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 Gary Gingras

Regrets: Suzanne Ainley, Delton Becker

Staff Present: 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 2:00 p.m.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated May 21, 2013

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on June 18, 2013 and by Grey County Council on July 2, 2013.

Transportation Master Plan Update

The recommendation and report from the May 21, 2013 meeting was forwarded and addressed by the Transportation Master Plan Committee. Planning Director Randy Scherzer subsequently met with tourism staff to review potential changes to criteria associated with tourism operations, and this information was forwarded to the consultant. Summer weekend traffic counts were taken on Grey Roads 1, 13 and 119 and the results were shared with the committee. The Transportation Master Plan Committee are expected to meet again in the near future and any suggested changes to the draft plan will be brought to the attention of this Committee.
Update 2013 Advisory Committee Roles and 2014 Priorities

Mr. Plumstead provided a PowerPoint presentation that outlined activities undertaken by the department in 2013 to meet the key strategic roles of the Tourism Advisory Committee, the goals outlined in the Destination Development Action Plan, accomplishments delivered from the Plan, and participation in regional collaborative leadership.

It was discussed how there have been some difficulties working collaboratively with the Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) group, particularly in the Functional Assessment project undertaken by PLACES Consulting. Many of the Destination Marketing Organizations in the three counties are dissatisfied with their relationship with RTO7 and expressed their concerns with the PLACES report in a joint communication that was sent to RTO7 by Grey County. It was noted that Grey County currently has three partnership projects with RTO7 that are positive developments, but other initiatives have not been a positive experience. Changes are required to get the groups back on-side. The RTO7 Board of Directors is aware that there are problems, as is the Ministry of Tourism.

Moved by: Philip Allanson        Seconded by: Councillor Richardson

THAT a letter be sent from Warden McKinlay to the Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) Board of Directors explaining Grey County’s concerns with the lack of collaboration within RTO7 and its support of Destination Marketing Organizations;

AND THAT the letter request prompt action be taken to correct the issues as RTO7 is a publicly funded entity.

Carried

Looking forward to 2014 it was discussed whether a new tourism development plan should be undertaken since the current plan will be largely complete in 2013. The Committee would like to see a new plan undertaken for a further three or four year period, but feels this plan should be separate from the Economic Development Strategy planned for 2014.

Committee members discussed how tourism should have its own plan specific to this sector’s specialties and activities. It is important that tourism not be diluted by being combined under the economic development umbrella. While it would be the Committee’s preference to have both a Tourism Manager and an Economic Development Manager (two positions), it is realized that this is not always possible in smaller centres.

Tourism is very important in this area and needs its own voice and goals.

There are some areas where the County can assist in economic development such as bringing in better broadband services, encouraging better communication between the lower tier municipalities thus providing them with a larger voice, and assisting with educational opportunities. This is now being done with the establishment of the Grey County Economic Development Working Group, collaborative trade show participation, statistical data sharing,
organizing business visits, establishing newsletters, etc. This work is important at the County level but is difficult to measure the successes.

Much of the economic development work must be done within each municipality, such as working with and nurturing businesses on an individual basis to help them remain in the community and expand their business (planning assistance). If there are local issues it must be handled by the municipality. The County has less influence in these areas. Also, bringing new established businesses to this area is unlikely to create as much growth as working with those businesses that are already established here.

Tourism’s goal is to draw people here from outside the area, and many of tourism’s activities are very different from those of economic development. While tourism is a part of economic development, it was felt that these are two very different roles that would work best if focused on separately, and not in the same development strategy.

Moved by: Philip Allanson Seconded by: Gary Gingras

WHEREAS Grey County’s Destination Development Action Plan for the period of 2010 to 2013 is essentially complete;

AND WHEREAS tourism’s focus is very different to that of economic development;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Tourism Advisory Committee recommends that Grey County undertake a new three to four year tourism destination development plan;

AND THAT the new tourism destination development plan be created separate from a Grey County economic development plan;

AND FURTHER THAT the new tourism destination development plan be mindful of Grey County’s overall economic development initiatives.

Carried

Economic Development in Grey County could be greatly enhanced with the establishment of a committee such as the Tourism Advisory Committee that works with successful business people to understand, learn and build upon their insights and expertise.

Grey County Tourism Web Project

Ms. Markowitz joined the meeting and spoke to the group about the advances being made towards the tourism website rebuild, referencing the research done by the study groups, and showing how that research has translated into a new look and navigation set up. New photography, and content is being attained. The new website will be mobile telephone friendly and mapping friendly and will also be searchable. It will feature some premade tours, and the ability to create personal tours. It will be much more serviceable for consumer, industry and departmental needs.
The website launch is expected in the winter or spring of 2014. The final launch date will be dependent on the work and time involved to populate the new site.

Economic Development Update

Activities Update

Ms. Bowers joined the meeting and spoke about a First Impression Community Exchange (FICE) program that was developed by the former Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs. At a low cost FICE is used to match up communities of similar size, and compare their downtowns. The Grey County Economic Development Working Group (GCEDWG) undertook this exercise in eight communities this summer. It was a huge success and a great learning tool where simple things were identified in order to improve each community immediately. These tours focused on downtown areas. A full FICE reviews the entire community and it is hoped that some full community reviews can be done next year.

Grey County’s first economic development newsletter was sent out in May, with the second issue to be sent out at the end of September. The newsletter is emailed to over 1,500 businesses and individuals within Grey Bruce and Simcoe Counties.

In the area of corporate after care, the GCEDWG has also started taking business tours. The group and local municipal officials have visited the Lystek plant in Dundalk and the Caframo plant near Wiarton. This is an excellent opportunity for businesses owners and staff to meet with their local politicians, economic development officers, and planners. Plans are in the works to visit a business in each lower tier municipality.

The GCEDWG will be participating in the Zoomer and Boomer tradeshows in October and November in Toronto. Booth staff will be promoting the area to people and distributing real estate, tourism, and local business information. Members of the GCEDWG attended the Zoomer show in 2012 and were very busy talking to people in the 55+ age group interested in relocating and visiting Grey County.

Some of Meredith’s recent activities have also included working on a Skills Gap Study, gaining knowledge from a new statistical data package, initiating work for new videos to be added to the InvestinGreyBruce website, setting up a very successful Southern Ontario Development Fund information session and continuing to work with the Bluewater Wood Alliance Cluster.

Report CCR-PCD-21-13, An Introduction to Community Economic Development Practice

Mr. Plumstead advised the Committee members that the report had been presented at the Grey County Planning and Community Development Committee meeting earlier today. The report will be shared with the Working Group and lower tier municipalities.

Next Meeting Date

This Committee will meet next on Friday, November 29, 2013 at 10:00 a.m. at Grey Roots.
On motion by Phillip Alanson the meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Don Braden, Chair