

**SWOTC Board Meeting
December 14, 2023, at 10:30 a.m.
Tourism London Office, London ON**

Present: Jeff Jack, Aggie Armstrong, Aileen Murray, Denny Vervaeke, Kelly Provost, Peter Rigby, Craig Goyette, Troy Loop and, Darren Winger and Janet Jones, MHSTCI

Regrets: Stephen Tooshkenig, Lindsay Wilson

Resources: OSW - Joanne Wolnik, Kelleagh Alexander, Ana Baxter, Jen Moore, Emma Rowley, Megan Carman and Alayna Simpson.

Chair Aileen Murray called the meeting to order at 10:52 a.m. with land acknowledgement.

Introductions around the table, Aileen and Joanne welcomed newcomers Darren and Alayna, and farewell to Janet.

Confirmation of Quorum

Conflict of Interest - none declared at this time.

Peter motioned and Craig seconded to approve the agenda. Carried.

Craig motioned and Denny seconded to approve the October 2023, minutes. Carried.

Business arising from minutes: none

Observations

Barrels bottle and brew trail – Troy reports in Essex county, 2 weeks before Christmas they fell 20% short of what was supposed to be a recovery time, and are still recovering with the Michigan and Detroit tourist base not returning. Perhaps partnership ideas moving ahead.

10-20% of breweries in 2024 will be facing foreclosure. Could be trends, beer taxes are expensive, folks that are looking to provide an experience rather than just buying beer in a bar.

Peter has read articles with issues of the changing drinking habits, more and more are going away from alcoholic beverages and towards non-alcoholic, coming out of Toronto.

Janet talks about 2 trends for SWOTC to keep an eye on; short term rental regulations and municipal accommodation tax (should the gov't minister of finance regulation) that affects tourism. Every community is regulating it in a different way. No move at the provincial level at this time, but MAT keep most at 4%, Toronto raised theirs to 6%

Any further comments or topics, let Joanne know to bring to the next meeting

Treasurer's Report:

We do not have a quarterly financial statement to review at this time, it will be reviewed at January's meeting.

TRF fund was released back in, to pay back \$70,000. There was a delay once the TRF program finished, suspected it was due to staffing. Originally expected in May, we just received the funds this week.

QuickBooks TRF files open, now that money is in, we can close QuickBooks financials we can also close any of the bank accounts associated and clean up our finances.

Governance review is occurring and looking at the use and application of reserve funds. TPA until the end of March, no one gets money until the springtime when it is announced.

Budget gets submitted to the government, so having the reserves funds gives us about a month and a half of operating/a little bit of wiggle room.

Statement of Financial Position was shared, and notable variances were discussed. No concerns with variances.

Financial processes are being updated to have fewer GL codes that team OSW will be using moving forward.

Operations Report:

Team OSW provided general updates as well as updates on Tourism leadership, provincial funding planning, marketing in shoulder seasons + new partnerships, sustainability strategy was approved, tourism supply support and tourism demand generation. Written report submitted to the Board of Directors.

Operations was sent out to the board. Introduction to Alayna who joined just shy of a month ago.

After JT leaving, Megan has shifted fully into the communications coordinator role and OSW has outsourced some of the work that was done before. Currently sitting at a 6.5 person capacity.

Planning and Evaluation Committee:

Quick review, progress report was submitted on time. We have not heard anything back – good thing.

Business plan was first reviewed on Dec 7th and is moving in the same direction that Provincial audit done, concern across the board in RTOs is to provide further measurements with goals and numbers, specifically.

Governance Committee Report:

Kelly provided the Governance Committee Report. January meeting to occur. Then will come back to the board for any questions. Looking at the recruitment needs for the BOD.

No questions.

Business Plan

Joanne presented the Business Plan. Submitted to Board of Directors prior to the meeting.

Janet recommends: Don't rely solely on gov't funding –and to look at opportunities in the biz plan. Suggested that conference expenses (for example), you could charge more for the ticket - it was brought up that since we are provincially funded it gets tricky to not compete with private business.

Board to review Business Plan and submit any questions within the week, a virtual meeting to take place on January 9th on Zoom to review and prepare the business plan to submit to the ministry.

Ministry Update:

Janet provided an update from the Ministry.

Business plan – submit by January 19th Check TPA.

Auditor general 2023 annual report has been released, value for money Ontario public sector programs.

Observations: Value for money

1. Tourism Support Programs, research, DO, RTO, Tourism Recovery
2. TICO, Metro Toronto Convention Centre and Ottawa

** encourages to read the report

Janet – comments and recommendations:

- If you don't understand how gov't policy is made, you need to. Every decision made by gov't is because of policy. Start by attending a municipal council meeting. In your spare time or staff training go to Toronto or Ottawa.
- RTOs were created as a shift in a policy – every decision is a domino effect of that.
- Experience Ontario 2024 application closed Jan 11th, changes program it will be a tiered approach. If you're dealing with any money, read the guide, the form and training video – THEN call Darren.
- Destination Ontario – US market, cost a lot more, but ROI is greater. Americans spend more. It's about what comes in at the end of the day.

"It has been my greatest honour to be an Ontario public servant for 20 years. Thank you."

Risk Matrix Review

Associated risks to the organization, recognizing there are still other risks, but for this table that we submit to the province as part of our business plan.

Finance committee will review and get back to us before the next meeting with the Matrix.

Meeting Termination

Jeff motioned and Denny seconded to adjourn the meeting at 1:48 p.m. Carried.

Next Meeting: January 9th (zoom), January 30th (zoom)