Tourism Advisory Committee

December 2, 2013 – 10:00 a.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: Don Braden, Chair, Warden Duncan McKinlay, Councillor Francis Richardson, Philip Allanson, and Suzanne Ainley

Regrets: Gary Gingras, Delton Becker

Staff Present: Sharon Vokes, Clerk/Director of Council Services; Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism, and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Mr. Braden called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Transportation Master Plan (TMP) Update

Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Kelly were welcomed to the meeting and provided an update on recent changes to the criteria of the TMP. Under the heading Urban Centre Connector, there are now additional points awarded for roads connecting to primary recreational resort areas, recreational resort areas designated in the County Official Plan, and to other minor tourism attractions and escarpment recreation areas. This change in points was initiated by the Tourism Advisory Committee through a request for additional tourism considerations to the TMP.

For tourism purposes, a weekend traffic count was taken on three County roads on a non-holiday weekend in August. While traffic counts were higher that weekend, compared to average weekday counts, they were not high enough to make a difference to the points standing on those three roads. Historically Grey County traffic counts are
taken on weekdays and there are no existing traffic count numbers for weekends available for comparison.

Next steps were discussed and how they relate to active transportation needs on both County and lower tier roads. Off road parking is needed for people who are hiking, cycling, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, etc. This would also entail clearing parking areas of snow, and having washrooms, and food and beverage access nearby. Parking areas need to be seen as a safe area to leave a vehicle.

When parking properties are not owned by municipal governments, difficulties arise with liability issues for snow clearing, sign placement, etc. Partnering with existing businesses may be one way to do this, or by utilizing existing municipally owned properties, or by working with other groups such as the Bruce Trail organization.

Discussions continued around the possibility of some roads being removed from the County system, how this would impact tourism, what the key objectives and key success measurements are of the TMP study, and how changes to the County Road Network will benefit taxpayers.

Another possible outcome of the TMP might be a hierarchy of roads within the existing County system, with some roads receiving higher levels of construction and maintenance than others.

Another outcome may be to target future shoulder paving to identified active transportation routes, especially on roads with higher traffic volumes.

It was questioned whether an attempt has been made to find out where people are travelling from, and going to, in order to better understand the needs of residents and tourists. This has been done recently within the City of Owen Sound in a separate study, and could be considered for other areas of the County.

Mr. Scherzer and Mr. Kelly left the meeting.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated September 17, 2013

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on October 15, 2013 and by Grey County Council on November 5, 2013.

Business Arising from the Minutes
There have been staff leadership and board member changes at Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) since the Committee’s last meeting. They are currently taking applications for these openings.

Tourism Advisory Committee 2014 Priorities

Mr. Plumstead provided information to the Committee on his thoughts for priorities in 2014 for Grey County Tourism. These priorities were presented under the headings of leadership, market research, demand generators and marketing. Mr. Plumstead discussed the Province’s plans for tourism segmented marketing in 2014 and how the County can best position itself within that framework to market to those population segments.

A grant for an Economic Development Strategy Plan has been applied for in the hope of an overall County plan being developed in 2014. It is hoped that a tourism specific plan would be developed in 2015.

Grey County Tourism held a Let’s Talk Tourism forum in November for its industry members in order to understand how Grey County can support their business needs in the upcoming year. This was a well-attended event with good discussion and outcomes.

Funding for International Trade research was previously received from RTO7 for the southern Georgian Bay area and has now been expanded to include the larger Georgian Bay area with additional funding from RTO12 and RTO13. Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation (OTMPC) staff will also participate in this study. Consultants have been hired, and it is expected that efforts will concentrate on identifying one or two preferred international areas where Georgian Bay tourism will be promoted.

Mr. Braden and Mr. Allanson will attend the next Planning and Community Development Meeting to discuss Grey County Tourism’s work in 2013 and its planned priorities for 2014.

Economic Development Activities Update

Ms. Bowers informed the group of Grey County’s joint participation in the Boomer and Zoomer tradeshows in Toronto. Partnering with the County at these shows were the City of Owen Sound, the Township of Georgian Bluffs, the Municipality of Meaford, and the Township of Southgate. Cobble Beach was also in attendance.
The County has applied for Rural Economic Development (RED) funding for a 2014 Economic Development Strategy Plan. This is for matched funding and it is hoped that the County will hear back on the application by the end of December.

The County has worked with various parties recently to provide information sessions to businesses and schools, including a skills gap study. Reports from these sessions will be forthcoming. Excellent participation was received from Grey County businesses.

Ms. Markowitz informed the Committee of a new food safety curriculum being developed with Georgian College. This new curriculum has come about from a request from this Committee to assist businesses in understanding the food safety regulations at various levels of government. Meetings were held with the Health Unit, and the College and a collaboration agreement is in process. Plans are in place to inform the agriculture and business community stakeholders of this initiative at the upcoming Grey Bruce Farmers Week, on Monday, January 13 as part of its Ecological Day program.

The Chef’s Forum hub project is ongoing. They have applied for funding, and it is hoped that they will hear by the end of next week whether they were successful. The group is starting to aggregate their products and get them to market while waiting for word on funding.

Marketing decisions are being reviewed for 2014.

Ms. Markowitz continues to devote some of her time to the development of the new Grey County Tourism website.

It was noted that the Premier’s Agri-Food Innovation Award was recently won by the Apple Pie Trail. It is the first non-agricultural business to win this award.

It was discussed how Warden McKinlay and Grey County staff travelled to Ottawa to find MP support for the development of true high speed internet access in this area of the province. This is not an easy sell, but the work will be ongoing until the necessary support is received to move forward. Eastern Ontario has already benefited from similar connectivity funding from the Province and funding is needed here to better support business development. This service is not being provided by private industry, nor is it in the planning stages.

**Next Meeting Date**

A date for the next meeting slated for late March or early April, will be determined by polling Committee members in January.

On motion by Councillor Richardson the meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.