



# Committee Minutes

## Tourism Advisory Committee October 29, 2020 – 9:30 AM

The Tourism Advisory Committee met on the above date through electronic participation with the following members in attendance:

Present: Andrew Siegwart, Joel Dawson, Councillors Shirley Keaveney and Sue Carleton

Regrets: Jim Diebel, Andrea O'Reilly and Jim Halliday

### Staff

Present: Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Bryan Plumstead, Tourism Manager; Heather Morrison, Clerk; Heather Aljoe, Tourism Marketing and Communications Specialist; Alison Theodore, Tourism Partner and Media Relations Specialist; Kim Trombley, Administrative Assistant, Hiba Hussain, Planner; Rob Hatten; Communications Manager and Tara Warder, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator;

## Call to Order

The Clerk called the meeting to order at 9:35 AM.

## Election of the Chair and Vice Chair

*TAC01-20* Moved by: Councillor Keaveney      Seconded by: Councillor Carleton

**That Andrew Siegwart be nominated as Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee for 2020 and 2021.**

On motion by Councillor Carleton, nominations closed.

Andrew Siegwart accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Chair.

*TAC02-20* Moved by: Councillor Carleton      Seconded by: Andrew Siegwart

**That Councillor Keaveney be nominated as Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee for 2020 and 2021.**

On motion by Joel Dawson, nominations closed.

Councillor Keaveney accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Vice Chair.

Andrew Siegwart then assumed the Chair.

## Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

## Climate Change Action Plan – Verbal Update

Hiba Hussain provided an update on the Climate Change Action Plan.

The Plan will focus on two areas: a community section which will look at emissions in the community, and a corporate section which will look at emissions from our corporate assets.

The current status of the plan is primarily carrying out the communication plan and conducting an inventory mapping and analysis.

Staff have created a group because of the interest to provide feedback on the County Plan. There are opportunities for further engagement as well.

It was suggested that staff engage business stakeholders at the beginning rather than towards the end of the project.

The Committee discussed the notion of sustainability and the broader interpretation of this item. The industry needs to look at sustainability and it is important to consider this especially as the County emerges from recovery.

## Reports

### EDTC-CW-16-20 Cycling and Trails Master Plan

Bryan Plumstead provided the Committee with an update on the Cycling and Trails Master Plan, noting that the Plan was brought to the Committee of the Whole for endorsement.

Mr. Plumstead noted that a lot of the comments received on the Plan were regarding trails. The Plan was initially more focused on cycling routes. The main difference between the draft and the final plan were additional considerations related to trails.

Mr. Plumstead then reviewed the six recommendations which were to be implemented in the short term. Staff noted that Council discussed issues such as liability when they were considering the plan.

The Committee discussed the increase in traffic to many of Grey County's natural areas and the need to do something to address some of the challenges.

Staff are working on putting together a workplan for 2021 that should align with the discussions of the Committee.

It was noted that the Grey Sauble Conservation Authority could attend a future meeting, as they have been experiencing an influx to their properties as well. The Committee noted that if a good experience isn't provided, the opportunities may be lost when people are able to travel internationally again.

## EDTC-CW-09-20, EDTC-CW-10-20 and EDTC-CW-11-20 Impacts on Grey County Businesses and Economic Development Recovery Plans

Savanna Myers introduced the three reports to show the efforts by staff over the last few months.

Heather Aljoe initiated the discussion, speaking to the activities of the communications team. Discussion occurred on the outdoor activities map and efforts to redirect people from busy spots to ones which would provide a similar experience.

The Rediscover Grey campaign was also developed involving several weekly promotions to local municipalities to get people back out spending locally and doing things as safely as possible. The Holiday Plan is also in the works and will come out with a "shop local" focus.

Alison Theodore then addressed the Committee on recovery supports provided to Grey's businesses. A business hotline number and email address were developed which allowed businesses to ask their COVID-19 related questions. There have also been opportunities for business owners to speak directly with Dr. Arra about their questions, and several all sector business surveys have been conducted. A business toolkit and a personal protective equipment suppliers list was also developed, which included local suppliers. A community and business resiliency map was introduced in March and continues to grow.

Mr. Plumstead also noted that a lot of Grey Roots and Economic Development staff were deployed as ambassadors out to the field to get a sense of how people are using Grey's natural areas. Signage was developed to remind users of protocols on the trail, but also drives them back to the activity map if they feel uncomfortable with the volume of people at a certain attraction.

Savanna Myers spoke to the Starter Company Program. It was noted that the as a provincial program, there is a mandate and structure, however staff requested some

flexibility from the province on how funding could be used because of the circumstances resulting from the pandemic and this was granted. The program was delivered with great success and received a lot of positive feedback. Newer businesses were able to receive funding and there were opportunities to meet with a advisors one on one to ask key questions in areas where they struggle the most.

Ms. Myers recognized the efforts of the Economic Development Working Group and staff and their ability to pivot quickly and adapt to the ever-changing situation.

She then introduced Kim Trombley to the Committee who is the new Administrative Assistant to Economic Development, Tourism and Culture.

The Committee discussed possible webinars with Dr. Arra coming into the winter season related to scenario planning for the winter months. Staff will look into arranging this topic with the Health Unit.

## Verbal Update – TIAO Conference

Bryan Plumstead noted that the recent TIAO Conference concluded yesterday. The conference was held virtually and there was an increase in attendees.

Mr. Plumstead spoke to the themes of the conference, noting that words of encouragement were shared. Topics were discussed such as thinking incrementally, providing a hyper local focus before reconnecting Ontarians and restoring confidence with consumers. The importance of attracting people to the workforce was also discussed.

## Roundtable and Discussion Points to Consider

Staff asked the Committee to provide feedback on the below items:

- Changes to your business in services/volume
- Outlook for late fall/winter
- Role for Grey County
- Anticipated priorities for 2021

Joel Dawson noted that a number of businesses have gone to online reservation systems. He noted the benefits of having a centralized booking system for all attractions so if something is booked up, an alternative can easily be found without using a different platform.

Councillor Keaveney noted that it would be helpful understand what types of businesses can be successful on a main street and how downtown businesses can be better

assisted. She also spoke to the Renew Meaford Program and whether this could be done at the County level as well.

Savanna Myers noted that a lot of the interest the Business Enterprise Centre is seeing right now is a growing interest from entrepreneurs wanting to locate in downtowns.

Andrew Siegwart noted that a retail gap analysis was completed in the Town of the Blue Mountains and is an interesting document to identify where some of the gaps are.

The Committee shared experiences related to expanded patio and restaurant experiences during the pandemic. It was noted that the patios have been a huge success and all the restaurants adapted very quickly. There are efforts being made to look at how to facilitate this next year as well and consider what improvements could be made. Further discussion occurred on considerations related to operations during the upcoming winter months.

Councillor Carleton noted that the Township of Georgian Bluffs is interested in undertaking a business mix analysis. She asked what can be done during these times to encourage people to stay and travel locally once the appeal of international travel returns.

The Committee further noted the need for additional accommodations in Grey County.

## Other Business

There was no other business.

## Next Meeting Dates

The next meeting will be held on Tuesday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 8:30 a.m. in a joint meeting with the Economic Development and Planning Advisory Committee.

On motion by Councillor Carleton, the meeting adjourned at 11:03 AM.

Andrew Siegwart, Chair