

Minutes of the Merrickville & District Chamber of Commerce

Date: July 14, 2020

Location: On-line Zoom teleconference

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

Guest: None

Gallery: None

1. CALL TO ORDER

- called to order at 7:01 pm

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- moved by Nick and seconded by Lisa - carried

3. DECLARATION OF PECUNIARY INTEREST

- None

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- moved by Nick and seconded by Lisa - carried

5. IN CAMERA SESSION (RE NEW BOARD MEMBER)

- moved by Robyn and seconded by Anne that the Directors accept the nomination of Jennifer Ritskes to the Board as Vice President - carried. Jennifer was whole heartedly welcomed to the Chamber and the Board of Directors.

6.CORRESPONDENCE:

Yves noted that he had received an e-mail from Michelle Vallee of Juice FM indicating that we have \$315 unused in our advertising account. He also received an e-mail from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce regarding a digital modernization program. If we get 3 businesses to sign on to the program, our Chamber of Commerce will receive \$1800. Yves will circulate the e-mail to the other Board members for discussion at the next meeting.

7.TREASURER'S REPORT

- motion made by Anne and seconded by Lisa to accept the Report of the Treasurer - approved.

Robyn asked for clarification on the item related to the non payment of back taxes. Anne noted that there has been no movement on hiring an accountant to deal with past tax filings. Anne has submitted the HST for the current year (2019/2020) and reported that we have a credit of \$920.35.

Yves indicated that many of the new businesses moving into the community have indicated an interest in joining the Chamber of Commerce.

With respect to insurance renewal we have received a letter and invoice from our insurance Broker and the full information will be uploaded to the shared drive. The cost of renewal of the premium is \$2,504.52.

8.COMMITTEE REPORTS

a)MEMBERSHIP update

Robyn reported that we now have a single updated list of all of the current members showing their status and the level of membership. The list will be posted on the shared drive under the title of "Chamber Members - 2020". Robyn also indicated that the correct mailing address for each member is still being developed.

With respect to the status of the window "decals", Yves reported that the electronic file was lost by the printer and she offered to create a new file for a "smaller" decal. Membership brochures are now printed.

***Action Item: Board members (Yves, Robyn, Alessandro, Jennifer and Lisa) have volunteered to divide the list of 62 businesses and to contact them directly with respect to membership.**

b)MARKETING

Yves reported that we now have a draft of the map and that one side of the map is fully populated.

Robyn has been recording video "snippets" of local businesses and there have been no negative comments. Yves mentioned the great quality of the professionally produced video on Nana B's Bakery.

Yves noted that the "Discover Eastern Ontario" magazine has been available at multiple locations for a few weeks and contains articles, ads and a map of the downtown, all spread over multiple pages. Merrickville receives the highest number of copies for distribution and is another valuable promotional tool.

The local Digital Service Squad (DSS) initiative has now wrapped up and the final report has been completed and approved. All of the 14 businesses that applied for the fund were approved. There are new funds available under the renewal of the DSS.

Yves received a Phone App proposal (visit www.904apps.com for brief intro) from a Brockville based company offering a downloadable phone app for the Village. There is a small annual fee but no direct costs to businesses. Yves will circulate the information to the Board members for a possible future discussion.

9. OLD BUSINESS/ACTION ITEMS

Zoom stakeholder call outcome

The second meeting of the Community Group Stakeholders took place on July 7th. Yves has circulated the minutes and they are also on the Chamber website. Yves noted that under the Strategic Plan there was a recommendation to hold such meetings. The consensus of the Stakeholders was that such meetings were valuable and that another meeting should be called toward the end of August.

Website proposal

A proposal was received by Mejan Graphic Design for the development and update of a full website for the Chamber. There were questions about the possibility of updating some of the website items ourselves to save costs and also clarification on what is meant by "maintenance" costs. Robyn reminded the Board members that we also received three other proposals previously from website businesses. Yves offered to create a

chart showing a breakdown of services and costs prepared by all four website proposals.

Public washrooms update

Based on the discussions at the Community Stakeholder consultation, the issue of availability of public washrooms remains a critical factor - especially since the Province is entering Phase 3 of the recovery plan. The Mayor has reiterated that there are no staff available to clean and operate the municipal public washrooms. Anne suggested that if staff are not available, the Municipality should consider contracting out this public service. This item was also discussed under 10.b) below.

10.NEW BUSINESS

a) Federal volunteer program

Yves raised this item to indicate that the possibility exists to obtain a student to help out on items of interest to the Chamber.

b) Business Survey (street closure/DSS/issues/?)

Lisa reported that some municipalities are considering closing off portions of their streets or utilizing parking spots to assist businesses and to facilitate social distancing. This has had mixed results in various communities that initiated such closures and has led to cancellation of the initiative in Kemptville and Gananoque. Nick noted that the altered use of roads and/or parking spaces would have to have Municipal and possibly County approval and would take forever to resolve. Lisa informally canvassed some of the businesses on St. Lawrence Street and there was little appetite to support such an initiative. From a Chamber perspective the consensus was that we would not be advocating for such an initiative on St. Lawrence or Main Streets.

Yves proposed that the Chamber could undertake a short "survey" of Chamber members and local businesses on the issues of public washrooms, phase two of the DSS and any other relevant questions. There was consensus that this could prove valuable and the results could be provided to the Municipal Office and to Council. Yves offered to circulate draft survey questions and requested Board members to send him any additional questions they would like to see included.

c) The Big Spend promo (www.thebigspend.com)

Yves presented an information item for the Big Spend promotion scheduled for July 24th which encourages people to support local businesses. He offered to circulate the press release to the Board members.

11. QUESTIONS

- no questions raised

12. ADJOURNMENT/NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for August 11, 2020 at 7:00 pm by Zoom.

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Yves and seconded by Robyn - accepted. Meeting adjourned at 8:38 pm.