



3 Taylor Road, Bracebridge, ON P1L 1S6
1-800-835-7303
Algonquin Park, Almaguin Highlands, Loring-Restoule, Muskoka, Parry Sound
www.explorersedge.ca



**Explorers' Edge Board of Directors Meeting Minutes
Tuesday September 17, 2019
Inn at the Falls, 8 Mahaffy Court, Bracebridge, ON**

Present: Jeff Suddaby, Michael Simonett, Brenda Scott, Don MacKay, Curt Dunlop, Eric Miglin, Scott Doughty, Angela Pollak, Hilary Chambers

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

Staff: James Murphy, Kate Monk, Peter Coish

Guests: Leah Leslie, JW Marriott & Muskoka Tourism Marketing Agency

Regrets: Gail Burrows

Welcome and Chair Remarks: Chair Suddaby began the meeting at 9.00am

Conflict of Interest: Jeff Suddaby, Muskoka Accommodation Board
Scott Doughty, Muskoka Accommodation Board
Hillary Chambers, NOTO
Don MacKay, Airport Board of Directors & Golf Muskoka
Angela Pollack, SABA

Approval of Agenda – September 17, 2019

Motion: Michael Simonett

Seconded: Don MacKay

Discussion: n/a

Approval of Minutes – April 6, 2019

Motion: Don MacKay

Seconded: Curt Dunlop

Discussion: n/a

Chair Suddaby brought the meeting to order noting that the last meeting of the board was June 4, 2019, not taking into account our Annual General Meeting at the end of June. Jeff shared with the board his travel over the summer with Porter Airlines to Chicago and thanked the team once again for their efforts and diligence over the summer ensuring that commercial air service was a success.

Round table discussions began with Hilary Chambers speaking to her properties in Loring Restoule, followed by Angela Pollak speaking to her work in South Algonquin and Brenda Scott sharing with the directors updates on Almaguin Highlands including Tom Thompson. Round table discussion continued with Michael Simonett providing a Club Link update, Don MacKay sharing with directors golf updates, Scott Doughty sharing with the board information related to new owners at Hidden Valley followed by Curt Dunlop providing updates on tourism in Muskoka and Bracebridge in particular. Eric Miglin spoke to travel receipts in Algonquin Park followed by a brief update from Laura Ross related to the Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Guest Leah Leslie spoke to Muskoka Tourism and the partnerships with the RTO.

Dunlop presented the financials and questions were raised regarding the partnership allocation and spending. ED Murphy noted that this year in particular the RTO has had continuing partnership with FedNor Industry Canada related to the marketing of the KTA's and Indigenous development. Simonett noted that when reviewing the partnerships that the organization attempts to work with partners ensuring that programs meet the objectives of both partners and that possible looking for more investment from partners, moving away from strict 50/50 allocations would be an option. Leslie, noted that MTMA also navigated challenges associated with FedNor and queried the process of partnerships. ED Murphy shared with the board that several different communications methods are deployed and partners have several different opportunities to bring forward partnership. Pollak also enquired about the opportunities. ED Murphy noted that there are two deadlines during the year with information on the website, the RTO also nurtures partnerships by meeting with partners and aligning objectives followed work being done to uncover partnership in the region by which the RTO then provides direct communication. ED Murphy noted that the partnership program consumes a large part of staff resources to administer as the allocation is predetermined by the province. ED Murphy also noted that the partnership is not a mere grant, it requires alignment of objectives.

Treasurer Dunlop asked directors if there were further questions regarding the financials.

ED Murphy shared with the board breakouts of budgets outlined in the income statement noting the commercial airline investment, Rendezvous Canada investment and the transacting expenses related to Fly and Explore. Leslie asked about the ROI related to the Rendezvous spend. Ed Murphy noted that the investment aligned with the launch of commercial air service and investment into international markets via our marketing programs, it was also noted that this particular project and its ROI is one of the organizations longer term investments which will be realized in future years as the travel trade will pick up regional products and packages for future year itineraries. The product development spend was also broken out by ED Murphy with an explanation of the shuttle routes and usage. Murphy' noted that year one the RTO ensured all routes had incoming transportation to ensure travellers were not left behind.

Motion to approve the Income Statement, Balance Sheet for the period ending September 11, 2019

Motion: Michael Simonett

Second: Don MacKay

Discussion: n/a

Carried

Executive Director Update

ED Murphy provided the directors with an overview of the detailed partnership programs to ensure that all directors were up to speed on the allocation. Suddaby enquired about partnerships and if the RTO were to be oversubscribed to the allocation would and could core funds be used. MacKay cautioned as this is theoretical as the RTO has never been oversubscribed. ED Murphy noted, that theoretically all funding could be used for partnership but that would be counterproductive to one of the organizations operating principals of engaging multiple operators and that not all sub-regions have the capacity to invest into partnership programs year over year. Directors Chambers, Pollak and Scott noted that smaller sub regions benefit for the mantra of “evening the playing field” and that core funding needs to work hard for the entire region, dispersing both communication and travellers. Pollak noted that smaller sub-regions still require ongoing, diligent communication while Doughty noted that even though communication is strong stakeholders still do not act on programs or RTO initiatives. Pollak noted that in rural settings there is a need to understand what’s stopping stakeholders from participating, figuring out the gaps, Simonett noted that this is not in the scope of the RTO i.e. rural communication gaps.

ED Murphy proceeded to remind the directors of the 2019 budget reduction, our RTO saw a 24% reduction as the year began. Directors were also updated on the spring flooding outreach to stakeholders, business operators, bureaucrats and provincial marketing partners. The RTO surveyed and provided recommendations to the Ministry and hosted a series of PR media programs with Destination Ontario. Destination Ontario also worked with the RTO on Toronto Star Content and Social posts.

On the workforce development front the team spent staff resources related to outreach to immigration centres. At the same time the region hosted two FAM tourism to the region as part of an ongoing program with Georgian College. Summer 2019 saw 23 students travel to Parry Sound and in the fall 45 students travelled to Huntsville.

ED Murphy shared with the board outcomes related to

- Annual General meeting held in spring 2019
- Commercial Air Service Ambassador Program
- Commercial Air Service dialogue with CATSA and Muskoka Airport
- Commercial Air Service dispersion program

Over the course of the summer the organization participated in several PR engagements:

- Cogeco Television- Local Television Show, Commercial Air Service Update & International Markets
- Moose FM - Local radio, inbound and outbound travel programs
- CBC Radio One - Update mid-season on the entire program

ED Murphy updated the board on staff resources related to the upcoming TIAO summit in Collingwood fall 2019:

- Kate to present on social media at the Ontario Tourism Summit in October (Collingwood)
- James to facilitate a panel of winter tourism operators from our region (RTO12 to make recommendations for participants).
- We will do the same way we did the Entrepreneur Panel
- 2020 Summit to be hosted at Deerhurst Resort

Finally, ED Murphy shared with the board regional information related to:

- FedNor Indigenous Program - Signage Dokis First Nation Trail, Waaseyaa Consulting (Algonquin First Nation)
- Almaguin Web & Facebook Presence - Continuous updating from the RTO team
- Great Lakes Water Front Trail - Closing the gap on Georgian Bay, RTO assistance on packages and routes
- Parry Sound Cruise Ship Season - Successful year in Parry Sound, French Cruise Group fall 2019, German Cruise spring & fall 2020
- Parry Sound 12 forest fires - Operator outreach
- 100 Anniversary Group of Seven
- TICO Licence Development
- Northern Committee
- High-rise Operator Database refinement
- In House Video Development

Break

Chair Suddaby returned from the break and updated the agenda moving governance next followed by and in-camera update on the marketing and ROI of the commercial air service program.

Governance Chair Scott reviewed Policies items:

- 1-I Board of Director Travelling Expenses
- 1-J In-camera Meetings of the Board
- 1-K Role of the Governance Committee

Directors discussed the confidentiality of information with business partners as our organization continues to take on larger, more robust multiyear projects. As the RTO expands certain program aspects require confidentiality as noted by the directors. Directors noted that the agenda could be shaped to reflect a working session compared to a board meeting and citing “in-camera” sessions in the agenda ahead of time. Director then discussed the role of the governance committee and the importance of future director recruitment and the role of the committee in general. Directors reviewed the policy with no changes needed.

Motion to take board of directors in camera with ED.

Motion: Curt Dunlop

Second: Don MacKay

Discussion: n/a

Carried

Motion to take board of directors in camera without ED.

Motion: Don MacKay

Second: Eric Miglin

Discussion: n/a

Carried

Motion to Adjourn

Motion: Michael Simonett

Discussion: n/a

Carried.

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