

Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting held on Friday November 27, 2020 @ 1:00 pm

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

Staff: Kelly Haywood, Bill Farnsworth, Torin Suddaby, Scott Ovell, Morgan Richter, Dan Watson

1. Welcome

Motion to begin the meeting

Be it resolved that the meeting will begin

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Christine Kropp

CARRIED

2. Approval of Minutes

Be it resolved that the minutes from the October 22, 2020 meeting be accepted as presented.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Scott Doughty

CARRIED

3. Approval of Minutes

Be it resolved that the minutes from the October 28, 2020 meeting be accepted as presented.

Moved by: Christine Kropp

Seconded by: Jeff Suddaby

CARRIED

4. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were brought forward.

5. Staff Reports

Bill Farnsworth presented the Financial Statements with the Board. Looking at revenue projections for 2020, Bill explained that the Board currently has sufficient funds in the bank to support spending the additional \$250,000 on the Winter Lighting Project. Bill also pointed out that there is a large discrepancy between the amount of MAT funds reported to ORHMA and the amount that has been received. Due to COVID, accommodators have been slower at submitting their MAT funds. This means that, when collected, HMATA will have significantly increased cash reserves and more than enough to cover payments that will be made early in 2021.

The Board decided that it would be wise and prudent to have a member of the Board attend monthly financial update meetings. As Board Treasurer, Christine Kropp was chosen. Kelly

Haywood said that a meeting would be set up before the next meeting where Christine will have a chance to look at the financial statements and ask any questions she may have.

6. Discussion of Winter Lighting Project

The Board was brought up to speed on the recent events surrounding the Winter Lighting Project financials. The Chamber was successful in receiving a provincial Reconnect Festival and Event grant in the amount of \$290,000. It was mentioned that this amount is contingent upon HMATA providing \$300,000 in total support. Jesse Hamilton and Kelly Haywood presented the Winter Lighting Project Plan to Huntsville Town Council November 23, where the plan received unanimous support. This means that the Town of Huntsville will Provide \$41,000 in cash and \$40,000 of in-kind support toward the project.

Dan Watson presented an updated presentation from Limbic media with creative about the light show at Muskoka Heritage Place (MHP). The show will be called *Eclipse: Walk with Light*. It will take place in the form of a trail that winds throughout MHP, with 4 major interactive sound and light installations. These installations will present the passing of the seasons and time. In between the major installations will be more lights, interpretive signage and other elements to tie the theme together. There will also be another large interactive light display on Huntsville Town Hall that will have a similar theme and be used to tie downtown and MHP together. Dan told the Board that the current proposed dates of operation, providing there are no changes needed due to COVID restrictions, is mid-February until May 9.

Kelly Haywood explained to the Board the plan for Downtown activation to be a part of this project. A canopy of lights will be hung over Main Street between Brunel Rd and Centre St. Kelly said work is being done to contact building owners and arrange to have infrastructure attached to building to hang the lights. She explained that this canopy is being planned as a multi-year initiative, with more lights being added each year. River Mill Park will be the site of an adventure park created by the Huntsville Festival of the Arts, with snow forts, ice sculptures and other family activities. The Huntsville BIA will be animating Downtown with horse-drawn sleigh rides between downtown and MHP on select weekends, as well as other fun activities such as maple treats on snow and possibly dog sledding. The Town of Huntsville will be plowing a walking trail at the Lions Lookout Field that will be free to use during the daytime. The Grandview 9-hole golf course will be home to groomed Nordic skiing and fat bike trails, with a short loop being lit for night use and a long loop to be used during the day. These trails would be free of charge for all to enjoy. Kelly explained that the marketing for the event will feature all of these elements, not just the MHP light trail.

Scott Doughty asked about the timeline for the project. Kelly answered that the best-case scenario is a mid-February launch, but that COVID could affect this date and the launch could be moved until spring.

Karin Terziano asked how long it is expected that visitor will be in MHP to see the show. Dan Watson responded that the plan is to have people enter in 45 minute blocks, with the show taking about 30 minutes to see plus a 15 min buffer to ensure enough time between groups.

Jesse Hamilton reminded the group that there is lots of room to push the launch of the project back if necessary, for COVIS safety. The light show can be started whenever it feels safe for the community and for visitors. Torin Suddaby explained that the Lions Lookout Track and Grandview trails will open independently of the MHP project.

Kelly Haywood then presented an overall project budget with the Board. The total budget for the entire project is \$695,000. \$442,000 of that is for the MHP light show, with another \$98,000 for site preparation, installation and takedown. \$50,000 will be spent on marketing, \$22,000 for the trail at Grandview, \$23,500 for downtown activation activities and \$28,000 for staffing at MHP and Downtown. There is also a \$30,000 contingency cost built in for unexpected costs.

Jeff Suddaby asked who will be in charge of the MHP staffing. Kelly Haywood replied that the HLOB Chamber of Commerce will hire and pay the necessary staff. Matthew Phillips asked about the cost to re-install the lighting for the winter of 2021-22. Kelly says she expects it will cost about \$100,000 next year.

Scott Doughty asked if the Huntsville Festival of the Arts will be partnering on the project and events. Kelly replied that they will play an integral role, but that the money will have to flow through the Chamber as this was a stipulation of the grant funding. Scott asked if insurance for the event has been considered and Kelly responded that an insurance provider has been approached.

Karin Terziano expressed concern over the plan to not charge an admission fee for the MHP light show. Jesse Hamilton responded that he had always envisioned the admission as being free, with the return on investment coming from increased overnight stays at accommodations, which in turn results in an increase in MAT tax dollars. He said that perhaps charging an admission fee that is donated to a local charity might be good for the community and for marketing.

A conversation ensued about whether to charge an admission fee. The Board held a vote and it was decided that an entrance fee of \$5 will be charge for both individuals and families, with the money collected being used to pay some of the costs of future shows.

Motions were then made for the following:

Be it resolved that HMATA will pay the Huntsville/Lake of Bays Chamber of Commerce \$250,000 toward the proposed Winter Lighting Installation Project, with the stipulation that a \$5 entrance fee be charged and held for future costs

Moved by: Matthew Phillips

Seconded by: Christine Kropp

Motion Approved

Be it resolved that HMATA approves the re-allocation of the \$12,500 previously approved for the Huntsville Festival of the Arts to be used for the animation of River Mill Park as a part of the Winter Lighting Project.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Matthew Phillips

Motion Approved

7. Updates on Collaborative Marketing Project

Torin Suddaby reported that the Chamber has been working with the marketing agency Major Tom to prepare and launch the Collaborative Marketing Project. The marketing campaign will be called *Winter Adventure Your Way*, with a planned launch date of January 25. \$99,000 will be spent on marketing ads and purchases on a variety of platforms. Kelly Haywood said that a more detailed plan would be presented at the next HMATA Board meeting.

8. Adjournment

Be it resolved to adjourn meeting at 3:00 pm

Moved by: Scott Doughty

Seconded by: Christine Kropp