



City of Brockville

Economic Development, Recreation & Tourism Committee Meeting Minutes

6:00 PM - Tuesday, December 3, 2019
City Hall, Council Chambers

The Economic Development, Recreation & Tourism Committee meeting was called to order on Tuesday, December 3, 2019, at 6:00 PM, in the City Hall, Council Chambers, with the following present:

Members Present:	Councillor Jane Fullarton, Mayor Jason Baker, Member Jessica Barabash, Member Tony Barnes, and Councillor Matt Wren
Regrets:	Nil.
Others:	Councillor Larry Journal and Councillor Cameron Wales
Staff:	Robert Nolan, Director of Economic Development, Lynda Ferguson, Director of Finance, and Sandra MacDonald, City Clerk

1. CHAIR'S REMARKS

Chair Fullarton welcomed everyone to the meeting. She congratulated the Rotary Club for the organization of the Santa Claus parade and Mayor Baker on the success on the River of Lights Festival which started on November 30th at Blockhouse Island.

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

Nil

3. DELEGATIONS AND PRESENTATIONS

Nil.

4. TOURISM PANEL

1. Haley Veronyak, Executive Director
Downtown Brockville

H. Veronyak addressed the Committee. She noted that the DBIA received funding to hire a Summer Ambassador who undertook the visitor survey. She highlighted the events held downtown in 2019.

2. Jonathan Hanna, Administrator (Acting)
Brockville Arts Centre

J. Hanna spoke of the 2019 summer season programming which included seven performances under Pricedex Software Summer Series, the Webster Film Series and the File Brockville screenings.

Mayor Baker suggested that the Arts Centre should track and report on the amount of money raised by other groups (30-hour telethon; St. Mary's High School productions, etc.) who use the BAC. The funds raised have a significant impact on the community.

3. Michelle Osborne, Executive Director
Aquatarium

M. Osborne presented on behalf of the Aquatarium.

4. Andy Neeteson, Owner
1000 Islands & Seaway Cruises

A. Neeteson addressed the Committee. He noted that this was the 26th year of operation in Brockville. There is an average of 26,000 to 32,000 visitors per year of which 50% of these visits are booked online. He spoke to the challenges he faces each season, including the difficulty of visitors to access Blockhouse Island during festivals, which negatively impact the (majority) of the walk-on visitors which is heavier on the weekends; and the effect the high-water levels have had.

He suggested that there should be development of additional attractions such as an opportunity to develop one of the City islands where the cruise ship could stop; Refugee Island; event pavilion; boardwalk trails; and glamping sites.

5. Tom Scott, Thousand Islands - Chapter Chair
Save Our Shipwrecks

T. Scott addressed the Committee.

6. Katherine Hobbs, Tourism Manager
Brockville Chamber of Commerce – Tourism Office

K. Hobbs spoke to the Committee.

A copy of K. Hobbs speaking notes are attached to the minutes.

[2019 12 03 Tourism K Hobbs](#)

[2019 12 03 Tourism River of Lights](#)

7. Bonnie Ruddock, Executive Director
South Eastern Ontario, Region 9 Regional Tourism Organization

B. Ruddock provided an overview of the organization.

5. **CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATIONS**

Nil.

6. **REPORTS FROM BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

Nil.

7. **STAFF REPORTS**

1. 2019-183-12
Tourism Panel

Moved by Member Barabash

THAT Economic Development, Recreation & Tourism Committee received report 2019-183-12 – Tourism Panel for information.

For: Councillor Fullarton, Mayor Baker, Member Barabash,
Member Barnes, and Councillor Wren

CARRIED 5-0 on a recorded vote

2. 2019-182-12
Municipal Accommodation Tax Disbursement Procedure Consultation

Moved by Councillor Wren

THAT the proposed procedure (Appendix A) be adopted for the disbursement of MAT funds; and,

THAT MAT funds collected in the year be held in a reserve until paid out to the qualifying entities; and

THAT the MAT disbursement procedure be review at end of first implementation year.

For: Councillor Fullarton, Mayor Baker, Member Barabash,
Member Barnes, and Councillor Wren

CARRIED 5-0 on a recorded vote

3. 2019-184-12
Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre Contract

Moved by Member Barnes

THAT Council authorize the Mayor and City Clerk to enter into an Ontario Transfer Payment Agreement for SBEC Program (SBEC Core Initiative, Starter Company Plus Initiative and Summer Company Initiative) with Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Ontario as represented by the Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade; and

THAT staff work with the Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre to establish processes to ensure that the reserves are managed and are being used to further the needs of entrepreneurs and businesses.

For: Councillor Fullarton, Mayor Baker, Member Barabash,
Member Barnes, and Councillor Wren

CARRIED 5-0 on a recorded vote

8. **NEW BUSINESS FROM COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

1. Flag Policy
Councillor Wren

Moved by Councillor Wren

THAT the City of Brockville reconfigure the display of flag poles over the south portal of the Tunnel in order that the National Flag of Canada is able to be flown in keeping with the suggested flag etiquette of the Government of Canada; and

THAT the flags of other foreign nations only be flown during the time of a visit to our city by a foreign dignitary or similar delegation, or when specifically approved by a resolution of Council. An exception to this practice would be applied to the Royal Union Flag (Union Jack), or the flag of the United States of America which may be flown from time to time without resolution recognizing, respectively, our country's lineage to Great Britain and membership in the British Commonwealth, and our geographical proximity to our neighbours to the south; and

THAT the City review and revise its protocol with respect to the flying of flags, including that surrounding the lowering the flag(s) to half-mast in recognition of a time of mourning.

REFERRED ON A LATER VOTE

Motion to Refer

Moved by Councillor Wren

THAT the matter be referred to staff to report back to the Committee in March 2020.

For: Councillor Fullarton, Mayor Baker, Member Barabash,
Member Barnes, and Councillor Wren

CARRIED 5-0 on a recorded vote

9. EDRTC - CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by: Councillor Wren

THAT the following items as recommended by the Economic Development, Recreation and Tourism Committee be placed on the Consent Agenda:

1. 2019-183-12
Tourism Panel
2. 2019-182-12
Municipal Accommodation Tax Disbursement Procedure Consultation
3. 2019-184-12
Leeds & Grenville Small Business Enterprise Centre Contract

10. **MEDIA QUESTION PERIOD**

11. **ADJOURNMENT**

Moved by Councillor Wren

THAT the Economic Development, Recreation and Tourism Committee adjourn its meeting until the next regular meeting scheduled for January 7, 2020.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 pm.

TOURISM BROCKVILLE PRESENTATION TO EDRTC – Dec 3, 2019

Thank you Madame Chair, Mr. Mayor, Councillors and Citizen Members of the committee.

When people ask me what I would do if I didn't get paid all day long every day, I say THIS job. And I think for many people that are proud of their community and work for the betterment of it, this is a passion. I look at the hundreds of volunteers that work at our attractions and organize and run our festivals and events and I find it amazing and I am so thankful to them.

But tourism is far more than just a passion – it is an industry. And that industry generates more than 50 million a year in Brockville, and creates jobs right here.

It's inspiring to hear Minister Lisa McLeod talk about her title - Minister of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries – she emphasizes industries and sums it up in a very unique way using the example of hockey. Hockey is part of our heritage, it is a sport, it contributes to tourism as people travel to watch games in other cities, and it is an ingrained part of our culture.

Here are some key facts on tourism in Ontario:

- It contributes over \$34 billion in tax contribution to the province and its GDP contribution is 4.3% in Ontario. Pretty remarkable.
- While Tourism often provides a first job for young people, it also grows year round jobs in Ontario, as more than 60% of tourism workers are in full time positions

The Tourism Industry matters in Ontario - and it matters in Brockville. And listening to everyone here tonight underscores that point.

But if you ask what keeps me up at night – it's thinking about the people I couldn't reach out to that day to catch up and suss out any opportunities where we could help each other – because there hasn't been time. And that is the same for the entire tourism team, some of whom are here tonight.

I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit more about them. Of course there is Pam Robertson the Exec Dir of the Chamber who leads this ship so ably and devotes so much of her time at work and personally to Tourism activities. Along with our accountant Cathie Paquette the Chamber takes care of events like River of Lights, and Island Breakfast, the Rail Tunnel contest, and many, many other projects where time is donated to the City. And we always get good advice from Jan Murray at the Chamber.

And for the tourism Team - Most of you know Deb Hamilton who works part time for the Tourism Office, and runs our retail operation and sells ads for our Visitor Guide as well as the Chamber Visitor Map each year – and she does so much else in the Tourism office because she has a long history in working with the DBIA, the Chamber and with Tourism and that history and knowledge proves invaluable to us every day.

Rebecca Bredin our Digital Media Specialist moved here from Toronto this year to get us on the map digitally - she amazes me every day with something that is possible that “who knew it was!”

Being mindful of our budget this year we didn't have a full time Tourism specialist in 2019 until just recently when Kat Edgeley joined our team. Kat also moved here from Toronto and her extensive and relevant tourism background, most recently as a manager at the world's leading adventure travel company - G Travel - meant she was a contributor on Day 1.

And with all the extra things everyone does – like decorating seven live Christmas trees outside of our office to make the street look better for those going to River of Lights... all I can say is – it just has to be a passion because the requests never end and the team never stops providing cool ideas, and hunkering down and contributing so much every day.

I'd like to finish up in the next five minutes with an overview of the three aspects of Brockville's tourism operation run by the Chamber of Commerce

1st: Visitor Services

- Brockville Tourism plans and writes the Visitor Guide which currently is underway for 2020. We start this process in June with the creative and generally have it to the designer in early December. The production of the guide is subsidized by the ads Deb Hamilton sells in the fall.
- We print 50,000 copies and a portion of that is French only guides many of which delivered directly to households
- In the spring we spend a week driving around the countryside to deliver the guide to campgrounds and gas stations and restaurants

and other tourism organizations along with the brochures from our many attractions in Brockville.

We are the only tourism organization, from Cornwall to Gananoque and maybe further afield, who does this –the norm is reciprocal agreements with other visitor centres to display their guides and brochures and they display ours in their Visitor Centres. But it is a fantastic opportunity to have Brockville be the only destination in the KOA campgrounds from Kingston to Gan for example.

Originally this started as a revenue generating project, and it still is today – although the revenue we raise generally just covers the truck rental and gas to get to all the locations from Bainsville to Smiths Falls to Gananoque.

- We serve visitors in the office, via telephone and via email. This isn't merely pointing out where things are, but entails getting on the phone and helping people book accommodations. It is calling down to Captain Andy and finding out if the cruises are running and if they will hold the boat. It is researching on the Internet to find out what they need to know. And it is drawing out on a map how to get from here to the 1000 Islands Parkway on their bike. And here are the stats:
 - In 2019 11,788 Market 6053 BH for a total of 17,841 visitors
 - In 2018 9735 Market 4729 BH for a total of 14,464

- In 2017 (Canada 150) 11,183 Market and BH 4,709 for a total of 15,888
- Also in 2019 we helped 740 people with visitor information via phone, and 149 who emailed requests.
- At the end of the year we do our full stats on website hits and all of our Point of Sale information on where people are visiting from. We also provide all the stats for our surrounding attractions from Morrisburg to Kingston, including Boldt Castle and other attractions in the US. This gives us an idea of the scope of opportunity with visitors and emphasizes why we partner with all of these surrounding attractions to display our information, etc.
- We run a successful retail shop and the proceeds go towards salaries in the Tourism office.
- We attend trade shows to promote the destination, and most notably in 2019 we were at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto for 3 days courtesy of RTO9.
- We write grants, hire and manage summer students
- We meet cruise ships, cycling groups and other conference groups visiting Brockville to give out bags and info and sometimes fudge and other goodies. We provide welcome bags to different organizations like BGH to give to visiting doctors.

- And we collaborate wherever we can help - We work with festivals like Big River Festival which was new in 2019, Tall Ships where 10 people worked that weekend, Island Breakfast and in an effort to stimulate winter tourism – the River of Lights. We contribute on committees like the New Year's Eve Concerts, The Garden Trail, and the Kingston Film Commissioner for locales in our area.
- We send event info to a large distribution list. We maintain an extensive calendar of events and issue a weekly blog and the list goes on, but this should give you a good idea of Visitor services.

2nd Aspect is: Digital Communications

I can sum up digital communications in a few words rather than giving you endless statistics. It just keeps getting better.

We have been able to purchase the tools to provide more help to others in our community and to help us work faster and be more effective for our partners.

We are finding we have people reaching out to us now that we have a dedicated digital position as they are hearing about it from others – and other destinations digital counterparts.

Film Brockville is one as we have helped as well as the Concerts series, and NYE concerts and we are going to train the Garden Trail folks on social media.

We are providing information on events for everything in Brockville and the area, even if it is geared to locals more than visitors.

And with our What's Happening Newsletters we have seen an increase in click rate over the last few weeks. On average the opening rate is between 30 and 35% and the click rate 25 – 35%. Open rate are those that open our post, and the click rate are those that click on one of the events listed.

Leading up to the River of Lights we saw a spike with over 40% of the people who read the email clicking through to other events. These numbers are surpassing even the weekends leading up to Big River festival. For River of Lights however we built interest through our digital marketing program which was pointing people researching Xmas events in general in many of the surrounding cities to our River of Lights landing page.

Also I would like to highlight the River of Lights Landing Page Stats. This Page highlights everything going on in Brockville over the month of December – In the last 7 days we have had 380 people visit the landing page. On Friday the 29th of November we have had 126 unique Sessions who stayed on the page for 42 seconds before clicking through to one of the activities or events. We are really happy with this length of time as this landing page is meant solely to redirect people.

And lastly: Marketing & Product Development:

Everything we do here is focused on collaboration with businesses, attractions, other destinations – you name it we are connected with them. As an example Kingston Tourism has the Brier in 2020 and we are invited to promote our destination for a day.

And we rely heavily on the research contracted by RTO9 and other Tourism Organizations and follow best practices and trends in the industry. We work closely with our partners in tourism along the waterway.

We do buy print advertising, and other media like TV and radio when required with major events. We buy into a digital media campaign each year.

And we look for opportunities via grants and sponsorship and our budget to help new product development and to and help existing festivals. It is my hope that we can continue to help event and festival organizers not only with major products but also those developing smaller scale experiential tourism products. There are two recently that serve to bring in small groups of people at a time, but are very interesting experiences. Brewski Tours and Vogue and Rogue Wedding Planners.

We watch for new technologies and opportunities for target markets that are more lucrative – for example the Chinese market (based on credit card data in our region) shows they spend more than any other visitor. This is not tour groups this is free (or fully) independent travelers (FIT).

And millennials are attracted in different ways so in 2020 we are starting to work on a digital visitor guide app where we can populate our map with videos, pictures, text – and they can hold up the phone and look down a street and those bits we have inserted will pop up. We have had to give a lot of thought in the last two years on migrating away from paper copies in the future as the technology to provide the

information changes and visitor methods of finding information changes.

We are redoing our website in 2020 and will be aligning all of our brand elements so we are cohesive and focused.

And we attend meetings on just about everything that is in any way loosely connected to our industry. That covers things even like staffing issues with tourism employees by OTEC, the Training, Consulting, and Workforce Development organization or working on a wayfinding signage committee with the City.

In Conclusion,

We in the Tourism office don't do this work in a vacuum. We work with our partners locally and around the region and the province, so we can ensure our tourism industry as a whole contributes to economic bottom line in Brockville.

The final thought I would like to leave you with is this. Success in Tourism isn't made with policies and procedures. It is made with all of the passionate people who are ambassadors of our City and region – all of whom are working tirelessly for their community. And we have some magnificent successes here to show for that.

Thank you,

Katherine Hobbs

Tourism Manager Dec 3, 2019

River of Lights Landing Page Stats

We activated our analytics tracking on November 26th, and were able to see how many unique sessions took place in the last week.

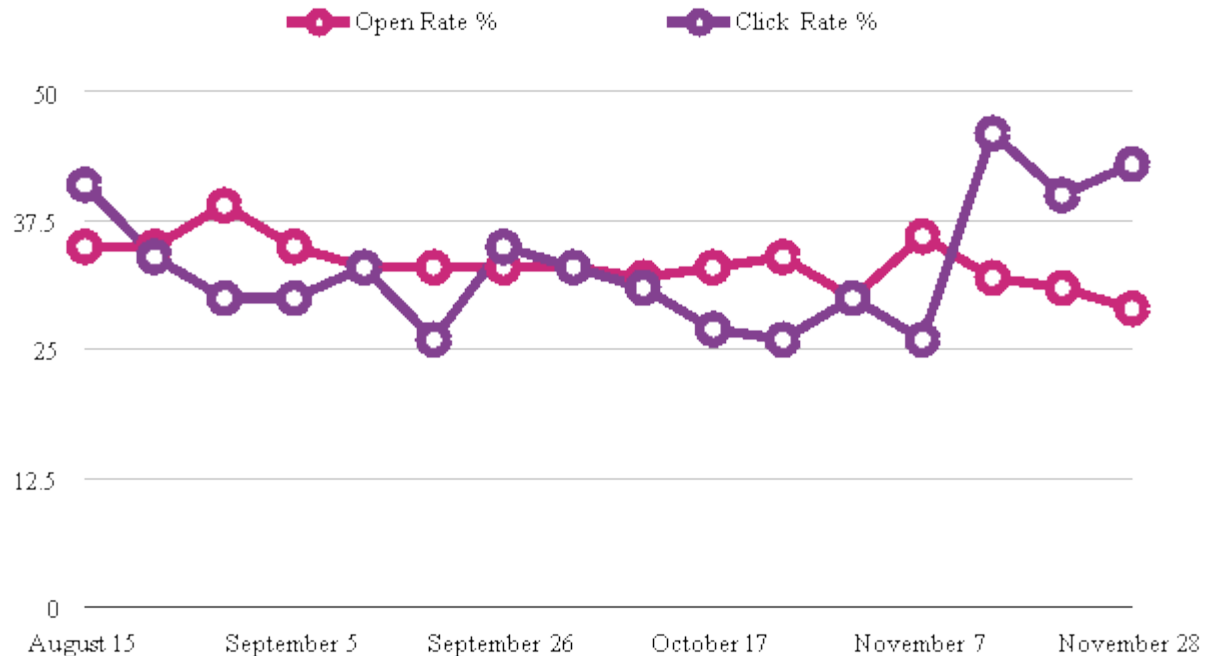
Friday, November 29th really took off in terms of unique sessions on the site. We had 126 people visit riveroflightsbrockville.com, and they stayed on the site for an average of 42 seconds on the site. This is a decent amount of time because our landing page really was intended to just redirect people to the event they'd like to see.

In the last 7 days, we've had 380 people visit the landing page.



What's Happening Newsletters

The What's Happening Newsletters have seen an increase in click rate over the last few weeks. On



average, the opening rate is between 30-35%, while the click rate has been 25-35%. However, as we led up to the River of Lights and holidays, we saw a spike in clicks, with over 40% of people who read the email actually clicking through to see what was happening in our region. These numbers are surpassing even the weekends leading up to Big River festival.

The biggest similarity between November 2019 and August 2019 is not just that there were large festivals, but that Brockville Tourism was well informed enough that we could write blog posts about the events coming up, and build a lot more interest in the events. Especially with newer events, Brockville Tourism was able to build interest in advance through traditional and digital platforms.