



MINUTES

In-person meeting at Hilton Home2
and online via Zoom
January 21, 2025, 2:00 p.m.



Present: In person: Jeff Suddaby, Andrew Buwalda, Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Chandler Joliffe, Linda Fraser; via Zoom: Scott Morrison
Regrets: none
Staff: Kelly Haywood, Dawn Huddleston, Torin Suddaby, Rhonda Christenson
Guests: Halley Clover, Chamber (Zoom); Rachel Hunt, BIA

1. Welcome and agenda approval

The meeting was called to order at 2:05 p.m.

Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

Moved by: Chandler Joliffe

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

2. Declaration of conflict of interest – none

3. Approval of meeting minutes

Motion: To accept the minutes from the November 18, 2024 meeting as presented.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

4. Partnership presentations

The Board heard presentations from HMATA's tourism partners: Halley Clover, Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce; Rachel Hunt, Downtown Huntsville BIA; and Dan Watson, Festival of the Arts with funding requests for 2025/26.

5. Financial update

The Treasurer presented a YTD financials and cash flow update. There are still two more MAT payments to come from the Town this fiscal year, expected in February and May. 2024 audited financials are pending and should be tabled at the next regular meeting. The AGM is tentatively scheduled for March 25.

6. ED report

- The ED presented the January marketing report. \$4,000 remains in budget, to be used for spring campaign.
- Spring marketing campaign – working with Muskoka Tourism on birding/birdwatching tourism campaign. Have hired a local bird expert to create activities in April-May over five weekends. Has potential to drive room nights because the best time for birdwatching in early morning or evening. Marketing campaign will also include other things happening in Huntsville, like Maple Festival.

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- General discussion regarding marketing effectiveness and driving engagement — what is the ultimate goal.
 - Staff engaging short-term rental accommodators to add to website database to help market their properties and ensure ongoing communication.
 - Brief discussion re: the possibility/legality of increasing the MAT on only STRs since they have an advantage over commercial properties (less legislation, less requirement for water sampling, pay residential rather than commercial taxes)
Action item: Staff to investigate options.
 - Staff looked into whether MAT can be applied to Arrowhead Park's roofed accommodations. Provincial legislation currently prohibits collecting the MAT on Crown land.
Action item: Staff to connect with TAIO for help addressing this.
 - Explore Huntsville/HMATA has been selected as host for 2026 Ontario 55+ Winter Games, to be held February 3-5, 2026. Official announcement to happen in the coming weeks.
 - Applications for Visitor Attraction Grants are rolling in. Seven received to date, with more expected. Application deadline is January 31.
 - Reviewed Tourism Support Alliance. It is a requirement of the TPA with the Town that HMATA engage a cross-section of local tourism stakeholders to ensure they are aware of and can share their opinions on HMATA activities, in particular providing insight that may assist with strategic planning and to help ensure alignment with tourism-related marketing for a consistent community message. Structure will include a small group of stakeholders using an online resource tool, email communication, and perhaps an annual meeting to encourage collaboration between HMATA and tourism operators.
Action item: A motion to approve the alliance will be tabled at the February regular meeting.
 - Update on downtown lights and rink. Rink at the Lookout field is not yet open — encouraging Town staff to get it open so that there are several options for outdoor skating. River Mill Park rink lights require engineering adjustments due to a calculation error. The rink has been popular this year.
 - Staff presented a timeline for market research/strategic plan RFPs.
 - Update on meetings, conventions, and incentives.
ED will be attending Meet Week, a speed-meeting event in Ottawa, with a representative from Deerhurst – only DMOs are invited but can bring a guest. Meeting planners attending the event will spend 15 minutes with each DMO.
Staff working on incentives to encourage groups to come to Huntsville, including a pilot to provide transportation (a shuttle or bus) for groups that may be undecided about travelling to Huntsville, or offering each delegate a Huntsville Explorer card loaded with \$40-50 to spend at local businesses, or providing an opening or closing reception at a local business like Sandhill or Canvas.
Another FAM (familiarization) tour is in planning stages for one-on-one engagement with meeting planners – an effective way to encourage groups who may be resistant to travelling to Huntsville due to its distance from the GTA/Pearson.



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- Update on Eclipse. Legal agreement is almost complete and will be forwarded to Sandhill for review. Public announcement will follow once contract is signed. A rep from Cirque du Soleil will do a walk-through of the property at the end of the month to start the creative process for the installation.
- Staff presented revised KPIs. Goals of any funded events will be incorporated for future reference during grant intakes.
Discussion: Economic impact and occupancy should be ultimate top-line goals, with metrics in place to measure growth as closely as possible, understanding that there are variables outside HMATA's control. More granular measurements will be included to satisfy reporting requirements per TPA.

7. Next meetings and adjournment

7.1. Next meetings

Tuesday, February 11 at 1:00 p.m., Deerhurst Resort, G8 Boardroom – grant intake review

Tuesday, February 18 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

Tuesday, March 18 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

Tuesday, April 22 at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting

7.2 Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 4:50 p.m.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Chandler Joliffe

CARRIED

IMPORTANT 2025 DATES

- **January:** Annual business & marketing planning commences
- **February 18:** Initial budget discussions
- **March 25:** AGM, time/location TBD
- **March 26 9am:** TBC General Committee presentation (pending scheduling by Town)
- **April 22:** HMATA budget approval
- **May:** Town/HMATA biannual touchpoint (launch TPA preliminary discussion)
- **May 31:** Year-end
- **June:** TPA draft
- **July:** Begin strategic planning
- **September:** Final draft TPA to Town staff for General Committee
- **December:** Final TPA due
- **December:** Strategic plan expires