

Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting held on **March 11, 2021 @ 2:00 pm**

Present: Jesse Hamilton, Christine Kropp, Scott Doughty, Karin Terziano, Matthew Phillips, Jeff Suddaby, Nate Smith, Steve Carr

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

1. Welcome

Motion to begin the meeting

Be it resolved to accept the agenda as presented

Moved by: Scott Doughty

Seconded by: Nate Smith

CARRIED

2. Approval of Minutes

Be it resolved that the minutes from the February 11, 2021 meeting be accepted as presented.

Moved by: Nate Smith

Seconded by: Matthew Phillips

CARRIED

3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were brought forward.

4. Staff Reports

Kelly Haywood reminded the Board that part of the TPA agreement between HMATA and the Chamber was the creation of a Tourism Master Plan. While COVID altered the timelines, Kelly said it is still an important project for the Board going forward. Kelly said that she would provide a high-level overview for the next meeting.

Jesse Hamilton asked whether this plan would include input from all 4 organizations – HMATA, the Town of Huntsville, the Chamber and the BIA. Kelly replied that it would, but not for the first couple of meetings.

Bill Farnsworth presented a 2021 Cash Flow Projection spreadsheet to the Board. Taking the projected 2021 revenue of \$700,000 that was approved in the 2021 Budget at the last meeting, the spreadsheet projects when and how much cash will be available based upon expected payments from the Town of Huntsville. The document also included 3 projected payments from the collection of the \$320,000 in unpaid receivables from 2020.

Karin Terziano asked how long accommodators had to remit their MAT funds. Scott Ovell responded that it is typically 30-45 days, but they were more lenient given cash flow issues

resulting from COVID-19. Scott explained that he has a meeting in the next week with ORHMA to discuss the collection process for unpaid accounts.

5. Spring 2021 Campaign Discussion

Huntsville BIA

Morgan Richter presented the Board with a BIA Spring Voucher program proposal. The BIA's mandate is to create incentives and activations to help Downtown businesses. This year with the Streetscape construction and COVID businesses need as much assistance as possible. The BIA is proposing to use the \$20,000 allotted to them by HMATA to fund a BIA voucher program. The proposed program would work similar to the RTO-12 Cottage Country Spirit program, with people signing up to receive one of 400 packages containing \$50 worth of coupons to spend at participating businesses in Downtown Huntsville. The program would launch as soon as possible to coincide with the start of construction. Morgan will track spending and provide the Board with a report on the economic impact of the program.

Jeff Suddaby asked if people have to buy the coupons and Morgan responded that they will be free to people who register.

Be it resolved that the HMATA Board approves the Huntsville BIA spending their HMATA 2021 \$20,000 funding on the proposed Spring Voucher program.

Moved by: Matthew Phillips

Seconded by: Jeff Suddaby

CARRIED

Huntsville Festival of the Arts

Dan Watson presented a plan to the Board for a 2021 Spring Art Crawl project. Dan is requesting to use HMATA's previously allocated \$12,500, which was previously approved to be used for River Mill Park activation for the Winter Lighting Initiative, to fund the project. The Art Crawl would consist of a self-guided tour where locally created art would be placed in businesses for people to visit. This would benefit both the artist and the business owner through increased traffic. A website would be created that would highlight tours people could follow. The project would run in May and June and would also include the painting of more Group of Seven canoes and pop-up mobile art displays. Dan is requesting the HMATA funds be used for the creation of the website and for marketing. He said he believes that the Art Crawl will draw visitors and enhance their stay while driving traffic Downtown.

Karin Terziano asked how the Winter Lighting Initiative will be funded if money previously allocated to it gets used for other purposes. Kelly Haywood said that there is the potential for further funding for the Winter project through upcoming grants. Dan Watson responded by saying that there currently isn't anything concrete planned for spring and that it would be wise to create some projects we can market.

Jesse Hamilton asked how confident Dan would be that he could still animate River Mill park for the Winter Lighting Initiative if he used the \$12,500 for this spring project. Dan responded that there will definitely still be activities in River Mill Park, but that they may have to be on a smaller scale. Karin Terziano suggested that the money for the Art Crawl should be a separate ask of \$12,500, and the previous approved amount be saved for Winter.

Be it resolved that the HMATA Board approves \$12,500 to be given to the Huntsville Festival of the Arts to be used for the 2021 Spring Art Crawl project.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Karin Terziano

CARRIED

RTO-12 Partnership Update

Kelly Haywood informed the Board that, after a conversation with James Murphy, she was told that RTO-12 has approved a budget that includes some money for partnerships. She told the Board that her goal would be for the Board to commit an amount of money to be used toward a potential RTO-12 campaign partnership.

Jeff Suddaby said that he feels like the timing for this project is critical and that it needs to happen as soon as possible.

Jesse Hamilton said he would love to see the Board commit \$50,000 toward a voucher program partnership that would be designed to promote spring in the region. He said that he believes that summer in Huntsville will be busy no matter what, but it is important to support our economy in the spring.

Be it resolved that the HMATA Board approves \$50,000 to be allocated toward a partnership with RTO-12 to create a Spring 2021 Voucher program.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Scott Doughty

CARRIED

6. Provincial Reconnect Grant Update

Kelly Haywood updated the Board on the status of the Provincial Reconnect grant funding. She said that she has been given the assumption that the Province will provide \$196,725 toward expenses already incurred for the Lighting initiative, although this amount is not 100% confirmed. Kelly explained that she will apply for the 2021/22 Reconnect grant for the program to run this winter, with the goal to receive \$160,000 toward the project. She told the Board that, should the project not be approved for the 2021/22 grant, the project would require an additional \$110,000 from HMATA to be able to run this coming winter.

Jesse Hamilton responded that the worst-case scenario, where the HMATA has to spend an additional \$110,000, does not seem like something HMATA couldn't do.

Scott Doughty asked if the contracts/quotes received for the project would increase due to rescheduling for winter 2021/22. Kelly Haywood responded that the contracts with Limbic

Media are locked in, but that quotes from independent contractors could increase. Dan Watson said that he feels the installation costs will be less because the set-up will not have to take place during the winter.

Christine Kropp asked if there were any plans for revenue to make up for potential increased costs. Dan responded that if the project runs from November 1, 2021 to May 15, 2022 and if a \$5.00 entrance fee was charged, there is the potential to generate \$75,000 in revenue. Karin Terziano said that she feels that further discussion will be needed before fall about the potential to create revenue and that there is the possibility of running private events at MHP as part of the project to increase revenue opportunity.

Jesse Hamilton responded that he wanted to remind everyone that this project represents money being spent on local projects and that, if we keep increasing the ticket price for the initiative, we are not helping accommodators, which is the overall mandate of the Board.

7. Discussion of Charitable Donation Policy

Bill Farnsworth presented a revised draft of a HMATA Charitable Donation policy. He reported that he had changed the potential number of recipients to 9 organizations receiving \$5,000 each plus a \$5,000 scholarship to be given to a Huntsville High School student who will be attending post-secondary education in the hospitality field, for a total of \$50,000 donated per year.

Matthew Phillips said he would like to see maybe 2-3 scholarships valued at \$7,500 each. Karin Terziano responded that she thought \$5,000 seemed like a low amount to give organizations and suggested increasing the donation to \$10,000.

Scott Doughty suggested that the Board be flexible with the amount. He suggested picking an overall amount to be donated to organizations, but instead of providing a set amount the Board could choose to allocate more or less funds to an approved organization depending upon need and type of donation proposed. Nate Smith said he liked the idea of having flexibility as long as there was a clear set of criteria for judging applicants.

Jesse Hamilton suggested spending \$40,000 per year, with 2 \$5,000 scholarships and \$30,000 to be allocated to organizations. He suggested revisiting the amount in tandem with the discussion about the Tourism Master Plan.

8. Election of a new HMATA Secretary/Treasurer

Matthew Phillips agreed to be nominated for the position of Secretary/Treasurer and a motion ensued.

Be it resolved that the HMATA Board elects Matthew Phillips as the new Board Secretary/Treasurer.

Moved by: Karin Terziano

Seconded by: Jeff Suddaby

CARRIED

9. Adjournment

Be it resolved to adjourn meeting at 4:05 pm

Moved by: Nate Smith

Seconded by: Christine Kropp