

Tourism Advisory Committee July 22, 2015 – 1:00 p.m.

The Tourism Advisory Committee met on the above date at the Grey County Administrative Building with the following members in attendance:

Present: Chair Gary Gingras, Philip Allanson, Peter Majewsky, Jim Halliday and Paul Pinchbeck

Regrets: Councillor Barb Clumpus, Councillor Gail Ardiel

Staff

Present: Sharon Vokes, Acting Chief Executive Officer; Bryan Plumstead, Manager of Economic Development and Tourism; Amanda Pausner, Tourism Specialist; Allison Davies, Tourism Specialist; Philly Markowitz, Economic Development Officer; and Mary Jane Hills, Recording Secretary

Call to Order

Chair Gingras called the meeting to order, welcomed and thanked those attending. Jim Halliday was welcomed as a new Committee member, and Paul Pinchbeck attended as an interim member due to Don Braden's recent passing.

Agenda

There were no additional agenda items.

Moved by: Philip Allanson

Seconded by: Peter Majewski

THAT the Agenda for July 22, 2015 Tourism Advisory Committee be adopted.

Carried

Election of Vice Chair

Chair Gingras called for nominations of Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Moved by: Gary Gingras

Seconded by: Jim Halliday

THAT Philip Allanson be nominated Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee for 2015 to 2018.

Nominations were closed.

Philip Allanson accepted the nomination and was acclaimed Vice Chair of the Tourism Advisory Committee.

Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There was none.

Minutes of Meetings

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated May 4, 2015 as Amended.

The amended minutes are for information only as they were adopted by the Planning and Community Development Committee on June 16, 2015 and by Grey County Council on July 7, 2015.

Business Arising from the Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee Minutes dated May 4, 2015

Today's meeting was originally intended for the purpose of further discussion on a refocus of Grey County Tourism's marketing. Due to the inability to find a suitable meeting date in June, and the approaching deadline to prepare a Request for Quote (RFQ) for a five year Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP), today's meeting will focus on developing the deliverables and approach for the DDAP.

Don Braden Tribute Discussion

Mr. Plumstead spoke about the recent passing of Don Braden, a longtime member of this Committee, and how there is a desire from Committee members to pay tribute to Don in some way. Don volunteered his time and chaired this Committee for many years and was a huge supporter and promotor of tourism in Grey County and area.

The only ongoing award for Tourism excellence in this region is The C.A. "Charlie" Kelly Award presented annually at the Regional Tourism Conference. It was suggested that an ongoing award be created in Don's memory. Some ideas for the award's criteria were discussed. . The purpose of an award in Don's name would be to increase

engagement in the local tourism industry, and to acknowledge Don's many contributions to local tourism.

In addition to the award, it was thought that an awards dinner similar to that previously held by Saugeen Economic Development Corporation for their SCOBÉ and STAR programs could be considered. The eleven years that these awards were presented brought much needed recognition to many different business in the area. The awards for these programs was shelved in 2011 due to a lack of funding.

Perhaps a joint tourism and economic development initiative in Grey County could be considered as an ongoing way to promote business in the County. This could create friendly competition, media interest and business promotion.

Staff will research these ideas and bring information back to the next meeting of this Committee.

Workshop: Updating Destination Development Action Plan (DDAP)

Mr. Plumstead provided background information on Grey County Tourism's last five year DDAP that was undertaken in 2010, its purpose, scope, strategy, goals, actions and accomplishments. Committee discussion ensued under each of the four pillars of the plan.

Grow Grey County's role as a Collaborative Tourism Leader

A key difference since the last study is that the Regional Tourism Marketing Partners (RTMP) group has been disbanded, and partnership work will need to be undertaken with RTO7, the Georgian Bay Partnership, or other groups.

Some of Grey County's best assets are its natural landscape and waterways. County tourism staff has taken on the promotion of these assets although the County is not the owner of the properties.

To manage this work effectively agreements should be in place with property owners, property maintainers and promoters. This usually involves several government bodies signing off on each property involved. With the many variables involved with each property it is a difficult undertaking to reach agreements. Need for these agreements include who is liable for accidents on the property, who will clear the snow and pay for that clearing, if and where signs can be located, who initiates and pays for the sign design work, fabrication and installation. Tourism staff must engage and facilitate action among the different governing bodies to improve tourism attractions and products.

Conservation Authorities and the Ministry of Natural Resources benefit from people using and visiting their properties. Tourism operators and service providers increase their sales, and employ others due to their proximity to these assets. Tourism revenue helps many people in Grey County make a living and pay their taxes.

Tourism operators, service staff, and residents need to understand the importance of tourism to our local economy, and the need to provide exceptional service. Everyone in direct contact with tourists must be ambassadors for tourism, knowledgeable and actively promoting what is here for tourists to do and see for success to result.

Market Research – Tracking

There is difficulty getting accurate statistical information for tourism in our area. Provincial statistics come out three years after the fiscal year end, and the sampling is accurate regionally, but too small for accuracy at a County level. A data collection project with recently completed with the assistance of Region Tourism 7 (RTO7) to help with this problem.

It was suggested that Grey County's summer students who visit operators throughout the summer for brochure delivery, take the opportunity to talk with operators and get a feel for what is happening first hand. It would be very beneficial to teach the students to ask the right questions and have them document their findings back in the office.

Metrics for success in Tourism was discussed. This includes economic impact, power of place, size of impact, audience size, engagement level, etc. The question of what metrics are of most importance to business operators was asked.

Tier 1 data – Industry health overview (big picture)

Tier 2 data – Market Insights of our customers (who is coming from where, interests, web stats, etc.)

Tier 3 data – Local or county assets, visitation numbers, occupancy, specific if possible, down to the weekend (restaurant, hotels, camping, etc.)

Demand Generators

The importance of demand generators was discussed. This includes initiatives such as the Apple Pie Trail, and Grey County Tourism's plans for a 2015 fall contest via social media .

The newly released Saints and Sinners brochure was championed by Grey County Economic Development and is receiving rave reviews. It promotes local wineries, breweries and cider producers, along with a corresponding exhibit at Grey Roots

Museum. The next step for the project is to improve and increase product offerings and experiences.

Grey County needs to continue to promote cycling, and to improve its trail offerings with things such as improved signage, parking, and maps. Grey County is home to more kilometers of Bruce Trail than any other County or Region in the province. Some industry people are keying into this product, but much more can be done to expand this offering and those who can profit from their proximity to it.

Marketing – Destination Positioning

Current marketing programs and products were discussed. The Grey County Tourism website rebuild has been very well received. A social media campaign this year is going very well promoting waterfalls, paddling and cycling to date in Grey County. A fall product will also be promoted.

The reach of marketing was discussed for inside the area versus outside the area. Social media buys and event distribution is largely targeting visitors from outside of the region this year. A large percentage of visitors coming here stay with friends and family and this audience is mainly targeted through internal promotion. Also many campers visiting the region are reached through internal advertising as well.

There was discussion around whether the County should be advertising, or if this should be left to the individual operator. Time is needed to explore and evaluate this direction. There are big changes underway on how people investigate places to visit. There is a role for promoting things to do here, whereas individual operators focus on their specific area of sales. County staff should work towards building the destination, by becoming facilitators to operators building experiences.

Tourism needs to work more with economic development. We need to entice people to come here to visit, let them see the potential that is here and make this their new home and business place. We need to promote coming for a visit, and staying for a lifetime. We must be ready to tell the stories of those who are here. Use organizations such as CARP (formerly Canadian Association of Retired Persons) to bring attention to Grey County. We should also work to engage municipalities to do this as well.

DestinationNEXT Approach

The group discussed the DestinationNEXT program which is a different approach to undertaking this type of study and whether it would work in a region of our size. The program developer advises that it can be scaled by budget and governance model.

We need to be certain that our key deliverables are identified prior to beginning the project.

RTO7 offers 2:1 funding for this type of work. Grey County has budgeted \$40,000 in 2015 for this study to be undertaken. Leveraging funding from RTO7 would allow Grey County Tourism to accomplish additional work to move forward with the recommendations of the study. IF RTO7 funding is received, they are responsible for preparing the RFP. A subcommittee of this Committee, tourism staff and RTO7 staff could participate in the review of proposals for the RFP and the resulting awarding of the winning contract. The application for RTO7 funding must be made by September 15, 2015, and the project completed by March 31, 2016.

A decision needs to be made prior to going out for the RFP if we want to use the DestinationNEXT model for this year's DDAP or not. The RFP document will reflect this decision, as will the consultants hired.

Terminology used by DestinationNEXT is different than that used by the County in past years, so this may take a little time to get used to.

Stakeholders input into the DDAP is needed at the operator and municipal level.

Mr. Plumstead will investigate this program further, over the next two weeks, and will speak to staff in other regions who have undertaken this approach in order to learn from their insights and outcomes. RTO4 is using this program. Blue Mountain Village Association has also done some work with DestinationNEXT and has had good results to date. Mr. Plumstead will contact Committee members with his findings and options by email or teleconference in order to move ahead with the funding application and RFP work.

Other Business

Grey County logo shirts will be available for Committee members. Mary Jane will correspond with Committee members for proper shirt sizing.

Next Meeting Dates

The next Tourism Advisory Committee meeting will be held Tuesday, October 6 from 2 to 4 p.m.

On motion by Philip Allanson, the meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Gary Gingras, Chair