

Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting held on **Wednesday December 23, 2020 @ 2:00 pm**

Present: Jesse Hamilton, Christine Kropp, Scott Doughty, Karin Terziano, Matthew Phillips, Steve Carr

Staff: Kelly Haywood, Bill Farnsworth, Torin Suddaby, Dan Watson

1. Welcome

Motion to begin the meeting

Be it resolved that the meeting will begin

Moved by: Scott Doughty

Seconded by: Christine Kropp

CARRIED

2. Approval of Minutes

Be it resolved that the minutes from the December 18, 2020 meeting be accepted as presented.

Moved by: Scott Doughty

Seconded by: Karin Terziano

CARRIED

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were brought forward.

4. Opening Remarks

Jesse Hamilton opened the meeting with an acknowledgement of the passing of HMATA Board member Kaushal Gandhi. Jesse said, "By now we have all heard the sad news that fellow Board member Kaushal Gandhi has passed away suddenly. This is difficult news to hear, especially so close to the holidays. Our deepest sympathies go out to his wife Pooja, his son Malav and his family. Kaushal will be sorely missed for his passion and involvement in our community. We will miss his contributions as a Board member, we will miss him as a peer and we will miss him as a friend."

5. Staff Reports

Kelly Haywood advised the Board that there would have to be a HLOBARA meeting in early 2021 to elect a representative to replace Kaushal Gandhi as a HMATA Board Director. Steve Carr will attend meetings and act as a proxy until that decision is made.

6. Updates and Discussion of COVID Recovery Winter Lighting Initiative

Kelly Haywood updated the Board about the winter lighting initiative. Limbic Media employees are currently scheduled to arrive in Huntsville January 18 to begin installation of the lights and equipment. Complete installation is expected to take 4 weeks. The Grandview lights and trails project is moving along well, with pick up of the trail grooming drags to happen in early January 2021. She reported that the announced Provincial lockdown will affect the amount of external marketing that will be put in place, but that to receive the Provincial Reconnect grant the event will need to take place, although it could be for a shorter period of time.

Karin Terziano asked if we are still eligible for the grant if no marketing takes place. Kelly advised that she will be speaking to the Province later that day, but she is confident we will still be eligible so long as the event can open sometime before the end of March. Jesse Hamilton commented that he still feels like the process makes great sense and should proceed.

Torin Suddaby updated the Board on the proposed entrance plan for Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP). The entry process will mimic that of similar projects across the province. It is estimated that it will take participants 30 minutes to complete the experience at MHP. With the addition of 15 extra minutes per session to ensure that the space is empty of current participants, timeslots will be booked in 45 minute increments. He proposes 5 sessions per day between February 18 – March 13, with 25 participants attending each session or less, depending upon provincial health regulations. After March 13 there would be fewer sessions because it stays light longer. Participants will register online in advance to avoid line-ups at the gate as much as possible. Kelly reported that the entrance plan has been submitted to the Health Unit for approval.

Torin then opened discussion about the ticket cost for the MHP installation. The Board has approved a fee of \$2.50 per person or family, but Torin suggests a flat \$2.50/person with under 12 admitted for free. This will make online purchasing easier. Jesse asked if people will receive a refund if they cancel. Kelly said we can definitely offer a refund. Christine Kropp asked why a refund would be provided. Jesse said a possible benefit of not providing refunds is that people may not simply cancel at the last minute which can take up spots for people wanting to attend. After discussion the Board decided to make the entrance fee non-refundable. Kelly also reported that HST will have to come out of the \$2.50 fee.

Kelly Haywood reported to the Board about the ownership of the lights and equipment. She said that there are 3 options for ownership – either HMATA, the HLOB Chamber or the Huntsville Festival of the Arts could own the equipment. She recommended that the Chamber own the equipment, with an MOU for its use. The Chamber has a successful history of owning and renting equipment for events. The Chamber would purchase a shipping container to store the lights and equipment when not in use. Kelly said she could prepare an MOU for the next Board meeting. Jesse asked why both the Town and HMATA would need to be on the MOU and Kelly responded that the Chamber would be asking the Town to store the equipment at their Madill yard, where the Chamber already stores some equipment. Jesse suggested that the MOU should be written so that every small use of the equipment does not require a meeting for approval. He also expressed concern that over-use of the lights will take away from their uniqueness and make them less appealing. Matthew Phillips asked who is responsible if equipment gets damaged when being used by outside organizations. Torin Suddaby explained that the

Chamber's current rental agreements state that the renting organization is responsible for repairs/replacements and they submit credit information before the rental date.

Kelly Haywood updated the Board about the proposed canopy of lights over Huntsville's Main Street. She said that the project has many complicated pieces and that one of the current obstacles is that some owners are worried the installation will cause roof damage. She is currently working on a possible indemnity clause, but the project may have to be changed from the initial vision.

Jesse Hamilton asked the Board if anyone had heard any concerns or negativity surrounding the proposed lighting initiative. Matthew Phillips said he has heard some negative comments and wondered if HMATA should issue a press release. Kelly Haywood reported that a press release has been drafted but is thinking of delaying its release until after Christmas. She said that the CTV article prompted many negative comments, but these comments appear to be mostly from people who did not read the details of the article to understand that the attraction will only run when it is safe to do so. Karin Terziano reported that she has not heard a single positive comment, has not received a positive email or has a positive conversation with anyone about the initiative. She hopes there will be more acceptance after people understand that the initiative will not be launched until Public Health measures deem it safe.

7. Financial Reports

At the directive from the previous Board meeting, Christine Kropp, Board Secretary-Treasurer, presented the financial statements. She reported that HMATA's cash flow statement shows \$97,715.00 currently in the bank, with an additional \$308,394.00 in pending receivables.

8. Adjournment

Be it resolved to adjourn meeting at 11:00 am

Moved by: Scott Doughty

Seconded by: Christine Kropp