

## Economic Development Advisory Committee, and Tourism Advisory Committee September 21, 2016 – 8:30 AM

The Economic Development Advisory Committee and Tourism Advisory Committee met for a joint meeting on the above date at Georgian Hills Vineyards, Town of The Blue Mountains, with the following members in attendance:

Present: Chair Don Lewis; Warden Al Barfoot; Councillor Barb Clumpus; Karen Ferri; Marion Lougas; and Councillor Paul McQueen

Regrets: Lynda Bumstead, Ashley Chapman; Brian Davenport and Lance Thurston

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

Regrets: Peter Majewsky

Staff Present: Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Randy Scherzer, Director of Planning; Ashleigh Weeden, Project Lead, Connected County Initiative; and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

### Call to Order

Chair Lewis called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.

### Adoption of the Agenda

Moved by: Councillor McQueen

Seconded by: Warden Barfoot

**THAT the joint Economic Development Advisory Committee and Tourism Advisory Committee agenda dated September 21, 2016 be adopted as presented.**

## Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

## Minutes of Meetings

### *Minutes of the Economic Development Advisory Committee meeting dated June 23, 2016*

These minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on July 14, 2016 and by Grey County Council on August 2, 2016.

### *Minutes of the Tourism Advisory Committee meeting dated August 9, 2016*

These minutes are for information only as they were passed by the Planning and Community Development Committee on September 15, 2016.

## Business Arising from the Minutes

There was none.

## Tourism

The “Made in Grey” Economic Development Strategy identified Tourism as an important area of focus. To direct that work Grey County Council recently approved a new five year Destination Development Action Plan for Grey County Tourism. Mr. Plumstead gave the joint committee an overview of how the Action Plan was developed and the steps identified by staff to be taken over the next three to five years in order to reach the Plan’s goals.

The main headings identified in the Action Plan for improvements are Community Engagement, Destination Management, Market Research & Tracking, and Resource Allocation. Staff is hard at work, and are currently on track and slightly ahead of timelines set out in the priority calendar. A major step forward for Community Engagement took

place yesterday in Thornbury where a Let's Talk Tourism event was held for tourism industry members. It was well attended and great success.

Tourism embraces the "Colour It Your Way" brand on-line and in print advertising. It was suggested that a new Grey County pin be designed to help celebrate the Canadian Sesquicentennial being held in 2017.

Marketing to visitors who stay with friends and relatives is an important segment that will be targeted in 2017. Developing a tourism mobile application is slated for 2018. The impact of the Airbnb business, and marketing to this segment is also on the radar.

Resource allocation refers to reassignment of key work responsibilities to staff. This has already begun and will impact job descriptions.

The new position of Economic Development Manager is to be hired in the next few weeks. Mr. Plumstead will then become full time Manager within the Tourism Department. Ashleigh Weeden's position with the creative community initiative will focus more in Economic Development as that project moves forward.

Working with area tourism partner groups will be a focus in the coming years as will increasing awareness of the financial and community benefits of tourism. The Municipality of Meaford, in cooperation with students from Georgian College, have developed community impact studies of Meaford's festivals and events. A number of positive comments have been received through the surveys. Similar surveys have been undertaken this year at Blue Mountain Village.

Paved shoulders are being included in Grey County road rebuilding projects and will help with safety issues surrounding many non-automotive road users such as cyclists, farmers, school children and Mennonite community members. Single file cycling versus cycling groups was discussed. It was thought that cyclists prefer to ride in groups for safety reasons. In Europe cycling lanes are clearly outlined in green to differentiate between motorist's lanes and cyclist's lanes.

The tourism, transportation and information technology departments are working together to identify roads in need of cycling lanes. An early November meeting is scheduled with the Grey County Cycling Group. Paved shoulders and groups of cyclists will be discussed.

Finding parking close to hiking trails can be difficult. It was suggested that some small, vacant, County owned parcels next to County roads may be suitable for this parking need. Local aggregate business could be approached to donate gravel to create the parking areas, and local business advertising could be encouraged.

Historic buildings such as the Eugenia Hotel could accommodate hikers from the Bruce

Trail due to its proximity. Locally there is a lack of this type of accommodation on the Bruce Trail. Some municipalities offer heritage designation programs that provide tax incentives for building upkeep. A tourism trail promoting history and historic buildings could draw visitation while providing property owners with incentive to bring these buildings back to their former glory. The Planning Department can bring this matter to Committee to ensure there is no duplication of effort. The Municipality of Meaford is working to identify and sign historic hamlets and crossroads and plan to develop a tour of these locations. Commercial business history could also be an area for identification and promotion.

Education will benefit some small business owners and this is an area where the County can assist. It is always helpful to have fresh eyes look at a business and see what could be changed or improved to help increase business.

There should be more interaction between Grey County Tourism and the local Real Estate Board, to understand the various markets within the County, and to identify where buyers are coming from, and why they are coming. Adding a real estate tab to the tourism website could stimulate interest from visitors who are looking to invest in the area.

## Let's Talk Tourism

Mr. Gingras gave an overview of the Let's Talk Tourism event held yesterday at Blue Mountain Library in Thornbury. There was a full house with 25 tourism business stakeholders in attendance plus many tourism partners. Christine Dodd, Grey County's representative with the Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Sport and Culture facilitated the information gathering session bringing out great enthusiasm, excitement and participation. This session was the first of a series to take place. Overall it was very successful and surpassed expectations. A synopsis of the information collected will follow shortly. An outcome from the session was seeing small businesses realize that working together can build a better tourism offering. It was noted that Mr. Gingras is a great inspiration as an example of how to run your small business the right way.

It was discussed how Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) has changed some of their matching fund programs and are now offering programs in smaller, more manageable amounts that allow small businesses to participate.

The next Let's Talk Tourism workshop could focus on educating industry members in areas of self-promotion such as blogging, Facebook ads, etc. Staff will work with local educators such as libraries and Georgian College in order to create small workshops for skill learning and networking.

## Planning Advisory Committee Draft Terms of Reference

Mr. Scherzer discussed the draft Terms of Reference for the proposed Planning Advisory Committee. The Planning Act requires upper-tier municipalities to establish a Planning Advisory Committee. An advisory committee could assist planning departments with review of policy changes to ensure they are effective and not a hindrance from a business standpoint. One of the first topics at the County to be reviewed could be the outcome and recommendations from the Recolour Grey initiative that the Planning Department has been working on this year.

Recolour Grey is a 20 year vision for planning in Grey County. Staff has attended many events this year to talk personally with attendees and learn about their thoughts for growth and development changes to the County for the next 5, 10 and 20 years. Attending local events is a new approach for information gathering and has provided much more feedback than typical public meetings. Discussing the needs of youth in the community has been an important part of the project.

The initial round of consultation for Recolour Grey will be completed in the near future, and then the comments will be summarized for review. Policy research will follow to address the ideas and concerns brought forward, then draft policies will be considered by groups such as the Planning Advisory Committee, changes incorporated and then the draft policies will be taken back to the community.

The first step in establishing the new Planning Advisory Committee is to bring the Draft Terms of Reference to the Planning and Community Development Committee for its consideration. The Economic Development Committee members indicated that they have no concerns with the proposed revisions to the Terms of Reference to add the role of Planning Advisory Committee.

## Staff Update

Ms. Markowitz provided an update on the Saints and Sinners project. This year a passport contest, tent, and promotional merchandise were introduced and results have been excellent with special events building brand awareness. A kickoff event for the 2016 season was held in June at Grey Roots. Since that time the Saints and Sinners tent has been seen at many events across the region, with more requests coming in regularly for participation.

Additional promotion has taken place through participation in the Green Belt Brewery Discovery Route, and Ontario Culinary and Tourism Association's fall marketing campaign

that is reaching out further into Ontario, Quebec, Canada and New York state.

The Saints and Sinners Trail is bringing interest into the area from other brewers, cider makers and distillers wanting to relocate here and get involved.

There are now eight completed “Made in Grey” business profiles showcasing new business owners in Grey County. The profiles cover a cross section of business types and locations. These profiles will start running as advertisements in Mountain Life magazine. The profiles talk about the people, their business and their love of living and playing here. A few more profiles will be made to thoroughly cover all areas within Grey County.

Ms. Weeden updated the group on the upcoming Ag 4.0 Summit coming to Meaford on November 2 and 3. This is the first year for the Summit and it is a Grey County “Connected County” initiative in partnership with Georgian College, AgNition and PA Incubator North. Ticket sales are off to a good start, and the early ticket sales and donations by two municipalities have allowed for the purchase of seven fully paid Summit tickets that will be donated to local students to attend.

A contest called Apps for AG is now underway and the winner will be announced at the Summit. The Summit program will provide opportunities for producers to learn from fellow agricultural innovators and for businesses to connect and problem solve. Agricultural innovation leaders will be presenting at this event and it will be an excellent opportunity for the local agricultural community to see what is happening, and how they can use these digital tools to enhance their business.

A number of marketing and awareness initiatives will be undertaken in mid-October in hopes of filling the venue.

FreshSpoke will be a speaker and sponsor at the event. This new digital pilot project will bring food product buyers and sellers together without the middleman. Grey County has been selected as a test site for this new project. Participating in FreshSpoke will give food producers more time in production and less time sitting in traffic.

## Other Business

A meeting is being planned between elected officials of Grey and Bruce Counties to discuss a number of topics. The Grey Bruce Map is no longer an ongoing project. Staff discussed how the map has been very well received in the past, and that Grey County is considering creating a new map that encompasses all of Grey County and neighbouring portions of Bruce and Simcoe County.

There have been other groups who have approached Grey County staff to assist in updating and printing the existing map since Bruce County has withdrawn their support. A map covering all of Grey, Bruce and Simcoe counties has been discussed, but for such a map to be a workable size, the level of existing detail will be lost. Going digital is the real answer to this issue.

## Next Meeting Dates

The next meeting date for the Economic Development Advisory Committee will be determined in the near future. Local food and farms is the main topic for that meeting.

The Tourism Advisory Committee will meet in January 2017 with a date and time to be determined.

On motion by Councillor McQueen, the meeting adjourned at 10:55 AM.

Don Lewis, Chair