

**Digby Area Tourism Association (DATA)**  
**Board Meeting**  
**Minutes – October 29, 2015**

**Present:** Greg Turner, George Manzer, Bob Benson, Carol Barnes, Tom Goodwin, Tina Frost, Linda Graham, Mary Tibbetts

1. **Welcome.** Vice Chair Greg Turner opened the meeting at 2pm and welcomed all present.
2. **Agenda Approval/Additions/Deletions.** Vice Chair Turner asked if anyone had any additions or deletions for the agenda.

Linda Graham added the Yarmouth & Acadian Shore “Starlight Immersion” and TIANS Air B&Bs.  
Greg Turner added Saltscapes.

3. **Approval of Previous Minutes.** Vice Chair Turner asked if everyone had read the previous minutes and asked if there were any changes or corrections. There were none.

*Mary Tibbetts moved for adoption of the previous minutes as submitted.  
Linda Graham seconded. All aye. Motion carried.*

4. **Treasurer’s Report.** No report submitted at this time.
5. **DATA Chair: Saskia Geerts Resignation.** Vice Chair Greg Turner said Saskia will be missed, she worked hard and did a good job. As Vice Chair Greg Turner offered to step up and assume the Chair’s responsibilities until the 2016 Annual General Meeting but also indicated that he does not have the time to take this on as a permanent position. A search for a new chair will begin immediately.

Chair Turner has passed this information along to Nick Fry at NSTA so they do know what has happened. Greg asked if there were any advice or guidance he could give us regarding the current and future role of DATA. Greg will also advise TIANS of this situation.

Chair Turner mentioned the big hole the Pines left when they withdrew from advertising with the Doers and Dreamers and Tom Goodwin said he will be advertising here this year but not next year as too much advance notice is needed and he’s not sure of the status of the business at this time.

Bob Benson talked about four tourist associations being in Nova Scotia and the way all advertising is being done. Digby is always caught in the middle with not good advertising and everyone agreed this has got to be addressed.

George Manzer asked about possibly getting a paid employee; we did have one once. This should be looked into and funding to assist with this should be available. George also said the paid employee needs to understand small businesses.

It was definitely agreed we need direction. Bob asked if it might be possible for us to have a meeting with Nick Fry of NSTA. Greg will get in touch with him to see if a meeting can be set up, hopefully in November. All members will be invited to this meeting.

Chair Turner asked Mary to send a thank you to Saskia for her hard work on behalf of DATA.

6. **Halifax Guide Advertising.** Tom Goodwin suggested advertising in the Greater Halifax Visitor Guide and provided us with page information and pricing. Ferry or no ferry most visitor traffic arrives by air into Halifax and most rent a car to travel the province. We can't do this alone as it is very expensive. Would we want to do a co-op or just DATA? Perhaps start with something simple as a test to see if it works.

Mary was asked to email all members to see if they would be interested. It is suggested that perhaps we could get just the hyperlink in flipbook (no ad) for \$125. Responses from members would be gathered and Mary will report the results to the Board.

George Manzer said the Municipality is investigating the possibility of hiring students to work a kiosk in downtown Halifax. No financials are available at this time. Students, via grant assistance, would work the kiosk. The general thought is a kiosk would be better than Doers and Dreamers and most tourists in the Halifax area would be visiting all of the kiosks set up there. George will keep us apprised as to how this goes with the Municipality.

7. **Saltscapes Harvest Greet the Holidays Expo 2015: Nov. 14 & 15, 2015.** Not applicable to us this year; the general consensus via earlier emails indicates this would not be feasible for our area.
8. **Provincial VIC Closure.** October numbers were not in as of the time of this meeting. It is estimated approx. 16,000 people. Everyone agreed the new signs on Shore Road made a big difference and all agreed they were busy and had a good season this year. The town was busy and Greg advised that two of the town VIC employees were bi-lingual which is very good news and very helpful at the VIC. When the question arose of why we closed our Provincial VIC and some areas did not close, it was because we had a second VIC in Digby Town.

Carol indicated crowds, especially during the WRR, were gathering at the empty VIC parking lot and suggested this lot should at least have a chain across it to block entrance.

Greg informed us that the downtown VIC is now a "regional" VIC so now they are allowed to promote the entire province rather than just the downtown Digby area. This made for a very good, very busy VIC this summer. It is suggested we got a lot of people from the Nova Star in Yarmouth.

Visitors told us that to google the Bay of Fundy Experience is a good way to find us.

Greg asked if there is anything more we can do for next year. Any ideas or suggestions? Mary suggested that while the contest was a good idea it just disappeared. No one other than the immediate group(?) who started and ran the contest knew any details. The contestants should be kept informed to continue their interest. We need to know the top ten, the runners up and the winner. The Board members don't know any of this information to pass along.

Greg then read Saskia's updates and indicated there are two un-claimed prizes we can use for a new contest and Tina offered another gift card.

9. **Doers and Dreamers Guide.** Greg has done a lot of research on this guide. There are 11 national historic sites; it needs a section on Keji, and only WRR festival is mentioned. Only two trails are mentioned.

Bob compared the 2014/2015 guides and showed how whale watching is advertised less in 2015 than in 2014 so we're losing ground. Carol asked if we should ask Doers & Dreamers about the formatting. Greg will call Meaghan at Doers & Dreamers to get an idea of the design. The Star Board doesn't mention scallops at all.

Greg has been working with DARC regarding getting trails put in and explained that private land trails are not municipality trails and therefore not eligible to be promoted as hiking trail destinations but all municipal hiking trails should get included. Bob had done a check and found that hiking is the #1 tourism draw, with history/culture and whale watching following closely.

There will be a Hike NS gathering in this area in April 2016. Jonathan Riley is on the Board for this and their first meeting will be next week. Greg will bring us more information after their meeting.

- 10. Town Map.** Saskia Geerts and Bee Stanton have been working on a town map hoping to get it as accurate as possible for posting on our web site. Everyone will be able to see it and print it. This will save a lot of money over print copies. Mary offered to follow-up with Bee and Saskia.

The Provincial map is actually the best map but we would need copyright permission to use it. Perhaps we could contact them to get permission to put it on our web site. Tabled for now.

Diane Theriault did work on a map of the islands. Linda Graham and Tina Frost will work with Diane on this. Greg will call Diane first to give her a heads up.

- 11. 2014/2015 tourism season comparison.** Statistics were received from Sue Beard at the Town VIC and Greg Turner had his statistics from GAEL Tours. It was a busy year. The new ferry schedule helped a lot with this and the tourists arrived more relaxed and happier. It seemed to make Digby more of an entrance to NS rather than an exit. Tina Frost suggested our presence at Saltscapes was a big factor in our improvement.

- 12. Origin of Visitors.** GAEL Tour statistics showed 54% from Canada (32% Ontario), 42% from US (21% Eastern US), and 4% from Europe or Asia. While others had no statistics with them it was basically agreed these were the general statistics for the entire area.

#### **Agenda Additions:**

**Air B&B:** This is a very large and growing larger problem in not only our Province but world-wide. It needs to be addressed. Everyone agreed and Chair Greg Turner asked Linda Graham to draft a letter to TIANS with our concerns on these un-regulated accommodations. Linda agreed to prepare a draft letter.

**Saltscapes 2016:** As earlier mentioned by Tina Frost, our presence at Saltscapes was a success. Everyone agreed and after much discussion it was agreed by all that we should attend Saltscapes 2016. The dates would be April 22-24, 2016. Figures, details, financials, etc. will need to be put together.

*Linda Graham made a motion that DATA attend the 2016 Saltscapes Exhibition in Halifax.  
Carol Barnes seconded. All aye. Motion carried.*

Greg Turner said the two TVs worked well. Carol suggested and we all agreed there would be no rack cards. It was suggested that perhaps participating members, for \$50 (cost to be determined), could put their business advertisement into the slideshow which will be promoting our area.

Chair Turner asked that all individuals write down their thoughts and ideas for the next meeting.

The Board thanks Vice Chair Turner for stepping in to cover the vacant Chair position.

**Adjournment:** Tom Goodwin called for adjournment at 4pm.

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, November 26, 2015 @ 2pm

**Actions Required after October 29, 2015 meeting:**

DATA Chair: Greg Turner offered to try to set up a meeting with Nick Fry of NSTA.  
Mary Tibbetts to send a thank you card to Saskia Geerts

Paid Employee: George Manzer looking into municipal funding

Halifax Guide: Mary Tibbetts to email members re interest in hyperlink for \$125

Halifax Kiosk: George Manzer looking into this with municipality

Doers & Dreamers: Greg Turner to call Meaghan to get an idea of design of the ad

Hike NS: Greg Turner to get more details

Town Map: Mary Tibbetts to follow up with Saskia and Bee Stanton

Island Maps: Linda Graham and Tina Frost to ask Diane Theriault re status

Greg Turner will call Diane T. first to make introduction

Air B&B: Linda Graham to draft letter to TIANS

Saltscares: Everyone is to write down their thoughts and ideas

**Next Meeting:** Thursday, November 26, 2015 @ 2pm