

Tourism Advisory Committee

May 4, 2015 – 2:00 p.m.

The Tourism Advisory Committee met on the above date at the Grey Roots Museum and Archives Building with the following members in attendance:

Present: Councillor Gail Ardiel, Councillor Barbara Clumpus, Philip Allanson, Don Braden, Gary Gingras, and Peter Majewsky

Staff

Present: Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism; Amanda Pausner, Tourism Specialist; Allison Davies, Tourism Specialist; Meredith Bowers, Economic Development Officer; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; Avery Vreugdenhil-Beauclerc, Summer Student; and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Plumstead called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the meeting. Introductions were made.

Additional Agenda Items

Mr. Braden requested that the topic Intersection of Grey Road 19 and Grey Road 21 in Blue Mountains be added to the agenda.

Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Plumstead called for nominations for Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Moved by: Don Braden

Seconded by: Philip Allanson

THAT Gary Gingras be nominated Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee for 2015 to 2018.

On motion by Peter Majewsky, nominations closed.

Gary Gingras accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Gary Gingras then assumed the Chair.

Mr. Gingras then called for nominations for Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Moved by: Philip Allanson

Seconded by: Gail Ardiel

THAT Don Braden be nominated Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

On motion by Philip Alanson, nominations closed.

Don Braden accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Minutes of Meetings

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated September 18, 2014

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on October 16, 2014 and by Grey County Council on November 4, 2014.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated September 18, 2014

Mr. Plumstead updated the group on the website operator criteria that was discussed at the last meeting. It was decided to start off with basic criteria and add it to it as needed. It was discussed how seasonal businesses should have their open and closed periods listed on the website.

An update was given on the Transportation Master Plan since this Committee last met.

Two of the buildings at the former Talisman Mountain property have been remediated to date. The owners are hoping for a July 1st opening of the renewed resort.

The tourism signage criteria project is well underway with the hiring of consultants P. J. Smith & Company. Some funding has been secured for the project from Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7).

A Google Analytics report was reviewed for visitgrey.ca. It is interesting to see how much the statistics fluctuated throughout the past year with the influx of social media advertising at certain times. It is clear that this type of advertising works.

Ms. Davies has embarked on enhancing Grey County Tourism's social media presence since she started work with the County in August 2014. Facebook views have regularly more than doubled in an eight month period.

Review of Terms of Reference

The Tourism Advisory Committee's Terms of Reference was reviewed with Committee members.

Overview of Destination NEXT Report

Mr. Plumstead briefly discussed the report which was originally brought to this Committee in September 2014. The Destination NEXT report was commissioned by the Destination Marketing Association International (DMAI) in order to define the current state of the DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) industry and position in the marketplace, identify major trends and issues, recommend real, actionable strategies, determine new DMO prototypes of the future and finally to prepare a tool kit to assist DMOs. It was discussed how this report could be used to provide a directional approach for the upcoming five year Tourism Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP) that will be going out for tender later this year. The proposed marketing refocus could also feed into this plan.

Bryan will develop a discussion paper based on the Destination NEXT Report for review by this Committee that will help give direction to the DDAP project.

Visit Grey Website Overview

Ms. Markowitz walked the group through the renewed visitgrey.ca website. The need for the upgraded website was discussed, as was the method of development. Much

work has been undertaken to make the new website visually appealing and easy to use on desktop, tablet and mobile applications. Mapping is a major improvement using Google mapping functions. Committee members were very pleased with the look, feel and attributes of the new website.

Presentation of Grey County Tourism Marketing Refocus Validation Report

Mr. Plumstead introduced Chris Hughes of B.C. Hughes Tourism and Marketing Development to present his marketing refocus report. At the end of 2014 B.C. Hughes won an RFP for the development of a marketing strategy for Grey County Tourism. During this process he determined that a refocus was needed to enhance Grey County's tourism marketing direction.

After much study and discussion B.C. Hughes determined that a unique position for this refocus should be directed at local foods, those that grow it, the growing experience, the topography and beauty of the land, and why the growers chose to live here including quality of life, and four season adventure.

This would be a longer term project with the need to build the product and the experiences. The recently approved Economic Development Strategy also identified local food as an important economic driver.

CC80-15 *THAT the minutes of the Tourism Advisory Committee dated May 4, 2015 be referred back to the Planning and Community Development Committee for further clarification on the wording around the tourism marketing refocus validation report.*

Discussion ensued about the proposed direction with several committee members expressing concerns with the proposed focus, including limited market ready product/experiences, and sophistication of our visitors and access to great culinary experiences in their own backyard. It was determined that a re-focus is needed to differentiate Grey County, and that a half day workshop be planned to brainstorm a unique positioning. The Committee will meet again on June 1st to further pursue this initiative.

~~Discussion ensued about the proposed direction with several committee members expressing support for the importance of local food within the tourism experience, but questioning the suggested direction to focus on food. It was determined that more time is needed to discuss the many aspects of the proposal. The Committee will meet again on June 1st to further pursue this initiative.~~

Economic Development Update

Ms. Bowers advised that Grey County Council recently approved an Economic Development Strategic Plan. This plan includes several key themes. Meredith then went into detail on some of the themes and discussed the action items being undertaken to meet the desired goals of the Plan.

Tourism Updates

Regional Tourism Marketing Partnership (RTMP)

Mr. Plumstead advised the Committee about a letter received from Bruce County Tourism regarding proposed upcoming changes to their tourism staffing and marketing direction. Bruce County is re-evaluating all marketing partnerships including the Regional Tourism Marketing Partnership (RTMP) that has been in place for more than ten years. These changes may end some co-produced maps and brochures including the popular Grey Bruce Visitors map.

It was discussed that we could consider partnering in a similar way with Simcoe County, and/or place more emphasis on the regional BruceGreySimcoe partnership.

Another possibility is promoting clusters that do not name political boundaries, but geographical areas instead such as South Georgian Bay as this would be more geographically identifiable by tourists travelling north to Canada.

Tourism Industry Association of Canada (TIAC)

This Canadian tourism marketing group is once again reconnecting with the United States now that the American dollar has surpassed its Canadian counterpart in value, providing more value to American visitors.

Intersection of Grey Road 19 and Grey Road 21

Mr. Braden brought the group up to speed on needed intersection changes in the Blue Mountains at the Intersection of Grey Road 19 and Grey Road 21. This intersection is on the boundary of Grey and Simcoe Counties and is the gateway to the Blue Mountain resort area. Right now it is a traffic bottleneck. Interested groups are looking to have the intersection changed to a roundabout in order to keep traffic moving. It is important to tourism to have this intersection improved and eliminate the gridlock this is now taking place.

Next Meeting Dates

A special half day meeting will be held Monday, June 1st from 1 to 5 p.m. to further discuss the refocus of Grey County Tourism marketing.

On motion by Don Braden, the meeting adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Gary Gingras, Chair