

Tourism Advisory Committee
Tuesday, August 9, 2016 – 9:30 a.m.

Meeting Room: Grey Roots Boardroom

- 1. Welcome and Call to Order**
- 2. Adoption of the Agenda**
- 3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest**
- 4. Minutes of Meetings**
 - a. Tourism Advisory Committee meeting minutes dated March 3, 2016
- 5. Business Arising from the Minutes**
- 6. Action Plan – Updates**
 - a. Stakeholder Database Clean-up
 - b. Marketing Plan / Embrace the Brand
 - c. Tracking Success
 - d. Reorganize Tourism Staff Functions
- 7. Action Plan Discussion – Preparation for September 20 Outreach**

Summary Notes Attached

 - a. Topics for Partner Workshops, Education, Training
 - b. Key Metrics for Measurement From Business Survey
- 8. Local Food Update**
- 9. Other Business**
- 10. Next Meeting Date**
 - a. September 21, 8:30 a.m. at _____
- 11. Adjournment**

Tourism Advisory Committee
March 3, 2016 – 5:15 p.m.

The Tourism Advisory Committee met on the above date at the Flesherton Public Library with the following members in attendance:

Present: Chair Gary Gingras, Vice Chair Philip Allanson, Councillor Gail Ardiel, Councillor Barb Clumpus, Jim Halliday and Andrew Siegart

Regrets: Peter Majewsky

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, CAO; Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism; Heather Aljoe, Tourism Specialist; and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Also

Present: Bill Sullivan and Alex Hogan, Regional Tourism Organization 7; Consultants Jillian Dickins and Oliver Martin (via telephone); and Councillors Paul McQueen and Stewart Halliday.

Call to Order

Chair Gingras called the meeting to order.

Review of Draft Report Grey County Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP) Update Phase 1

Jillian Dickins of Bannikin Travel and Tourism Consultants led the review of the draft report. Oliver Martin of Bannikin joined the discussion by telephone.

A draft report prepared by Bannikin incorporated the results from stakeholder surveys, personal interviews, a stakeholder meeting, and a workshop. The workshop attendees and the Destination Development Action Plan Steering Committee were given the opportunity to review the draft document and provided further input and clarification. The document reviewed today is the outcome of combined contributions from all groups.

The final report going to Planning and Community Development Committee from Bannikin will include recommendations for a three to five year action plan and will include in its appendices the detailed findings that were drawn upon to reach the report's recommendations. Those recommendations will be based on work that can be completed using existing department staffing levels, and without a call for further increased budget spend.

The draft plan was reviewed and discussions took place on the listed strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of tourism in Grey County.

Types of existing accommodations were discussed as were opportunities for new boutique hotels/inns that would offer another level of accommodation.

Making the most of the important Visiting Friends and Relatives (VFR) market was discussed. Statistics indicate that the VFR market keeps visitors in the area for longer stays than those visitors who book typical accommodations.

Keeping day trippers in the area for longer stays also needs to be addressed. The final report will list and prioritize key demand generators and will indicate those demand generators that should be enhanced. Generators could include culture seekers, sport team event participants and families.

Grey County Economic Development staff has recently updated community profiles. Identifying local tourism business opportunities could be undertaken in the future and could include up and coming demand generators and trends to watch. Tourism staff need to identify the visitor market segments that are coming now, what other market segments could come, and what interests those segments so that overall visits will increase along with lengths of stay.

The last DDAP used four main pillars as the framework for the plan, and these pillars have been reviewed and updated in the new report. The importance of each of the four pillars was discussed including priorities and ideas for improvement. These pillars are Community Engagement, Destination Management, Market Research and Tracking, and Resource Allocation.

The consultants recommend that Grey County become members of the Adventure Travel Trade Association. This organization offers excellent seminars, webinars, conferences and workshops that will enhance staff's expertise and that expertise would be transferred by staff to local industry members to enhance their product offerings.

The final report going to County Council will focus on a prioritized list of actions with a planned completion date within three to five years, leaning towards a three year plan. To do this, the scope of work must be narrowed so that efforts are not diluted by trying

to do too many things without the capacity to do so. Priorities will be laid out by quarter and year with the Manager reviewing priorities and budgets annually to ensure staff can complete the work within those time frames. Staff must keep Council informed of opportunities, so Council can ensure the budget meets the needs.

Mr Plumstead will ensure that Bannikin is provided with a copy of the approved Economic Development Action Plan for its review.

The final report from Bannikin is due on March 17 and will go out to the DDAP Steering Committee for review and comments by March 22. Those comments will be incorporated into the final report which will be submitted to the Steering Committee on March 31st and upon its approval will be sent to the Planning and Community Development Committee for its April 14th meeting. Bannikin will present the final report to the Committee .

Mr. Plumstead left the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

Agenda

There were no additional agenda items.

Moved by: Philip Allanson Seconded by: Councillor Clumpus

THAT the Agenda for March 3, 2016 Tourism Advisory Committee be adopted.

Carried

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Minutes of Meetings

The minutes from the October 6, 2015 Tourism Advisory Committee are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on October 20, 2015 and by Grey County Council on November 3, 2015.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated October 6, 2015

There was none.

General Discussion:

The Brochure Swap is an annual event that is hosted every other year by Grey County or Bruce County. The 2016 Brochure Swap is being held in Wiarton. Attendance is typically split 50/50 between Grey and Bruce County operators.

It was suggested that Grey County hold a second swap closer to the southeastern area of the County. This would be specifically for Grey County operators who find it difficult to travel to Wiarton.

In future years this swap could include an educational component for those attending, or an update on activities ongoing at the County level. An invitation will be sent out shortly after the Wiarton Brochure Swap to see if there is an interest in a second brochure swap being held for Grey County operators as noted above.

Other Business

The Fish Art Trail will be continued into Blue Mountains and will include the Thornbury Fish Ladder. The Fish Art Trail is a regional tourism initiative developed several years ago with Fish Art Trail locations in Owen Sound, Durham and Hanover along with others in Bruce County.

Invitations have recently been sent out for The Meaford Scarecrow Invasion Planners Day event. This is a well-organized event and would be of interest to many in the industry.

It was discussed how websites that are not on a mobile platform will no longer be accessed by Google as of April 2016. This is very important for industry people to be aware as it could potentially lead to lost business if potential customers cannot find a business online.

Next Meeting Dates

The next Tourism Advisory Committee meeting will be scheduled by staff.

On motion by Philip Allanson, the meeting adjourned at 7:45 p.m.

Gary Gingras, Chair

Action Plan Discussion

Tourism Advisory Committee, August 9, 2016

These notes provide a summary of the comments received from stakeholders in the Action Plan survey. They also frame out some questions to start a discussion by the Tourism Advisory Committee to help staff refine the content and questions for the September outreach session.

A. Community Engagement

Pillar 1 contains two recommendations to start working on relaunching our “Let’s Talk Tourism” events and framing out an annual communications plan. The Tourism Action Plan lays out the basic steps to achieve these two tasks in the detailed recommendations. The following is a summary of the actual survey comments received in our stakeholder survey, organized under common themes.

Summary from Stakeholder Survey

Question 7 – Community Engagement and Collaboration - “What should the County tourism officials be doing to improve/enhance overall engagement with the community and more specifically with the tourism stakeholders such as yourself?”

Total responses: 77 (41 skipped the question)

Host Industry/networking events/ – 33 responses (43% of total)

Sample responses:

“Sharing of marketing opportunities and funding, the emphasis on hospitality and making visitors feel welcome, ensuring that all residents buy into the importance of a strong vibrant tourism industry, operators should promote other attractions, events to enhance visitors experience and extend their stay or at least encourage repeat visitation.”

“More meetings and vary location. Most small business owners or artisans are one or two person shops and have limited downtime. Move meetings around and work with local communities wherever possible.”

“Facilitating interaction/networking amongst Tourism operators through things like Tourism operator mixers - bring together tourism operators to network and potentially partner. Customer Service Training for Tourism Operators/Providers. Link tourism operators based on knowledge of operators and providing potential experience packages/partnerships, etc.”

“Host Stakeholder Sessions - Where annual updates/reports can be offered, networking opportunities like 'Let's Talk Tourism' can take place, where the operators feel engaged (more fam tours)”

“Workshops and Training - Offer workshops and training seminars on topics that are deemed necessary by the industry. This could even be sessions by the OTMPC that they host.”

“I believe that officials are currently engaged with stakeholders that are listening, reaching stakeholders who are not listening should be the priority.”

“County officials need to attend stakeholder meetings & learn what is important to their stakeholders - work with them in terms of support & funding (if available) to help achieve mutual tourism goals.”

“Talk to us about our visitors, ask us about our ideas and how we market and what our visitors are looking for. Let's feel like and work as a team.”

Assist Community & Businesses Working Together - 19 responses (25%)

“Reach out with support for marketing, liase with business for sponsorship of events, connect stakeholders with local resources for the purpose of staging events and marketing initiatives. Engage local residents, their friends and family in marketing plan.”

“By now, I hope you are starting to get our point: THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY IS THE TOURISM STAKEHOLDER!”

“Promote COOPETITION - get more people involved in the process from the retail clerk who could learn how to refer people to attractions and give directions. Educate tourism stakeholders about the importance of engaging their own communities more positively. They could have community days to introduce people to their product and share their success so the community feels like they have some pride in their tourism offerings (too many attractions work in a vacuum - they don't see the local community as their market so do not involve them in the process of engaging visitors)”

“Working to improve the "customer experience", be that the quality of the exports (by fostering projects, mentoring content creators) or the quality of the local assets (infrastructure grants, luring talent, fostering networking between stakeholders and

friendly experiencers) before we get MORE people, we need to be assured those few who dare venture out here go away completely amazed.”

“Provide each community with a clear understanding why tourism is vital to the economic prosperity of that community.”

Communications/Newsletter - 15 responses (20%)

“I think it has been improving over the last couple of years but consistent and beneficial communication that actually relates to the businesses in the area and also provide opportunity for feedback and engagement. As opposed to just speaking to the businesses, have more interactive opportunities throughout the year.”

“More frequent newsletters with helpful information such as tourism trends, success stories (what's working and what's not), opportunities.”

“Communication is high priority for any organization - the county needs to create a newsletter for the community (not the weekly events one) that highlights new initiatives & how tourism is working to improve/enhance the living experience in Grey County (i.e. cycling lanes). For stakeholders, consistent and regular communication through their newsletters & industry site, with the industry site is currently being under-utilized. Back issues of industry newsletters should be available & easy to find on the site.”

“Keep people informed of all the many and amazing things that are happening in the area. It's a very artistic community.”

Themes running through the comments:

- Assist local organizations and business to work together
- Involve general public, ambassadors, VFR (Visiting Friends & Relatives)
- Outreach and help tourism businesses or organizations engage their own community
- Importance/benefits of tourism to communities/general public
- Get input from business on needs, barriers,
- Improve customer experience quality

Potential topics for stakeholder sessions:

- How to keep business moving forward/roadblocks or barriers/training
- Marketing opportunities/funding
- Hospitality/customer service training
- Annual report/update
- Economic prosperity of each community
- What is important to businesses, who is visiting, what are they looking for?

RTO7 undertook a survey at last year's Regional Tourism Conference and plans to deliver top-ranked topics. A summary of their results is found in Attachment A.

Questions for TAC:

Should we differentiate two “audiences” e.g.: private businesses and tourism organizations/DMO/Municipalities? Different needs, different sessions or can we accommodate both at same session?

There were many comments re. assisting local businesses and organizations to work with their communities. Is that our role, if so, how can we assist?

How can we leverage our “partners”, e.g. RTO7, local DMOs, municipalities, chambers to best serve diversity of needs? e.g. engage all groups (include economic development and business organizations) in a discussion of who can provide what training/sessions/networking and work out a calendar?

Where do we best fit in delivering networking and education/training needs? What is our niche, our focus, for tourism (and overall economic development/business)?

B: Market Research & Tracking

Pillar 3: Track Key Quantitative and Qualitative Metrics and Economic Impact of Tourism.

In the Tourism Action Plan, the recommendation is to host a “Tourism Talks” on what information to collect. Suggestions include:

Length of stay, customers/year, origin of customers, full time/part time employees, percentage of revenue spent on payroll, guest expenditure/day, percentage of bookings done online, top three places of origin.

We would like to incorporate this into our September 20 session, to get some direction and ideally be in a position to start collecting information on performance in 2016. We also received a lot of feedback from the Survey, and again below is a tally of priority metrics and then a summary of comments received.

Summary from Stakeholder Survey

Question 11: Market Research and Tracking “What kind of research, performance measurement and tracking information is most important to you?”

Responses: 68 (50 skipped the question)

Summary of the survey responses and comparison to our historic operator questions

1. "Number of visitors" - 23 responses (34%) In the past we have asked "How has the (spring, summer, fall) season been this year compared to last year (# of people to your business, operation or area, depending on the context.)
2. "Where are people coming from" - 18 responses (26%) – We have asked this question in the past.
3. "What are they doing here (activities) or what is their reason for visiting" - 17 responses (25%). In the past we asked "What are they doing (tailored to each case, e.g. if at a golf course... etc.)
4. "How they heard of Grey or is the marketing working"? - 11 responses (16%). We have not asked this question in the past.
5. "Expenditures (dollars spent)" - 10 responses (15%). We have not asked this question either, but could ask in a relative way, i.e. How do you find our visitors spending compared to other years?
6. "Age of Visitor(s)" – 8 responses (12%)
7. & 8. "Ethnicity", and "Events Attended" - 5 responses (7%) each
9. & 10. "Satisfaction with Visit" and "Website Analytics/SEO (Search Engine Optimization)" - 4 responses (6%) each

In the past we also asked a pretty open-ended question; "Are there are any trends you observe this year or over the past few years."

Actual Survey Comments

"Home location, reasons for visiting, demographics, the usual, but also, their emotional response to the area, the activity, their satisfaction with the experience."

"Is our marketing getting people to come; hits are nice but doesn't necessarily mean that they're coming, what do people like most and probably more important; what disappoints them."

"Numbers. Attendee's. Location or reason for visiting. Would allow us to then focus our limited resources on getting them into our community."

"Attendance at special events and festivals, visitor origins, length of stay, spending patterns."

"Economic impact of tourism at the county and regional level. Visitor demographics."

“Who is coming to my area of Grey and why. Will they return, and if so why? Will they not return, and if so why? \$Spend How did they find out about us? What jobs are being created in the tourism industry.”

“The only kind of tracking that is important to me, frankly, is my own numbers. Is my business doing well? I don't have time to care about how many people crossed the border into our county. I can tell by whether the places I go and the people in my own business...are they busy? Are the people having fun? Let's not get hung up with numbers and reports. That's been our main function but it's time to get real and just busy ourselves promoting the area in a positive way and the county does a good job already.”

“The data we have received in the past is worthless. Guest visits, purpose of visit, length of visit, demographics(age, sex, home address, number of vacations taken per year) and how they heard of Grey county would be beneficial to all operators if they were educated.”

“Postal Code data with party size and date when they visit. If you can find out what they did and other interests, that's a bonus.”

“Need economic impact of tourism numbers. Perhaps research should focus on the tourism resources we have so that the tourism partners or private sector can develop new attraction, events or businesses/ accommodations.”

Questions for TAC

Are there other key metrics we are missing?

The plan is to collect some data from stakeholders directly. Timing to collect & share key metrics: quarterly, annually, by season, etc.? Annual “Tourism Snapshot” to contain key metrics that can be collected each year for comparison.

Best method to collect: Survey monkey, “live” web-based form. Should participants only get detailed data or share with everyone?

Should we differentiate audiences or ask the question to our stakeholders – eg. do businesses want different metrics vs. DMO/municipality/tourism organization?

Clarify utility of profiles of target market groups using demographics and psychographics, etc. Canada's Explorer quotient vs. Ontario's segmentation.

How to best leverage our partners - RTO7, local DMOs, municipalities, chambers, eg. what information do they collect and where is our niche? Also third party data sources: e.g. OMAFRA's Analyst, Ministry of Tourism regional profiles – useful at RTO7 level.

Attachment A - Questions from the RTO7 Conference

The first number in the equation is the result from the conference and the second number is the amount from Survey Monkey. Survey Monkey was a follow up to those delegates that did not complete the survey at the conference. The Survey Monkey respondents self-identified.

- Google Analytics (34+5 =39) – 34 are from the conference – 5 are from Survey Monkey.
1. On various occasions you have provided us with training opportunities you are interested in as follows:
 - Google Analytics (34+5 =39)
 - Marketing Plan Development (27+7=34)
 - Social Media (25+7= 32)
 - Digital Advertising (26 +5=31)
 - Media Training (25+1=26)
 - Business/Strategic Plans (21+4= 25)
 - Ambassador Training/Tour Guide Training (20+1=21)
 - Motivating Staff (16+4=20)
 - Online Reputation (17+1=18)
 - Customer Service (12+2=14)
 - Marketing (12+1=13)
 - Succession Planning (9+3=12)
 - Recruitment and Retention (10+1=11)

 2. What other workshop or training would you be interested in?
 - Market/Tourism Trends (18+6=24)
 - Trip Advisor (19+0=19)
 - Geofencing (17+2=19)

 3. Many members have indicated interest in Social Media training. What does that mean to you?
 - Calculating ROI (10+7=17)
 - Social Media Advertising Opportunities (8+8=16)
 - Using Various Channels Effectively and when NOT to use (2+12=14)
 - Content (8+5=13)
 - Integration of Online Tools (1+10=11)
 - Using Twitter effectively (10+0=10)

 4. How would you like to learn?

- Workshops/Conferences/Seminars (49+10=59)
- Webinars/Online (24+10=25)
- Self-directed ELearning (16+8=24)
- Blended (Combination of online and classroom (9+9=18)
- Learning Community/Mentorship (8+1=9)

5. What time of year is the best time for you to attend training?

January (14+3=17)

July (3+0=3)

February (11+2=13)

August (2+0 = 2)

March (2+1= 3)

September (4+0= 4)

April (11+2 = 13)

October (10+3=13)

May (7+1=8)

November (37+4=41)

June (5+0=5)

December (15+1=16)

6. What length of training appeals you:

- 3 hour workshops in the morning (33+8=41)
- Full day workshops (34+7=32)
- 3 hour workshops in the afternoon (19+3=22)
- 1 hour minibit knowledge exchange (16+1=17)

7. What makes great training for you?

- Presenters that relay practical tips, strategies, best practices (36+6=42)
- Passionate about topic (28+4=32)
- Subject Matter Experts (18 +2=20)
- Local resources/experts (11+1=12)
- Networking Opportunities (14+0=14)
- Speakers have tourism background (3+6=9)