

# Minutes of the Merrickville and District Chamber of Commerce

Date: Tuesday, April 14, 2020

Location: On line meeting through Zoom teleconference

Present: Yves Grandmaitre, Anne Barr, Nick Previsich, Robyn Eagle, Lisa Card, Alessandro Giuliani

Gallery: Jennifer Ritskes

1. The meeting was called to order at 6:15 PM
2. Motion to approve the agenda was made by Lisa and seconded by Anne - passed.
3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests - none; was passed.
4. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the Minutes of the March 9, 2020 meeting was made by Lisa and seconded by Robyn provided item #8c was revised with respect to the planned Chamber Launch event of March 26, 2020.

## 5. Correspondence

Anne noted that she has had some correspondence with respect to the HST and will report on this as part of the Treasurers Report.

She also indicated that she has received correspondence from COBA Studios and Mejan Graphic Design with respect to their membership fees. They both will be providing their services in-kind in lieu of paying a membership fee.

Yves mentioned that Anney de Gobeo is near the completion of her contract and three local business are awaiting results for their application to the Mainstreet Digital Service Squad. In addition, Yves reported that he

recently received an e-mail from the Economic Development Officer regarding discussions on the impact of COVID-19 on businesses.

## 6. Treasurer's Report

Anne Barr provided a written report (viewable on-line) which indicated that as of April 14th total assets were \$17,902.87. She noted that after paying existing financial commitments there is approximately \$5,000 of disposable income that could be allocated to networking, advertising or other endeavours to support our members in 2020. The HST for 2019/20 has been filed and a refund of \$2399 is expected.

In discussions with the account officer, it was discovered that the last Corporate tax filing on record was for 2011. Board members indicated that it is a priority to address this situation and supported the search for an accountant/tax advisor who could undertake the filings. If a local resident who has experience cannot be found, the search could extend beyond Merrickville-Wolford. Further, a liability (GST and penalties) of app. \$2100 or more may be outstanding.

A motion was made by Anne Barr and seconded by Robyn Eagle to accept the report of the Treasurer - passed.

**Action Item: Board members were asked to use their personal network to identify possible candidates to undertake the task of filing the delinquent tax returns.**

## 7. Committee Reports

### a) Membership

#### Membership fees and benefit handout:

Yves noted that the most up to date listing of members is available on the shared drive. Robyn and Lisa tabled their work on developing a brochure that was both a marketing tool as well as description of the three levels of membership and associated fees. They were congratulated on their work and were asked to make revisions by adding links to the Chamber's web site and Facebook page as well as rolling the \$10 fee for the Ontario

Chamber of Commerce membership into the overall fee at each of the three levels. It was suggested that at this point only 100 print copies are needed and that we should approach COBA to determine their interest and cost of printing.

A motion was made by Nick and seconded by Alessandro to accept the brochure with the suggested changes - passed.

**Action Item: Robyn and Lisa to contact COBA for a cost estimate and to go ahead with printing as needed.**

MAG Question:

Nick spoke to this item as the President of the Merrickville Artists Guild (MAG) which is a full member of the Chamber. He asked if there was an opportunity for MAG artists to be featured (through photos and a description of the artists) on the Chamber website. He also mentioned that this kind of opportunity could be provided to other businesses who are also Chamber members. Anne commented that this could be an opportunity for a more “dynamic” use of the website. Yves felt that the present web design would make this difficult but suggested the new site (when constructed) should be able to accommodate this feature.

Yves also noted that Mary Kate has been managing the Chamber Facebook site and is requesting material to post and therefore in the short term this might be a good opportunity for MAG. For the immediate future, Yves and other members supported having a link to the MAG website posted on the Chamber’s website.

**Action Item: Nick to contact Mary Kate with suggestions for posting information on MAG artists on the Chamber Facebook page.**

b) Marketing:

Yves informed the Board that posters showing the slogan below are being developed for placement in the windows of downtown Merrickville business locations:

## **Merrickville-Wolford**

### **227 Years of Perseverance**

#### **Stronger Together**

The hashtag “Stronger Together” will be used (on Twitter ?). Robyn offered to make some signs with this hashtag (it will be up to 8 feet in length and 12 - 16 inches high) and would be hung on the entrance signs to the Village.

c) Networking:

Deferred to a future meeting

#### 8. Old Business/Action Items

a) Revenue generation ideas

Deferred to a future meeting

b) Map

Given the economic situation within Merrickville-Wolford, work on the map will be delayed until the situation improves.

c) Certification mark

Nothing new to report at this time.

#### 9. New Business

a) UCLG meetings and communications

Yves had distributed via e-mail the results of the UCLG survey of businesses and how they are being affected by COVID-19. The full survey results and those for Merrickville-Wolford can be found at the following link:

<https://invest.leedsgrenville.com/en/contacts-news-events/covid-19.aspx#>

Robyn suggested that the Chamber could use the survey results as part of our advocacy efforts on behalf of local businesses.

b) Letter to Council

Yves noted that on April 2, 2020 a letter by the Chamber was sent to the Mayor, Councillors and the Municipal Office urging action to help alleviate the economic impacts being experienced by residents and business owners. A number of helpful suggestions were raised in the letter - Yves indicated that the Council will be sending out further information shortly on how it will be helping residents and businesses.

c) Ideas for supporting businesses

Yves suggested that the Chamber may wish to look at various “events” that have been or will likely be cancelled as a result of COVID-19. These could be candidates under the Community Grant program for reconsideration by Council and unspent funds redirected to recovery efforts. Nick urged caution and indicated that the applicants are primarily non-profit organizations and some count on these small levels of funding to support their initiatives. However, he acknowledged that since some events have already been cancelled that some clawback from the Community Grants is possible.

Robyn mentioned that given the likelihood of a “new normal” for several months to come this may present an opportunity for the Chamber to enter into a more collaborative partnership with the Council by offering our assistance on recovery efforts. Board members requested that Yves write a letter to that effect for our review and approval.

Yves indicated that one suggestion he heard is that it may be possible to combine the annual sidewalk sale in August with the (now cancelled) May 2nd Merrickville Garage sale. Combining both events might bring a significant number of people to the community. Yves also reiterated an earlier suggestion (via e-mail) that some local businesses may wish to create short videos of their businesses which can be posted on the Chamber website and Facebook page when the timing is right.

Yves introduced Jennifer Ritske who had been on-line (gallery participant) and listening in on the meeting discussions and solicited her comments on what she heard. She suggested that there should be something on the Chamber's website regarding COVID-19 and what the Chamber has done or is doing to assist members. In addition, she noted that there is no detailed information on how to become a member and to whom payment could be made. She suggested that the brochure Robyn and Lisa produced should be downloaded onto the Chamber's website.

**Action Items: Yves to draft a letter to Council offering the services of the Board of Directors and Chamber members to assist as possible with the Municipality's recovery efforts in the short and long term. Robyn/Lisa to post the brochure on the Chamber website.**

#### 10. In-Camera

##### a) Proposed New Board Member

The in-camera discussion took place with regard to an identifiable individual who might be considered for a seat on the Board of Directors given the recent resignation by Bruce Perron.

**Action Item: Yves to write a short description of duties of the position and skill sets needed with respect to marketing and social media.**

#### 11. Question Period

No new questions were raised

#### 12. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Nick and seconded by Anne. The meeting was adjourned at 8:31 PM. The next meeting will take place on May 12, 2020

