

Huntsville Municipal Accommodation Tax Association

MINUTES

Virtual Meeting held on Thursday September 9th, 2021 @ 3:30pm

Present: Jesse Hamilton, Nate Smith, Karin Terziano, Steve Carr, Chirag Patel, Jeff Suddaby, Ken Patel (proxy for Scott Doughty)

Regrets: Scott Doughty

Staff/Guests: Kelly Haywood, Torin Suddaby, Barbara Bloomfield, Scott Ovell, Morgan Richter, Rachel Hunt

1. Welcome & Acceptance of Agenda

Motion to begin the meeting

Be it resolved to accept the agenda as presented

Moved by: Steve Carr

Seconded by: Jeff Suddaby

CARRIED

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts were brought forward.

3. BIA Winter Request – Rachel Hunt

Rachel started off by thanking this Board for all their support for the Downtown, it is very much appreciated. Rachel was speaking on behalf of the BIA Board and Merchants; they are looking to launch a Christmas Market in the Downtown the last weekend of November this year. It will be a two-day event, November 27th and 28th. This will be the first annual and hope to grow the event each year. The proposed weekend starts off with Black Friday and the Santa Claus Parade, the Christmas Market, named “Muskoka Market – Huntsville Holiday Edition” will follow on both the Saturday and Sunday. The BIA has allotted \$10,000 from their reserves for this event. A High-level description of what it will include is:

- Sleighrides
- Christmas Tree Farm
- Vendors on the street
- Downtown Merchants and Restaurants to take part
- Carolling
- Flash mobs

The BIA is asking for the HMATA Board to support this event in the following way:

- \$4K for 10 outdoor propane heaters
- \$1K to cover the sleighrides for Sunday
- \$10K for soundless fireworks display in evening
- \$5K for photographer/videographer

Questions/Discussion:

Jeff – will the be modelled after the one in the distillery district in Toronto?

Rachel – yes something like that, goal is to grow it to that size.

Jeff – is there the possibility to expand the hours into the evening?

Rachel – possibly, need heaters and content, hope to expand it to include evening events/draws.

Karen – Is this ask in addition to the \$20K that this Board allots to the BIA? Is that monetary designation supposed to replace the BIA from asking for partnership funds? Karin supports this event, just looking for clarification on funding.

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Jesse – is under the same impression as Karin, Board needs to look into this. What is the time frame you are looking for an answer?

Rachel – sooner rather than later, looking to launch save the date on Monday September 13th, 2021.

Nate – are vendors local? Will the street remain open?

Rachel – we are communicating with Muskoka vendors. Yes, the street will remain open.

Jesse – Thanked Rachel for her presentation and let her know the Board would discuss and get back to the BIA.

Rachel – last comment is that the Flag Park would be a perfect location for Christmas trees and lights if this Board wanted to make a statement.

4. Discussion:

- **Tourism Master Plan RFP review and direction to staff**
 - Kelly reported that although there were a few phone calls from providers that showed interest in submitting proposals only one was received, from Kyla Taylor.
 - The proposal checks all the boxes but does not allow any comparisons.
 - Kelly suggested to the Board that the dates be changed to a February start, having the RFP submissions in by mid January.
 - The question was posed to the board and the unanimously approved the new start time for February 2022.

5. Eclipse Walk with Light Update

- a. Installation date – October 11th
- b. Soft Opening – November 2nd – HMATA Board, invited guests
- c. Grand Opening – November 5th – open to public
- d. Downtown Installation Complete – November 4th
- e. Closing – May 7th, 2022

Discussion:

- Kent Park installation is still fluid but well underway for confirmation. The lighting over the Main Street will not be installed until the construction project is completed (next year). Lights will still be installed at Town Hall.
- The event new dates will be presented to Council for approval at the September council meeting.
- Limbic staff will be here for close to 3 months for installation and launch. Will be reaching out to accommodators for housing for the staff.

Jeff: do we anticipate work force issues?

Kelly: we are working on this, hoping to target high school students for majority, may have to use our team more than expected.

- Admission prices \$5.00/person, 12 and under free.
- Possibility of accommodators to package entrance fee with rooms to entice room nights.
- Promote this through the accommodation sector

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- Caution of having too many “free” entries as profits from entry fees to be re-invested year over year. Will HMATA be on board to support this event on a yearly basis?

Karin – not sure if we can or want to revisit the admission fees, but perhaps we can make a day or two mid week free entrance to locals and charge visitors.

Kelly – we will be reaching out to local services clubs, Community Living, Big Brothers/Sisters, Christine’s Place etc. to help promote and offer entrance. Revenue projections are small this year, however revenue raised all helps to leverage on grant applications. Perhaps on the Grand Opening (Nov 5th) invite the community for free.

Jesse – leave it with Kelly and Torin to determine free entrance night program. Jesse wanted to go on record that he supports this as a free event at all times.

6. Sweater Weather Update

- As of noon today (September 9th), there were 30pkg sold.
- James Murphy is inquiring as to how the accommodators are pushing this program out? Are there any marketing dollars coming from HMATA? Explorer’s Edge has budgeted \$5K to market this program.
 - Jesse – Deerhurst Resort has pushed it through their email program (70K emails), promoted on website and other marketing means.
 - No other accommodators in meeting have started marketing, not sure what Hidden Valley has or is doing.
- Staff will follow up with other accommodators to push out this program.
- HMATA should match dollars with Explorer’s Edge for marketing – blog posts on both Facebook and Instagram.
- Program launched on Monday September 6th with 500 available packages, booking up until September 22nd.
- Budget of \$59K with \$34,500 from HMATA.

Motion:

Be it resolved that the HMATA Board will put \$5,000 towards the Sweater Weather marketing campaign.

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Nate Smith

7. New Business

a. Muskoka Hornets Baseball Association

Interested in revisiting previous application with the following changes

- Instead of \$10K for multiple tournaments over the summer, \$5K for one single tournament October 1-3, 2021.

Discussion:

Jeff – would like to see our financials and confirm percentages for partnership agreements.

Karin – would like to see proposals in writing, and not simply a 5–10-minute verbal presentation.

Kelly – the Muskoka Hornets ask was only a place holder to see if the Board wanted to open the floor for partnership requests. We did not ask them to spend time on a proposal if this Board

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was not going to look at them. We will prepare the financials for next meeting and table both the BIA proposal and this one for next meeting.

b. TPA Update

Scott Ovell will have a full update for the next meeting. The agreement is currently at the lawyers, a high-level update:

- 2-year agreement starting November 2020
- STR – 100% revenue to be retained by the Town of Huntsville with the understanding that a portion be committed to affordable housing.
- Tourism strategy to be completed by November 1st
- Clause (yet to be determined) along the lines that if an organization received funding from the HMATA Board, they cannot approach the Town for further funding.

c. Ironman Event Discussion

To be added to agenda for the next meeting.

8. Adjournment

Be it resolved to adjourn meeting at 4:48pm

Moved by: Jeff Suddaby

Seconded by: Chirag Patel

Next Meeting: Thursday September 23rd, 2021 – 3:00pm