Curt Dunlop, John Miller, Michael Simonet, Karina, Nicole Saulnier, Jeff Suddaby, Anthony Rizzo, Hilary Chambers

**Regrets:** Gary McMullen, Hilary Chambers, Andrew Vitich, Dympna Hayes

**Via Conference Call:**

**Resource:** Laura Hernando

**Staff:** James Murphy, Cindy Kaupp

**Welcome and Introductions:** Chair Leung called the meeting to order at 9:39am

**Conflict of Interest:** N/A

**Approval of Agenda – May 30, 2017**

**Motion:** Curt

**Seconded:** Miichael

**Discussion:** n/a

**Carried.**

**Approval of Minutes – January 17, 2017**

**Motion:** Curt

**Seconded:** Anthony

**Discussion:** n/a

**Carried.**

**Call to order & Chair Remarks – Chair Leung**

**Chair Leung asks the board of any conflict of interest**

**Financial Presentation – May 30, 2017 Income Statement & Balance Sheet**

ED Murphy presented financials, as the fiscal year is just underway there is not much to present. The RTO did receive its first transfer payment as the Transfer Payment Agreement (TPA) has been signed – second payment is coming in soon. Spending to date has been on overhead a little bit of marketing. Audit starts in June and draft audited statements will be presented in August ahead of the AGM. Satisfied with timelines – no delay. We hope to have the final report in next week. Chair Leung noted that Ontario budget was late coming in but the MTCS gave us a 250 thousand dollar advance.

**ED Update (45 minutes) Murphy**

Murphy spoke to domestic marketing as the strategy continues to increase website hits with smaller budget. Bill Farnsworth is hired back and he is writing with content being edited and polished by the Director of Communication which results in exceptional content. Murphy noted that the RTO hit a significant social media milestone - 150,000 likes on our FB page – still getting more likes because of the exceptional content strategy that is overseen by Kate Monk. ED Murphy notes the red arrows on the slide - 29,000 people talking about our content and Facebook page – our director ensures 24/7 that the RTO is always engaged in the content.

While the domestic continues to produce great results the International Marketing program has important implications, Murphy noted that moving forward into international markets the RTO would require leads into an international database. Again the strategy and creative put forward by the Director of Communications results in over 1300 submissions in 2 weeks. Murphy highlighted the fact that to get user generated content with photo, story and more is at times difficult – the team anticipated 50 entries – we got entries from every province in Canada. The 1300 entries went into lead nurturing program. The program consisted of a voting period and an entry period - it turned over to voting last week. Currently at 5,000 international leads, still 3 weeks of voting. 50,000 website hits – of note that once the website was turned over to voting it actually caused a temporary shutdown at one point we were registering 400 votes an hour. Kate and Peter are working on next steps to get them over here and convert.

Murphy spoke to over workload, along with managing domestic and international the team took on the task of launching the 2017 Spring Fuel & Fun (slide): as of this morning, over 300 spring packages for month of June. Rizzo spoke to the fact that it's amazing how few actually go for this program even knowing that it is free. They may think it is too good to be true. I want to see this continue on in the future. Murphy made the recommendation that based on budget and international objectives that the fall Fuel and Fun be used to prime the pump with international audiences. Moving forward Vitch spoke to his preference losing spring than fall. For someone who has never been here to come in spring is not the best (black flies), fall is the best time for a new person to see this area. Chambers noted that the fuel incentive for fall drives should also be noted. Saulnier reminded those directors that it's not a reward program it's an incentive program to get first timers here.

Murphy continued with hub spot sharing with the board the observation that the closer the newsletter gets to the product the better the results. The segments are working and its getting huge engagement, open and click-through rates.

Murphy then spoke to Industry Outreach and the Parry Sound satellite office; in downstairs of municipal building. The town is offering the space to us for free. July, August September and rotating staff in this office. Murphy made the recommendation to go forward with it because of the importance of increasing communication in Parry Sound.

Murphy then touched on product development and the rack cards that have been developed. If people are in and are looking for something to do it explains them. Has the URL on them. We will get these printed before we get into busy summer season.

Ongoing International Marketing work by the RTO as Murphy noted that out of 18 tours operators, 3 of them that book flights, and fly & drives with Pearson and we are working with them. F&F: KW: could we have a car rental used for new proposed Fuel and fun.

Speaking to international Murphy touched on the fall 2017 Airline Industry Presentation: The Business Case for CYQA includes the development of origin demand and Risk-sharing structures. We are in good shape and we will know by this fall. It aligns with the next 3 year strategy.

In the way of a HR update Cathy Tait now overseeing Tourism Excellence North and will be going to Traverse City. We are playing a big role in TEN program because we have some many businesses registered from our area. Chair Leung noted that this is the end of a 3 year pilot commitment for TEN and it will need to be determined how much we are involved, and steps moving forward. Chair Leung noted that it is important that all the operators are prepared and offering a good product/service.

Chair Leung enquired about the 5,000 leads for International and what is the breakdown? Murphy said that he would follow-up with the team but it was close to a 50/50 split. Chair Leung said that it should be submitted to TIAO for awards in the fall of 2018.

#### **BREAK**

Rizzo presented governance to the board by first thanking John & Curt for their input in the last few meetings. Some Q's that have come up with outgoing board members is the size we need to maintain to be effective. Our bylaws allow for 9-11 Directors, including ED. Currently at 10 returning, looking at taking applications for another director. Keeping in mind that everyone here is committed for another year serving on the board. We need to be able to make sure that we have a verbal 2 year commitment to this. That said, we have a director at large; non-voting member but increases the size of directorship and will fill vacancies as they come along. Not giving you the vote, but allowing you to participate (committee level or in discussion). They will get a sense of what they are signing onto. This is a recommendation we can look at. This is volunteer but we are helping to direct an organization to keep it moving forward. If we have directors at large we can slide them into vacancy positions. Director self-assessments only received 3 responses a couple months ago so please fill these out today...even if outgoing members want to participate at a committee level that would be helpful. It gives Murphy something to work with.

Leung noted that we've seen that having board members leave for various reasons happens – and it needs to be taken into consideration. We need to be prepared to have individuals to make it through the year. The size is good because we are trying to represent a large are, sizes of business, etc. and we also need to aim for gender diversity, accommodation/attraction business and business sectors. We need to feel out what is going to work. Question raised whether we need additional members on the executive; recommendation to increase by one to 4; Vitch can relate that to the board. With the change in Executive (2 leaving), this creative a gap we need to fill. Leung supports a 4 person executive and splitting secretary/treasurer – if one of the executive members has to leave the board having a fourth person can pick up the slack and is good to represent the sub-regions as well. Rizzo asking about everyone perspective on committee size and what we want to see moving forward:

Vitch: four is good idea because it may provide some consistency on some level. I think it is important to have four executive; better for the organization. Size of the board; the biggest problem is that for new people to come on there is a lot of discussion that happens between those who have knowledge of everything going on in the past. It takes a year or so for them to develop understanding. The board size is fine, it is just difficult for a new person to get up to speed. On the executive it is like warp-speed. I do not like the director at large idea.

Suddaby: I agree with Vitch; director at large is not a good idea. If someone is going to commit they should be a voting member. I like the number of 4 for executive.

Dunlop: With the survey we should be able to find someone similar to clue pinpoint exactly who we are looking for.

Saulnier: frustrated by lack of attendance – understanding but we need to follow through with people who do not attend regularly and find replacements. Torn for director at large as it may help to alleviate someone realize it is taking on too much time. I agree with the number of four Executives. Recommend with executive where the executive does a lot of decision making for the board and the board just rubber stamps. Going forward to keep an eye on that moving forward.

-Simonett: Andy has made good points and only in the last few months have I felt comfortable enough to voice my opinion. Director at Large; if we have trouble recruiting people it is a way for them to test run without the same level of commitment. Also, how often is the board turned over – we don't want it too quickly or slowly. Size of executive; the more flexibility the better – we can handle an extra person. We need to make sure we are picking the right ones.

White: The at large position; not a bad idea – within your first year that person has to be committed. We could lose a lot of the at-large people if they don't feel like they can take part in things. The board is fine with 11 – but for more variation more is okay. The more I know about things – the more invested I am. If we spread it out to too many people are we all going to be important and valued. Size of Executive; hard to tell because not here long – when I came on board I looked to Jackie. It's nice to have more people to share their wealth of knowledge and doesn't hurt to share that responsibility with four.

Miller: I agree with White about Director at large. Executive should also be four. Executive making decisions beyond the board is also important, but we have to remember what the ED has to manage.

Chambers: Four executives would balance things a bit more, especially with two exiting. Member at large; they are always the people we have that don't do things because they don't have the same level of commitment. I was brought as a guest to a meeting before which helped. If we could do this. It should be exiting members responsibility to bring a guest from there region to dip their toes into what we do.

Leung - we have enough members that if any drop like flies we can still be above our minimum of 9. Also note that "That's a decision for the board" is something that is often said on executive calls.

Rizzo- based on feedback today – will be making a call for nomination to the board June 1-30. Then nomination committee, if necessary will review and have slate ready for August board meeting in preparation for AGM. One thing I am going to ask for is a verbal commitment of at least 2 years so that we aren't seeing these gaps. If anyone knows of anyone please contact AR and copy JM so we can start the process.

### **Community Relations (20 minutes) Simonett**

We had a meeting last week with an update. We talked about governance, an update, work force development and regional and sub-regional tourism vision. We discussed why we're having trouble recruiting; lifestyle and not thinking of this as a career anymore, lack of housing, lack of applying, transportation. Discussed places we could get people. We discussed the Georgian co-op program as well. Lots of discussion around that – really good sharing of ideas with a mix of agencies and entrepreneurs. Deerhurst brought up temporary foreign worker program, and workforce restrictions. We came up with 2 main ideas; need short term plans, and long-term developmental strategy. Suddaby suggested that we reach out to a third party agency that we could potentially retain because we could utilize them as a hiring agency for all businesses. Most of the labour pool was coming from India – some of the resumes blew my mind. It is something we could consider doing partnerships with all of the industries in the region to help bring professional people in who want to work in our industry. Simonett noted that businesses are turning people away because they do not have the staff to service it. Also, transportation and housing are a huge factor. Suddaby noted that discussions have to come up with each individual town. Ross noted that two RTO's 7 and 13 – have created labour market strategies. There are other models available to look at. There is money available it's just a matter of budgeting. Simonett, we shouldn't just do something because we identify it, but I'm not aware of anywhere else that has identified this as an issue. Saulnier, it is something we may want to push to the forefront because it is only going to get worse (min. wage increase, etc.). Suddaby, we have to make it in our industry for people to survive. Simonett, we need to decide our role in the process. We also talked about roles and responsibilities of the tourism vision – are we focused on international, Toronto, and how do we account for other areas.

### **Partnership (20 minutes) Suddaby**

Cathy Tait is the Partnership Manager working with James – her direction moving forward is partnership but first learning over the first six months the process and rhythm. One of the biggest partnerships this year already is with the District of Muskoka. The airport is now a joint initiative of EE and the District of Muskoka – we did a partnership of 20,000 and 20,000 with them. It shows they have the appetite for this. The communication with the staff at the District is positive. With the District – the 40,000 dollars is going into the project for the airport initiative. Another big one is Township of Parry Sound; cruise ships coming in – we have to shuttle people around and get them out. Details are uncertain at this time but it is overall a positive situation – visitors from all over, departing from Chicago. What is the potential of the number of ships that can come into PS? Saulnier - Pearl Mist & Victory 1, but little current has many ships that come in so opportunity for growth is there. Suddaby, the next big one is the beer festival and self-guided tours; a good fit because everything is being launched right now. Beer is taking off. Next – GBBR; we are looking at doing a large partnership with them; 20K each. Murphy, they came to us with the self-guided mobile tour development and the partnership may consist of the use of a product manager. Muskoka paddling, sunflower festival, Huntsville chamber of commerce. 100,000 ball park right now – what's nice about this is that it's not generating 200 in the region. Originally had a budget of 166 but moving forward by October – we are going to have to consider more dollars into partnership or turn away partnerships. Will have to be a board decision. I can see us spending more than 166 and

we've have good success. Leung, if we increase the number over 166 – everything over 166 will come out of our core funding.

### **In-Camera with Executive Director (TBD)**

### **In-Camera without Executive Director (TBD)**

### **Round Table (60 minutes)**

Vitch, business is good. The only inn-keeper in parry sound area and telling people what a black fly is. Suddaby: Restaurant business is good. If raining people eat. Very good May. Outstanding winter – weather has played a big role. Initiative with chamber in Huntsville is going through same process as last year – town of Huntsville has committed 50 thousand to marketing committee again. Chamber in process of receiving those funds- will know by end of June if they have them. So we'll see how it goes.

Dunlop: Summer is here – lots of cottagers arriving and discovering the store. Pub does well and live or die by the patio as every year – hopefully a good summer. Everything is ready for beer fest. Other than that – wedding singing.

Saulnier: interesting spring for us – lots going on. Found out we won an award with luxury travel – exciting. Few weeks later – found out Henry's was closed for the season. Fly and Dine is their signature experience so that is a challenge. Came up with a new fly and dine with dockside fish and chips. Day after that we sold. Last Friday we closed and sold to a new aviator in the area – staying on until September to help with transition.

White: winter was good – ice fishing good. Great spring – lots of flies. May 24 was good – fully booked. Last weekend fishing derby with 28 guys. Bunkies are getting booked up for longer periods of time. Looking at building a 1 bedroom cottage where garage currently stands. The new hot tub is very popular. Renovating still.

Rizzo: struggling this spring – flood waters have impacted them greatly. Nowhere for the water to go. Brutal year to try and get ready for boating. Intermittent rain keeping the bugs thriving and cool weather has been keeping people away. Great year ahead for occupancy. Illegal private cottage industry is really impacting them – they don't have same laws that they have to follow. It's a growing concern. Built a post and beam structure and a whole deck reconstruction. For Canada 150 – Highlander and Distillery coming to docks for sampling. Couldn't do fireworks last year – hoping to go big this year.

Chambers: dealing with an interesting challenge; in GV there is a Pine Grove Resort with no website or social media – they are taking my information for their site and their booking engine. It is frustrating and inconvenient. We are heavily renovating at the time, and did some road work also. June has not been great – May was better than it has been in a long time. I've had good luck fishing. Just came back from Woofstock in Toronto; not the bookings out of it as we are used to. NOTO; visited . Have partnered with northern bug wear – creating their website.

Leung: closed for May, was sick for a month. Working on packages; Ontario Parks passes from Algonquin – Arrowhead came through with books of one day park passes. Algonquin Outfitters will also work with her with vouchers that can be used in packages for guests.

Ross: Mentioning to James and Jackie – hotel tax ability that was given to municipalities recently has created some Q's and interest. Until legislation and regulation is in place there won't be much to share. It is not our ministry that has the information going forward – but if there are questions I can do my best to answer. MAA will be coming out with more information as time goes on. TPA has been signed – now being counter signed. OTMPC had a meeting recently with regions and wanted to highlight; a big part of the discussion is marketing alignment. They have 5 things; strategic plan in the works (where am I campaign), digital marketing partnership, coming out with content play book, content calendar and common KPI's – these are in motion at OTMPC. Also going to try to have a more engaging presence in the field. TEN; tourism week is this week. A great opportunity. Various events going on throughout the country. Destination Canada – on Twitter this week there is a lot going on. Awareness: Cycling ON Strategy, 13 RTO's are all now working together on this cycling program.

**Motion to Adjourn**

**Motion:** Nicole

**Seconded:** Jeff

**Discussion:** n/a

**Carried.**

DRAFT