

Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting held on **Wednesday October 7, 2020 @ 2:00 pm**

Present: Jesse Hamilton, Christine Kropp, Scott Doughty, Matthew Phillips, Kaushal Gandhi, Karin Terziano, Jeff Suddaby

Staff: Kelly Haywood, Bill Farnsworth, Torin Suddaby, Morgan Richter

1. Welcome

Approve Agenda as presented

Be it resolved that the agenda be accepted as presented

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Scott Doughty

CARRIED

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were brought forward.

3. Approval of Minutes

Be it resolved that the minutes from the September 9, 2020 meeting be accepted as presented.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Scott Doughty

CARRIED

4. Staff Reports

Kelly Haywood presented the Board with a summary of the RFP submissions for an accounting firm. Two firms responded to complete year-end financials and audits for HMATA for a three-year term: Pahapill and Associates Professional Corporation and BDO Canada LLP. After discussion of the proposals it was decided to accept the RFP from Pahapill and Associates.

Be it resolved to accept the accounting firm of Pahapill and Associates Professional Corporation to provide HMATA accounting services for the next 3 years.

Moved by: Karin Terziano

Seconded by: Jeff Suddaby

Motion Approved

Kelly Haywood presented the Board with four potential HMATA logo options. This logo would be used on letterhead and would be used when partners are recognizing sponsorship funding. The Board agreed on a design and a motion was made to accept.

Be it resolved to accept and adopt logo option #1 as presented.

Moved by: Christine Kropp

Seconded by: Scott Doughty

Motion Approved

Bill Farnsworth provided the Board with a financial update. HMATA currently has \$446,613.00 in the bank with pending receivables of \$232,966.00, for a total of \$679,579.00. After discussion about monthly projections the projected annual budget shows a reserve of \$588,604.00 after HMATA pays its current commitments.

5. Update of RTO-12 Sweater Weather Partner Campaign

Kelly Haywood informed the Board that the Sweater Weather campaign has garnered 248 packages so far. She said that, after talking to James Murphy, the program could be continued past the original end date of October 31. She also reported that a second option would be to keep the October 31 end date as planned and launch a re-worked Fall Into Huntsville campaign for November and December.

Jesse Hamilton suggested that it makes more sense to continue with Sweater Weather versus launching a new campaign. He feels it is more cost effective to put an additional \$1,250 into marketing the RTO program, as James Murphy had suggested, versus spending the proposed \$15,000 to market the Fall Into Huntsville program. Scott Doughty suggested it would be better to spend the Fall Into Huntsville marketing budget on winter programming. Jesse asked if the Board agreed to continue the Sweater Weather campaign and the Board Agreed.

Jeff Suddaby asked if it would be wise to spend additional money to bring the total number of available Sweater Weather packages up to 400 from the original 300. Kelly said she can talk to James Murphy about the additional costs of increasing the number of packages, including additional marketing spend. Kelly also suggested that some marketing dollars could be allocated to market the program on the Huntsville Adventures website for increased reach.

Next steps: Speak with James Murphy about increasing packages to 400 and subsequent costs. Information to be emailed to the Board for a decision.

6. Pollara Survey Data Summary Report

Bill Farnsworth presented to the Board a draft of the Summary Report of the Pollara survey data to be shared with partners and stakeholders. Jesse Hamilton suggested putting an executive summary style page or two at the beginning with findings/insights. Karin Terziano suggested that a more concise version of the report should be created and presented to Huntsville Town Council. The Board agreed to send two members to present this shortened version of the report to Council.

Next Steps: Bill to incorporate an executive summary in report and create a more concise version to present to council.

7. Discussion of Winter Marketing/Programming

Kelly Haywood presented the Board with four potential ideas for a winter product development and marketing campaign. She told the Board that the Pollara surveys showed that Huntsville is not thought of as a winter destination and that, with COVID restrictions, any new attractions/installations will have to allow for social distancing. As a result, outdoor programming will be essential to attracting visitors to Huntsville this winter. The four ideas were:

- **The creation of a light trail/light installation.** Option 1 would occur at Muskoka Heritage Place. Lighting installations would be spread throughout the property with multi-use trails as connectors. MHP could be further animated with sleigh rides, outdoor activity demonstrations as well as food vendors and a bonfire experience. MHP is naturally secure with existing gates allowing for crowd control and hydro and staff could be supplied. However, the location is further from the downtown core and may require more marketing. Option 2 would be to create light installations downtown, potentially including Main Street between Brunel and Centre Street and River Mill Park. These installations would be less of a trail and more showcasing unique “corners” of downtown. This option would bring and keep visitors downtown. However, it would require nightly security and there are limited sources of power and infrastructure. Limbic Media, the creator of the highly successful Agora Path of Light at Blue Mountain, has been contacted as the provider of the lights and installations. Preliminary talks have revealed that the upfront cost in Year One will be significantly higher as the initial infrastructure must be purchased, whereas it can be repurposed and reused in subsequent years. Limbic recommends at least 5 installations for maximum effect, with 7 installations preferable. With consultations from design team, the cost per installation ranges from \$40,000 - \$50,000, with a total project budget in the range of \$250,000 - \$350,000.
- **The creation of a winter playground at the Lion’s Lookout Field.** A large outdoor skating rink would be constructed and maintained on the field, with groomed trails for Nordic skiing, snowshoeing, walking and fat biking surrounding the rink. Lights could be strung over the field to create a unique winter atmosphere. The skating rink would be maintained by the Town of Huntsville, but will require the drilling of a well for water at a cost of approximately \$20,000. The Town would also plow and maintain the existing walking track. The company Centre Ice Rinks has been contacted and they have quoted a price of \$10,000 to create an Olympic size ice rink, with the cost of boards being extra.
- **Downtown Huntsville lighting and art installations.** If the main light show is centred at Muskoka Heritage Place, it is recommended to install a significant light installation in downtown Huntsville. The Huntsville BIA could expand their skating rink in River Mill Park. Other ideas include ice sculptures and art installations created by the Festival of the Arts, sleigh rides, dog sledding etc.
- **Grandview Golf Course Trails.** The owner/proprietor of the 9-hole Grandview Golf Course has suggested the site be used for groomed trails and possible skating on the small ponds. Trails for skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and fat biking would be free and available throughout the day for public use. As done in the past, the trees on the course could be lit at night. The proprietor has indicated support for an expansion of parking, use of power and liability coverage. The challenge would be the disconnect from town, however visibility from the highway is excellent.

Kelly recommended that the Board consider the Lookout Track proposal with partnership from the Town of Huntsville and the lighting MHP or downtown lighting installation with money from the HMATA Board.

Jesse Hamilton said that, while the price tag for the lighting installations is very high, they would create an attraction that puts Huntsville on the map as a winter destination. He suggested that the Board should spend the money, using \$250,000 as a “ballpark” figure, and that he would like to see the lighting be installed downtown. Matthew Phillips agreed that the Town needs to make a big splash and wondered if the installations can be changed to create a unique show each year. Karin Terziano asked if the lights would be moveable from year to year and whether they could only be used in winter. Torin Suddaby responded that the recommendation would be to take the lights down after use, but that they could be moved from year to year and used any time of year.

Jeff Suddaby presented concerns over the annual costs to change the installations from year to year. Scott Doughty asked what happens if the project budget increases and who will be responsible for any maintenance/upkeep to the equipment. Kelly responded that a detailed cost breakdown and budget will have to be created and that the Town has not been officially approached about partnership funding. Jeff also asked how soon the Board has to commit to the project given that it is already October. He also questioned whether the HMATA Board should be owning equipment or whether it would be better for a third party organization such as the Huntsville Festival of the Arts be contracted to own the equipment and take charge of the programming.

Karin Terziano updated the Board that the Town is “pretty committed” to creating trails around the Lions Lookout Track and potentially out to Camp Kitchen. She says the Town is less committed to the idea of lighting installations. She informed the Board that any conversation about infrastructure being maintained by the Town would have to happen soon.

Next steps: Kelly Haywood and team will create a more detailed cost analysis and budget for the proposed options to present to the Board the following week.

8. Adjournment

Be it resolved to adjourn meeting at 3:45 pm

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Christine Kropp

Next meeting date to be held virtually on Friday October 16 at 1:00pm.