



Staff Report

Report Title: Secrets of the Back Forty Project Update

Prepared By: Amy Irwin

Department: BED

Date: Oct. 3, 2022

Report Number: BED-2022-10-47

File Number: D06

Attachments:

Recommendation:

THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Committee of the Whole hereby approves report number BED-2022-10-47 prepared by Amy Irwin, Business & Economic Officer AND approves entering into a Tourism Micro-website hosting agreement with The New Business in the amount of \$30,500 + HST plus a yearly hosting fee of \$1,200/per year subject to a positive demonstration AND FURTHER approves the appropriate By-Law coming forward.

Background:

In June 2022, we applied for a grant to implement the Secrets of the Back 40 tourism action plan. Our application was approved for the amount of \$100,000, to cover the costs of the following:

- Creation of gravel cycling routes and itineraries
- Development of a tourism micro-website
- Purchasing branded infrastructure (bike racks, flags, etc.)
- Creating marketing assets including images and videos

On June 20th 2022, Staff brought a report forward with the following recommendation:

“THAT the Township of Huron-Kinloss Council hereby approves Report Number BED-2022-06-30 prepared by Amy Irwin, Business & Economic Officer AND approves expenditures of up to the approved maximum funding amount to implement the Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, AND FURTHER grants an exemption under Section 9 of the purchasing and procurement policy for staff to negotiate purchases while maintaining the principles of the

policy, AND FURTHER accepts the quote from BC Hughes to develop a gravel cycling route and itinerary development; key components of the Tourism Action Plan recommendations, at a cost of \$16,000.00 plus HST, AND FURTHER authorizes the appropriate by-law coming forward.”

The report was approved and staff has spent the last few months negotiating with vendors to meet the requirements of the grant. This report provides an update to Council for the recommended allocation of the grant funding.

Discussion:

Gravel Cycling Routes and Itineraries

In July 2022, staff contracted BC Hughes to create our gravel cycling routes and itineraries at a cost of \$16,000 + HST. Work has begun and the routes have been mapped out and tested. Itinerary development is well underway.

Tourism Micro-website

A tourism microsite is an important asset for the launch of Secrets of the Back 40 because it will speak directly to our visitors, instead of our visitors having to navigate our corporate website, which is often overwhelming. It will highlight our itineraries, cycling routes, businesses, promotions, points of interest and provide maps and information to draw tourists to our area.

The Team is recommending working with “The New Business” to design and develop our tourism microsite. The development of the website will be covered under the grant we received and the annual hosting fee will be covered under our existing economic development and tourism operating budget.

BC Hughes recommended working with The New Business, as he has seen their work with other municipalities and tourism providers and thought they would be a good fit for our project. We reached out to The New Business and received a proposal of \$30,500 +HST to build the site with a custom design that fits our brand and a hosting fee of \$1,200/year. The design of the site would be completely customized and include mapping features, our branding, our navigation specifics and full control of the content would be ours. Support is included in the hosting fee.

Having recently upgraded our corporate website, the team has a clear understanding of the work that goes into creating a website and the functionality we want moving forward. We also want the design of the website to be user friendly, mobile friendly and reflect the goals of Secrets of the Back 40. Furthermore, we would like to sign on with a company that will allow us full control of the content through a content management system instead of relying on a third party to update our content.

Subject to a demonstration of the content management system, and a review of our capability to manage it, staff is recommending entering into an agreement with The New

Business and that the appropriate By-Law be brought forward to at the next Council meeting.

Bike Racks, Flags, Other Tourism Infrastructure

The grant we received also provides funding for infrastructure required to make our tourism initiatives successful. We plan to purchase two bike racks from Urban Racks for \$2500 + HST, 10 branded flags from Vistaprint for \$5,500 + HST to place at participating businesses, 3 bike repair stations from Barrie Cycling Club for \$6,600 + HST to be placed throughout Huron-Kinloss, and 2 water bottle refill stations installed by Current Electric for approximately \$16,000 + HST (one for Ripley and one for Lucknow, Point Clark already has one).

Branding and Image Development

The grant will also cover the branding project that was originally funded through our tourism reserve fund. The funds earmarked for this project in the 2022 budget will remain in reserves as they are no longer required this year. The total cost of the branding project was \$15,000, the Team worked with Interkom to create the Secrets of the Back 40 brand, to be launched in Spring 2023.

We will be working with Tom Church, a local photographer, to schedule two photoshoots this fall. The photos will be used on our tourism website and in future marketing campaigns. The total cost for image development \$2,500 + HST.

Grant Funding

(all prices do not include HST)

Gravel cycling routes and itineraries - \$16,000
BC Hughes – 2 blogs - \$1200
Tourism micro-website - \$30,500
Bike Racks – \$2,500
Flags - \$5,500
Bike Repair Stations - \$6,600
Water bottle refill stations - \$16,000
Branding for Secrets of the Back 40 - \$15,000
Photo/Asset development - \$2,500
Partial coverage of Tourism Action Plan - \$4,200

Total = \$100,000

Total grant Funding = \$100,000

As with all tourism initiatives, the hope is to not only bring more visitors to the area to shop at our businesses and visit our points of interest, the hope is they will love it so much here they want to buy a home, move here and become active members of our communities –

work at our businesses, participate in our recreation programs, volunteer with our service clubs.

The team actively monitors where our visitors come from through Point Clark Lighthouse Tours, the Lucknow Tourism Office and geo fencing reports from RT07. We can compare these analytics with the demographics of people moving to the Township.

Key Performance Indicators

- Number of business that participate in the Secrets of the Back 40 initiatives
- Number of cyclists that participate on our routes (measured by interactions with businesses)
- Amount of money spent during tourism season (measured by local businesses)
- Increase of visitors during the shoulder seasons – specifically during harvest season (measured by local businesses and RT07 geo-fencing report)
- Number of website visits and downloads of our brochure
- Number of requests for paper copies of our brochure
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Financial Impacts:

These expenditures were not included in the 2022 budget; however the grant funding will cover 100% except the annual hosting fee of \$1,200 to The New Business to provide hosting and support for the tourism microsite, that \$1,200 fee beginning in 2023 will come from the economic development and tourism operations budget.

Strategic Alignment / Link:

The information provided in this report is consistent with and in keeping with the Municipality's Vision and Mission. The recommendations contribute to our goals in achieving a prosperous community, a vibrant community, and a spirited community

Respectfully Submitted By:

Amy Irwin, Business and Economic Officer

Report Approved By:

Mary Rose Walden, Chief Administrative Officer