



MINUTES

In-person meeting held at 3 Guys and a Stove and on Zoom
September 12, 2023, 2:30 p.m.

Present: Jeff Suddaby, Scott Morrison, Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Marisa Kapourelakos, Rachel Hunt (via Zoom), Andrew Buwalda, Bob Stone (for part of the meeting)
Regrets: none
Staff: Kelly Haywood, Barb Bloomfield, Rhonda Christenson, Dawn Huddlestone
Guests: Lauren MacDermid, Town of Huntsville; Denise Corry, Town of Huntsville (via Zoom for part of the meeting); Ellen Selby, Downtown Huntsville BIA (via Zoom)

1. Welcome and agenda approval

The meeting was called to order at 2:34 p.m. The chair removed one item from the agenda as noted below.

Motion: *To accept the agenda as presented, with the exception of the audited financial statements (5a) which are to be presented at the next meeting.*

Moved by: Scott Morrison

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

2. Declaration of conflict of interest – none

3. Approval of meeting minutes

Motion: *To accept the minutes from the July 20, August 8, and August 21, 2023 meetings as presented.*

Moved by: Andrew Buwalda

Seconded by: Chirag Patel

CARRIED

4. Affirmation of Vice-Chair

Motion: *To affirm Scott Morrison as Vice-Chair, as moved at the August 8, 2023 meeting.*

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Andrew Buwalda

CARRIED

5. Financials

a. Income statement vs budget

The Secretary/Treasurer provided an overview of the 2023 actuals to August 31, 2023 and forecast for the remainder of the fiscal year. Note: an updated forecast was circulated prior



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to the meeting that included the most recent funding approvals to the HLOBCC (\$25,000 for the Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery project) and Muskoka Tourism (\$25,000, incorrectly noted as \$50,000). Note that overall HMATA's overhead expenses will account for about 28% of MAT revenue, close to the 25% target. Will have about 18% of funds available for community tourism partnerships (one-off requests), with remaining funds for marketing and partnerships.

Discussion: Would like to see a supplemental report with an ongoing tally of funds available for disbursement (what's been disbursed, what's been committed, and how much remains); would like to see a breakdown of how annual partners use their allocated funds as well as any additional funding each receive for other projects or programming; need to have better process for measuring tourism impact of funds disbursed, in particular room nights.

Motion: *To accept the amended income statement as presented, with the amount allocated to the MTMA partnership reduced to \$25,000 from \$50,000.*

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Marisa Kapourelakos

CARRIED

b. GIC deposit

The Secretary/Treasurer noted that GIC interest rates are currently favourable and are low risk. HMATA currently has about \$1M in the bank and could be generating a better return on funds. Staff are discussing with our accounting firm whether this should be a restricted reserve (i.e. restricted to a specific purpose).

Discussion: Board may want to defer a decision on the amount until an ED is hired; consider timing of GIC because withdrawing funds early would negate any interest earned;

Motion: *To direct staff to deposit \$150,000 into a two-year GIC as a payroll reserve.*

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Chirag Patel

DEFEATED

Motion: *To direct the Secretary/Treasurer and staff to research GIC and high-interest savings options and return with a report for discussion at the next meeting.*

Moved by: Scott Morrison

Seconded by: Steve Carr

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c. HST return

Staff provided an update on HST refund. Application has been completed for a non-profit rebate, which requires that 40% of HMATA's revenue be from government funding. Staff are waiting on the CRA for a decision whether a MAT fund is considered government funding and therefore eligible.

6. Staff updates

a. Tourism conference

Staff presented a conference opportunity (Travel and Tourism Research Association) for the acting ED. Would provide data that could be useful to not only HMATA, but also to share with partners.

Discussion: Could the Chamber share the cost; what is the ROI; would it be better to use the funds for other conferences. The Secretary/Treasurer noted that staff should be making these tactical/operational decisions, while the Board's role is to provide strategic direction.

Motion: *To approve up to \$2,500 for Chamber staff to attend the Travel and Tourism Research Association (TTRA) conference.*

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Andrew Buwalda

CARRIED

b. Upcoming delegations

Staff provided an overview of organizations waiting to make delegations: Ontario Gymnastics Championships, tourism shuttle, an art gallery hub, Hope Arises Project, upcoming music festival.

Discussion: Need to revise and resume application and grading process; consider uptake cycle but need to remain flexible; perhaps just one delegation per meeting, or set aside special meeting time for delegations only with discussion to happen at the following regular meeting; prefer in-person delegations; need marketing campaign to advise public about applications/funding.

c. Draft email voting policy

Deferred to next meeting



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- d. Spring Into Huntsville recap
For information only. No discussion.
- e. The Campfire Sessions update
Continues to go well. Full report to come at next meeting.
- f. Group of Seven Outdoor Gallery update
Four murals have been completed, four remain. Brochure is complete. Public painting downtown was a popular activity this summer.
- g. Eclipse update
Have met with Town staff, as well as an engineer. Will be discussed with BIA Board at their next meeting before going to the Town for approval to install downtown.

7. TPA update

The Vice-Chair provided an update from the Town on the staff report that will be presented to General Committee. Two key items are outstanding: HMATA would prefer to bear responsibility for administrative support, which Town staff are in support of; and the revenue split between HMATA and the Town, which Town staff would like to keep consistent. Once STRA funds are rolled into the pool, that would equate to a 62/38 split. Most DMOs receive 50%. Have also discussed co-sponsored events. Town is also working to refine how it spends its portion of the MAT revenues.

Discussion: Suggested that Town provide HMATA staff with governance training once the ED and admin are in place. Board would like TPA to allow for reduced cost of Town facility rentals if HMATA-funded, and to also permit organizations to approach both HMATA and the Town for funding. What happens if STRA bylaw changes? (Could be addressed at next TPA renewal.) HMATA has no control over how STRAs are licensed or managed, but the MAT they pay will now be incorporated into HMATA's budget – currently bylaws do not allow for them to have a seat at the table, nor are they organized enough as a group to participate.

Motion: To direct the Chair to prepare a letter to Town staff on behalf of the Board and circulate it to the Board for review.

Moved by: Andrew Buwalda

Seconded by: Scott Morrison

CARRIED

8. Marketing campaigns



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The Chair invited Wendy Turner, Director of Sales at Deerhurst, to address the Board regarding how HMATA can help to bring more corporate groups (conferences, etc.) to Huntsville. Wendy's suggestions included: developing offsite group experiences (a dinner, for example) but would need to be able to accommodate approximately 300 people; increasing winter business, but groups from the GTA and southern Ontario are averse to this mainly due to road conditions; attending trade shows either alone or in partnership with Deerhurst, in particular CMEE (Canadian Meeting and Events Expo) where representatives could work to convince meeting and event planners that Huntsville is a great destination in the winter for their clients to have a fantastic experience; identify how to best work with finite conference space (limited to a few resorts/hotels and Town facilities); work to drive corporate business in the quietest months of the year (typically Jan-Apr, sometimes November); provide a shuttle to events/attractions like Eclipse, and also shopping districts and restaurants; offer financial or in-kind incentives for program expenses, in particular for northern Ontario or U.S.-based groups.

Wendy to share other ways Deerhurst works to increase corporate group business.

Discussion: Staffing issues can impact how easily businesses could accommodate large groups in the off-season (restaurants for example) or restrict their hours, but having advance knowledge of corporate group bookings could help with planning and build more consistent business volumes. From a strategic planning perspective, need to talk about capacity building in tourism and hospitality, which ties into how HMATA supports organizations and events, as well as charitable groups that improve access to affordable housing and healthcare which will help to attract staff. Shuttle/transportation discussions should be a priority, including group transportation from the GTA to Huntsville. District is working on a workforce strategy. Further discussions to come in future meetings.

9. Closed session

Motion: *To enter closed session at 4:45 p.m.*

Moved by: Scott Morrison

Seconded by: Andrew Buwalda

CARRIED

a. Executive Director recruitment – review applications and recommendation from hiring committee

Approximately 20 applications were received. The hiring committee has short-listed three candidates and interviews have been scheduled.

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b. Executive Director contract

Motion: *To accept the employment contract for the Executive Director as amended during closed session.*

Moved by: Andrew Buwalda

Seconded by: Steve Carr

CARRIED

Motion: *To exit closed session at 5:08 p.m.*

Moved by: Scott Morrison

Seconded by: Marissa Kapourelakos

CARRIED

10. Business arising from closed session

None

11. Next meetings and adjournment

a. Next meetings:

Tuesday, October 3 at 2:30 p.m., 3 Guys and a Stove

Tuesday, October 24 at 2:30 p.m., 3 Guys and a Stove

b. Adjournment

Motion: *To adjourn the meeting at 5:08 p.m.*

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Scott Morrison

CARRIED