

Chester Visitor Information Centre

An Economic Driver in the
Municipality of Chester



Working Together to Make Chester a Better Place

Presenter Profile – Jo-Ann Grant

- Chair of VOCTADA
- Member of BoD, Chester Municipal Chamber of Commerce (CMCC) 2009 – 2012
- President, CMCC, 2012 – May 2015
 - First-hand knowledge of:
 - VIC operations and staff interactions with visitors
 - Value and benefits to businesses, events, organizations, accommodations



VOCTADA's ROLE IN THE COMMUNITY

- Village of Chester Tourism and Development Association
- 20 years of community improvement projects
- Recent strategic planning = pivot from Village only to Greater Chester Area – East Chester to Marriott's Cove



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VIC – Options Being Considered

1. MODC to operate – ~\$42k
2. MODL to operate – ~\$45k
3. Move materials to Blockhouse - ~\$10k
4. RFP for another community group to run – continue grant of \$25k
5. Future: Use of kiosks only

Option 2 – MODL to Operate

- Slightly higher cost than Option 1
- Handing control of a MODC asset to another municipality that has no vested interest

Option 3 – Blockhouse VIC

- Most tourists coming from direction of Halifax, airport etc
 - Already passed Chester and unlikely to backtrack
- Significant loss of revenues to MODC businesses (including accommodations) and events

Option 4 - RFP

- Volunteer orgs lack paid staff
- Difficult to find volunteers able to offer time, skill and knowledge to oversee, e.g. Annual guide to businesses
- Projected operating costs of ~\$42k
 - \$25k grant from MODC will not cover costs
 - Not enough time to organize for this year
 - Success unlikely

Future Use of Kiosks

- Existing electronic access – Google, tourism websites, Doers & Dreamers
 - Insightful questions
- Human touch
 - Local knowledge (cemeteries; where to buy fresh fish; where to fish; how and where to jig squid)
- Staff personal recommendations for restaurants, accommodations, events

Option 1 – MODC to Operate

Economic Value to ALL Businesses,
Events, and Residents of MODC



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Economic Value to MODC

	2012	2013	2014	Inc
May	357	251	292	+41
June	not open	633	792	+159
July	1033	1764	1946	+182/913
August	1438	2090	2346	+256/908
September	679	724	1110	+386/431
October	not open	301	329	+28
Total	3507/4200	5763	6815	1052/2615

- 2010 NS Visitor Exit Survey: \$98/day per person
- All visitors to VIC spent an additional \$50 = \$341,000 to the economy

Who Benefits?

- Our Children: Summer employment and work experience for students
- Staff trained to know businesses in ALL areas of the Municipality
- Successful businesses contribute to tax base, benefitting all residents
- Synergy with Chester Farmers' & Artisans' Market: Vendors draw tourists; Tourists support vendors



Chester Farmers' & Artisans' Market



Many local vendors and their families earn extra income from tourists who are visiting the VIC

Who Benefits? Cont'd

- Going to the Valley?
 - Golf/stay at Sherwood; events at Bonny Lea; Card Lake; Kaiser Meadow (yes, it is a draw); New Ross (groceries, fuel); Can't miss Ross Farm; Pick up a picnic lunch at Peasant's Pantry; lunch at Vittles; Muwin winery; Forties Community Center suppers, wind farm.....
- Heading West?
 - Oceanmark K9; Seaside Shanty (chowder); Gold Reserves; Gold River Marina; Seaside Shanty; Island View; Glyda's; Sobey Sode's (fresh fish, etc); Sodes General Store (for ANYTHING!); Your Friend & Mine (pet supplies); Moe's; Oak Island; Atlantica Oak Island; Whirligig Factory.....

Who Benefits? cont'd

- Heading East?
 - Butterbox Babies; East Chester Hall; Graves Island (walking trails, picnic park, showers, camping); Grey Gables; antiques; East River picnic park; Aspotogan beaches; kayaking; pottery/jewelry; Swissair memorial; “Haven” Locations; Shore Club; Mall; Trellis; Rug Hooking Museum.....
- Hanging Around Chester?
 - Mecklenburgh Inn; Kayak Shack; Freda’s Beach; Fo’c’sle; Rope Loft; Windjammer; Ocean View; Stretch Diner (fish & chips); Lordly House; Playhouse; Kiwi Café; Tradewinds; art galleries; walking tours; Village Emporium; Zoe Valley Library; Lightfoot Tower; Chester Golf Club; “Haven Herald”

Working with other VICs

- Recent years:
 - Fam trips for staff of VICs and other tourism staff on the South Shore
 - #1 Priority – Keep visitors in MODC
 - #2 Priority – Keep visitors on the South Shore

Making it Work

- Tara Maguire, MODC Director of Community Development, tasked with applying for grants
- Senior Economic Development Officer (SEDO) position is vacant. Amend job description to include managing VIC
 - Eliminates need to hire VIC manager (\$\$ already in budget)

Making it Work cont'd

- Economies of scale and available skills:
 - MODC staff have the skills and abilities to plan, organize and oversee
 - New SEDO would be hired with managing VIC as part of job description

Recommendations

- That Council recognizes the value of the VIC to businesses and residents throughout MODC
- That Council recognizes the enormous ROI: ~\$45k investment to achieve \$340k - \$680K return to our economy

VOCTADA urges Council to commit to funding and operating the VIC for 2017. And, that unless a proven viable alternative is found, Council will continue to fund and operate the Chester VIC.



THANK YOU!



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