



MINUTES

In-person meeting at Deerhurst Resort
and online via Zoom
July 15, 2025, 2:00 p.m.



Present: In person: Jeff Suddaby, Andrew Buwalda, Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Linda Fraser, Chandler Joliffe
Regrets: Scott Morrison
Staff: Kelly Haywood, Dawn Huddlestone, Torin Suddaby
Guests: Halley Clover, Chamber; Rachel Hunt, BIA (Zoom); Lauren MacDermid, Town of Huntsville (Zoom); Val Hamilton, Muskoka Tourism (Zoom)

1. Welcome

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m.

2. Declarations of conflict of interest – none

3. Consent agenda

The consent agenda was adopted as presented.

4. Additions to the agenda

Under new business, discussion regarding downtown lights has been added to the agenda.

5. Previous business

5.1. Huntsville Festival of the Arts mural tours

Motion: To provide Huntsville Festival of the Arts with \$10,000 for Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery mural tours and self-guided tour translation costs.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

Motion to amend: To provide \$14,796 for the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery, with \$10,000 going to Huntsville Festival of the Arts for mural tours and self-guided tour translation costs and \$4,796 going to Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce for a new mural.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

Discussion: none

CARRIED

5.2. Muskoka Nordik Spa

Staff are awaiting a business plan – to be included in a future agenda for discussion.

Discussion: none

5.3. Strategic Plan RFP – Scope of Work

Kelly presented an updated scope of work for review.

Discussion: Scope of work should also include comparison with DMMOs that have a similar funding format (funded by a MAT), an internal review of the organization (how we serve our stakeholders and strategic goals), and focused recommendations (for example, the most viable markets to focus on). Board engagement/feedback loop will need to be determined with

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selected vendor and will likely include a retreat day with the Board and key stakeholders (MT, HfA, HLOBCC, BIA).

ACTION: Staff to issue RFP.

5.4. Eclipse update

Kelly provided an update on the Eclipse project. Staff have secured a grant for additional equipment and are awaiting a decision on other grant applications. Trail development is mostly complete. Staff have engaged a consultant from Cirque du Soleil for artistic advice. Install will begin in September; project is on track for relaunch in November.

Discussion: HMATA's overall investment in the project, including grants, is just over \$500,000. Downtown light installations will direct visitors to Eclipse and vice versa.

5.5. Financial Accountability Agreement (TPA) update

Kelly provided an overview of the Council motion directing Town staff to negotiate a new two-year financial accountability agreement with HMATA, including a request to move the split of MAT funds closer to 50/50. (Currently 62/38.) Kelly will present to Council on HMATA's activities, if needed.

The Town will also be updating its MAT budget principles policy, which guides the municipality's use of MAT funds.

Discussion: Don't want to see the percentage decrease – there is still lots of work to be done. Even when HMATA has accomplished business development initiatives, such as Eclipse, the work of marketing our community won't stop – it will continue in perpetuity. A reduction in the funds HMATA receives would also require reevaluation of what HMATA supports and how that is supported. Could the agreement be negotiated so that the split reduces over time (year-over-year or per agreement), such that the nominal amount HMATA takes in remains the same – i.e. If the total MAT goes up in a year, the difference between year A to B adjusts that formula so the Town gets the net increase until the split reaches 50/50 – which would remove the need for program reduction. Unlike in a larger, more bureaucratic organization, with a smaller, more nimble organization like HMATA, more of the MAT funds will reach end users/community and have a greater impact.

Lauren added that the intent of the MAT budget principles policy is that it supports quality of life for residents, including enhanced community infrastructure that encourages business retention and attraction and physician attraction.

ACTION: Staff to continue negotiations with Town and report back to the Board.

6. New business

6.1. Lake of Bays MAT

Kelly has been approached by the new Lake of Bays MAT task force about collaboration/combined efforts. They may also engage with Muskoka Tourism and the Huntsville Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce. Staff are looking for Board direction – would there be interest in having staff work with the task force to explore possibilities, including the option of having HMATA provide administrative and governance support for a fee?

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Discussion: Staff would have full transparency with the Town of Huntsville on any agreements struck with LOB. Accommodators in LOB are new to the MAT and looking for insight on how the program could work. May be preferable to focus on Huntsville until more is accomplished, but co-promotion could enhance Huntsville's offering with more attractions to market. There are benefits to both collaboration across municipalities and maintaining efforts within municipal boundaries. Estimated LOB MAT revenue would be about \$500,000 including STRs. It could be beneficial for both DMMOs to administratively join forces. It would be helpful to have a conversation with them to learn what they require.

ACTION: Kelly to present a proposal to LOB task force that HMATA would offer administrative and governance support as a fee for service.

6.2. CoStar reports

Staff presented example CoStar reports for Board review and consideration of data to be shared in future.

Discussion: Future reports to include year-over-year occupancy data for Huntsville to benchmark KPIs (3-year history), the development/construction pipeline for new properties, comparison sets with the rest of Muskoka and other similar tourism markets (occupancy, ADR, RevPAR). Staff to adjust graph colours for better readability. Data does not include STRs — only properties that report data to CoStar are included.

ACTION: Staff to include reports noted above in future consent agendas. Staff will investigate availability of STR data.

6.3. Downtown lights

A proposal for a phased lighting project downtown will be brought forward at the next meeting in partnership with the BIA. Staff are working with Town and Lakeland Power to address capacity of electricity infrastructure. Will encourage downtown businesses to add an outdoor receptacle to partner in lighting up their buildings.

Discussion: This initiative will be important for increasing winter activation as part of a series of investments over time to build the winter destination HMATA envisions — this project is a good place to start. It will also improve and maintain the vibrancy of downtown Huntsville.

7. Closed session

Motion: To enter closed session at 3:18 p.m.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

Discussion regarding the Executive Director's bonus template. The consensus of the Board was to approve the full amount of the bonus as presented.

Discussion regarding the upcoming transfer of bookkeeping services and whether there needs to be any updating of policies. Andrew will follow up with the ED.



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Motion: To exit closed session at 3:53 p.m.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Andrew Buwalda

CARRIED

8. Business arising from closed session

None

9. Next meetings and adjournment

9.1. Next meetings (at 2:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted):

No meeting in August

Tuesday, September 16, 2025, Deerhurst Resort (JEH MacDonald Room)

Tuesday, October 21, 2025, Deerhurst Resort (room TBD)

Tuesday, November 18, 2025, Deerhurst Resort (room TBD)

9.2. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn the meeting at 3:55 p.m.

Moved by: Chandler Joliffe

Seconded by: Andrew Buwalda

CARRIED