

## **Minutes of the Merrickville and District Chamber of Commerce**

Date: June 9, 2020

Location: On-line meeting through Zoom teleconference

Present: Yves Grandmaitre, Nick Previsich, Robyn Eagle, Lisa Card

Regrets: Anne Barr, Alessandro Giuliani

Guest: Mary Kate Lephen, Chamber Facebook Page Coordinator

Gallery: Shelbi McFarlane, Business Development Officer, United Counties of Leeds and Grenville

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:00 PM
2. Motion to approve the agenda with minor revisions was made by Nick and seconded by Robyn - passed.
3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interests - none; passed.

### **4. Approval of Minutes**

A motion to approve the minutes of the May 12, 2020 meeting was made by Robyn and seconded by Lisa - passed.

### **5. Correspondence**

No items related to correspondence were raised. However, Yves suggested that the Board invite the Gallery member - Shelbi McFarlane to provide a brief presentation/intervention on an important item as a subset of this section - approved.

#### **5a) Gallery Member**

Shelbi McFarlane is the Business Development Officer at the United County of Leeds Grenville. She briefed the Board on their efforts to support small businesses reopening in the County. The first project

mentioned was the creation of signage and other guidelines which have been endorsed by local Health Units. Further information can be found on their website at: <https://invest.leedsgrenville.com/en/contacts-news-events/covid-19.aspx>

Shelbi also spoke about the creation of a Roundtable zoom discussion involving small retail businesses in the County who could recount their successes and challenges. She invited the Chamber to identify someone who could be on a Panel - the identification of possible candidate(s) was addressed in an In-Camera discussion (Item #11). Shelbi mentioned that there is now an up-to-date list on their website of PPE suppliers that local businesses can access.

Robyn raised the important issue of signage, its funding, its availability and which level of government is responsible. She identified public washrooms as her most important issue - where they are located, how to access them and how to clean them. Shelbi responded that the goal of the Roundtable will be to hear from some businesses on how they have addressed similar washroom issues and to have their experiences possibly transfer to the Merrickville-Wolford situation. Robyn also mentioned the recent Community Stakeholder consultation that the Chamber held and identified that the Merrickville Jazz Fest organizers are initiating a survey/poll that will help them decide if they will hold the Jazz Fest in October - 2020. The results of the survey may also be of interest to the Economic Development Office. Shelbi indicated that there is a 50 member business coordination group which is comprised of various sub-committees and that it regularly shares information on challenges. Yves is our representative on this group and routinely shares information at Board meetings and through the Chamber Newsletter.

## **6. Treasurer's Report**

The report of the Treasurer was provided in advance of the meeting by e-mail by Anne and tabled at the meeting. Nick noted that while the information on "financial status" was useful and important, there was no information provided on our current liabilities.

Robyn raised questions with respect to who has been invoiced to date for membership fees and who is still outstanding; where the costs associated with the “decal” are listed in the financial status section. Yves reported that the final invoices provided by Annie de Gobeo for work on Digital Mainstreet have been received and are paid.

A motion was introduced to not accept the current Treasure’s report until additional information is provided - moved by Lisa and seconded by Nick - passed.

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **a. Membership**

There was considerable discussion on the important issue of sending out invoices for membership fees. Lisa noted that financially, people are in a real crunch and businesses have suffered. This may worsen when and if the second wave of COVID-19 infections happen (later in the fall ?). A suggestion was put forward that we suspend requesting fee payments for memberships until 2021. Nick noted that MAG has already introduced a similar system and has indicated that fees paid in 2020 will also be covered in 2021 but that new members will still be encouraged to join.

Yves expressed concern that a deferral of membership fees will have a significant impact on what the Chamber services to the membership. As it is, we only have \$5K available to support members this year and advertising (in many forms) comprises a large percentage of our annual budget to support members and local businesses. Yves also noted that to date, we have sold 12 ads in the Chamber Map and there is still space for 8 more ads.

The Board members agreed that additional discussion is needed on this important issue and a motion was made to hold a special meeting on membership fees to discuss it in more depth. It was proposed to meet via Zoom on Tuesday, June 16th at 7:00 PM - accepted unanimously.

b. Marketing:

Mary Kate reported on the status of the Chamber Facebook page: “Jewel of the Rideau” and she encouraged Board members to send her photos and items to populate the site. Yves noted that there are now eight local organizations that have “Merrickville” in their facebook titles. Mary Kate indicated that she is also trying to determine how best to use Instagram for the Chamber’s benefit.

Yves mentioned that the for the ads on the Map Brochure, single spaces were priced at \$50 and double spaces at \$95. With respect to the information provided on FanSave and the Pattison ads, it was decided to defer this discussion until after the membership fee discussion given the financial impact of these initiatives.

Yves also indicated that to date, there have been no requests to use the Chamber’s 360 digital camera to produce video snippets. There was discussion on possibly using a student to provide a video service to Chamber business members.

**8. Old Business/Action Items**

Yves, Robyn and Nick reported on the action item to hold a special Community Stakeholder zoom consultation - which took place on June 4th. It was very well attended and minutes of the meeting were produced and distributed. The Mayor and two Councillors also participated. The consultation elicited a number of very good comments and a follow-up meeting is being scheduled for early July.

Yves noted that he was unable to address the action item identified in the May 12th minutes with respect to consulting an Accountant on the issue of filing past tax returns due to time constraints.

## **9. New Business**

### a) Washrooms

Yves reported that the washrooms in The Village Bean and in Stella Luna are now open - as is the Parks Canada Lockmaster's House. Robyn heard back from a local portable toilet operator that he would make toilets available for \$165 per month with cleaning on a weekly basis.

There was discussion on the possibility of identifying on the Chamber's digital map and on the paper map the location of toilets.

On the basis of discussions, two action items were identified:

**Action Item #1: The Chamber will contact the Municipality and Council and urge the swift reopening of the two municipal public washrooms.**

**Action Item #2: To have the locations and availability of washrooms update weekly on the Chamber website and Facebook page.**

## **10. In-Camera**

### a) New Board Member

An 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 the VP. The person declined and Board members were requested to identify a suitable candidate. Yves noted that given his workload, a VP is urgently needed to assist in the work of the Chamber.

An in-camera discussion also took place on the name of a local business person to sit on a Panel for the Roundtable of local businesses in the country - per item#5. Several names were identified and consensus on one particular name which Yves will contact.

## **11. Question Period**

No questions raised.

## **12. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Robyn and seconded by Nick. The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM. The next meeting will take place on July 14th, 2020 at 7:00 PM.