



MINUTES

In-person meeting at Hilton Home2 Suites
and online via Zoom
February 18, 2025, 2:00 p.m.



Present: Jeff Suddaby, Andrew Buwalda (left at 3:15 p.m.), Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Chandler Joliffe, Linda Fraser
Regrets: Scott Morrison
Staff: In person: Dawn Huddlestone, Rhonda Christenson; on Zoom: Kelly Haywood, Torin Suddaby
Guests: In person: Halley Clover (Chamber), Rachel Hunt (BIA); on Zoom: Lauren MacDermid (Town of Huntsville)

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: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Chandler Joliffe

CARRIED

2. **Declaration of conflict of interest** – Linda Fraser and Andrew Buwalda noted that each of their businesses have interests contained in the Grant & Partnerships Subcommittee report. As no decisions are being made today, there is no need for them to recuse themselves from the presentation.

3. Approval of meeting minutes

Motion: To accept the minutes from the January 21, 2025 meeting as presented.

Moved by: Chirag Patel

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

4. Marketing presentation

Val Hamilton, ED of Muskoka Tourism, presented marketing stats from 2024/25 and a proposal for 2025/26.

Highlights:

- The Muskoka Tourism website had over 1.3 million visitors. Of the top 50 referrals over the past 12 months, 21 of them were Huntsville operators.
- Grew their overall marketing impact from 51 million impressions to 110 million impressions.
- Occupancy remained steady but trails behind provincial average: Muskoka is at 52.7%, Huntsville is 55% (a 3% lift), and province at 67.8%. Average daily rate is strong in Muskoka, at \$219 per night vs provincial average of \$206.
- Fall marketing campaign drove almost 19 million impressions on Huntsville operators and experiences.
- Market research planned for this year.
- Muskoka-wide spring birding campaign, Nature Takes Flight, includes guided birding experiences across the region between April 12-May 10.
- Also doing spring U.S. marketing campaign to drive American visits.

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See proposal included in agenda package for 2025/26. Collaboration among Muskoka DMOs/DMMOs helps better position the region in the market, especially against competing regions with larger budgets (e.g. Blue Mountains, Prince Edward County, Niagara Falls, Windsor). Gravenhurst has already committed \$60,000.

5. Financial update

- 5.1. YTD cash flow and forecast to be presented at next meeting.
- 5.2. 2023/24 audited financials have been forwarded to the Board. Organization continues to be financially healthy with a good cash reserve and few assets or liabilities. Please review and send questions to Kelly. AGM is scheduled for March 19 at 2:00 p.m. – location and agenda to follow.
- 5.3. 2025/26 draft budget is underway and will likely be presented for Board consideration in April.

6. Report from Grants and Partnerships Subcommittee

Subcommittee representative, Chandler Joliffe, presented recommendations for partnership funding and grant awards. Board members are to consider the recommendations — which will be moved at the next regular board meeting — and forward questions to Kelly.

7. ED report

- 7.1. Marketing report review – February
See report in agenda package. No discussion.
- 7.2. Meetings and conventions update
HMATA/Explore Huntsville will have a suite at Ottawa Meet Week in collaboration with Deerhurst Resort, an opportunity to showcase Huntsville directly to 10 Canadian meeting planners as well as attend social events to network.
- 7.3. Eclipse update (Sandhill)
Legal agreement is in process.
Staff have also applied for a FedNor grant to add additional lights to the installation.
- 7.4. Downtown light installation update
Staff provided an update on engineering/install for River Mill Park canopy lights.
- 7.5. Tourism Support Alliance
Motion: *To adopt the Tourism Support Alliance Terms of Reference as presented.*
Moved by: Andrew Buwalda
Seconded by: Chirag Patel
CARRIED

8. Next meetings and adjournment

8.1. Next meetings:

- Tuesday, March 18, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting
- Wednesday, March 19, 2025 at 2:00 p.m., location TBD – AGM
- Tuesday, April 22, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Hilton Home2 Suites – regular meeting
- Tuesday, May 20, 2025, at 2:00 p.m., Deerhurst Resort, A.Y. Jackson Room – regular meeting



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8.2. Adjournment

Motion: *To adjourn the meeting at 3:21 p.m.*

Moved by: Chandler Joliffe

Seconded by: Steve Campbell

CARRIED

IMPORTANT 2025 DATES

- **January:** Annual business & marketing planning commences
- **February 18:** Initial budget discussions
- **March 18:** ED presentation of 2025/26 marketing plan
- **March 19 2pm:** **AGM (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:** **TBC General Committee presentation (pending 2024/25 audited financials)**
- **September:** Final draft TPA to Town staff for General Committee
- **December:** Final TPA due
- **December:** Strategic plan expires