



Committee Minutes

Tourism Advisory Committee October 5, 2022 – 8:30 AM

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

Present: Chair Joel Dawson; Councillors Sue Carleton and Tom Hutchinson

Regrets: Members Andrew Siegwart, Jim Halliday, and Jim Diebel

Staff

Present: Kim Wingrove, Chief Administrative Officer; Randy Scherzer, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer; Savanna Myers, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Culture; Steve Furness, Manager of Economic Development & Tourism; Heather Aljoe, Marketing and Communications Specialist; Alison Theodore, Economic Development Officer; Linnea Catalan, Business Enterprise Coordinator; Tara Warder, Clerk; and Sarah Goldrup, Deputy Clerk/Legislative Coordinator

Also in attendance were delegates Linda Reader, Robert Barnett, Peter Mitchell, and Adam McMaster.

Call to Order

At 8:36 AM, the Chair called the meeting to order. The Chair noted that while quorum was not achieved, no items on the agenda required action from the Committee, and those in attendance would proceed to hear the presentations for information purposes only.

Delegations

Linda Reader, Robert Barnett & Peter Mitchell – Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy - Nature Tourism & Collaborative Approaches to Sustainable Tourism Development

Linda Reader presented to the Committee regarding the economic value of nature. The presenter reviewed the natural assets or services and eco-tourism assets in Grey

County, COVID-19's acceleration of nature-based tourism, the economic value or benefit of nature tourism, and the interests and demographics of nature tourists. Linda Reader raised the example of the Escarpment Biosphere Conservancy (EBC)'s forests and trails policies and described opportunities for research, collaboration, and stewardship.

In response to questions, the delegations discussed forest management and stewardship, the challenge of mixtures of land ownership, and considerations for volunteer stewards. Additionally, the delegations noted interest in opening additional trails on EBC lands within the County. The Committee further heard comments on managing nature for climate change, diverse user groups, and stakeholders. Steve Furness spoke about the County's commitment to the trail system, efforts to review trailhead systems, work to address safety concerns, and meet with interest groups, such as those for ATVs or snowmobiles.

Reports – Economic Development, Tourism and Culture

Digital Services Squad

Linnea Catalan presented to the Committee regarding the County's involvement in the Digital Main Street program, noting the services of Digital Service Squad, which offers a digital audit to meet businesses where they are and to optimize them digitally. Additionally, the presenter described the Digital Main Street Transformation Grant, which provides businesses with funding to implement the plans created by the Digital Service Squad and reviewed eligibility requirements. The presenter also spoke to the Shop Here Program that supports businesses in opening an e-commerce site. In response to questions from the Committee, Linnea Catalan discussed promoting the program and services to local businesses. Linnea Catalan highlighted that funding rounds would end in October and open again in January.

Ambassador Program

Alison Theodore reported to the Committee that the ambassador program ended in August with seven teams across Grey County. The presenter highlighted redirecting visitors to lesser-known outdoor spaces and local businesses, focusing on ambassador training, attending events, and collecting data on visitor trends through Survey 123, which found increased weekday traffic, capacity concerns, improved compliance, and visitors from the GTA. In response to questions from the Committee, Alison Theodore discussed the third-party promotion of locations that deal with capacity issues.

Adam McMaster – UpSkill Tourism - Georgian College Presents New Free Upskill Tourism Micro-Credential

Adam McMaster presented to the Committee regarding the UpSkill Tourism Micro-Credential program at Georgian College. The presenter explained the background and benefits of the micro-credentialing program and highlighted program objectives to address skill gaps in the hospitality and tourism sector and the ongoing labour shortage. Further, Adam McMaster described the program offerings, certifications, and employability skills. The presenter raised the role of the Program Advisory Committee and their role in informing program content. In response to questions from the Committee, Adam McMaster discussed the options for completing the micro-credentialing program.

Trail Head Study

Savanna Myers presented an update on the trailhead study, confirming the RFP had been awarded to GM BluePlan, and that consultation efforts were underway. Further, the presenter explained that phase two of the project to be undertaken in 2023 would investigate possible infrastructure, capacity, or safety improvements.

Reports – Communications

Marketing Update

Heather Aljoe presented to the Committee regarding the County's marketing and promotion efforts through the summer and into the fall. The presenter reviewed the content created, boosted social media posts, and shared newsletters, noting growth to the County's mailing list and positive feedback. Heather Aljoe shared the fall campaign thus far and efforts to repurpose previous content. Further, Heather Aljoe noted growth in website statistics and communications to different user groups moving into the winter and fall. In response to questions, Heather Aljoe discussed other channels utilized by the County, including print and radio.

Roundtable

Savanna Myers shared that the County is preparing to undertake an Economic Development, Tourism and Culture Master Plan to better align internal resources and priorities and identify outcome improvements. Savanna Myers expressed interest in feedback on organizations or initiatives to consider as examples and inspiration through this process.

Next Meeting Dates

To Be Determined

The Chair and members present unanimously announced the meeting adjourned at 10:45 AM.

Joel Dawson, Chair