

# **MINUTES OF THE MERRICKVILLE & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**SEPTEMBER 8, 2020**

**ZOOM VIDEO CONFERENCE CALL**

**PRESENT: Yves Grandmaitre, Nick Previsich, Robyn Eagle, Alessandro Giuliani, Jennifer Ritskes, Mary Kate Lephin, Anne Barr (joined later)**

**REGRETS: Lisa Card**

## **1. Call to Order**

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM

## **2. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve the agenda moved by Nick and seconded by Alessandro. Noted that the Treasurer's Report will be moved to later in the meeting to accommodate the involvement of the Treasurer - approved.

## **3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest**

None indicated.

## **4. Approval of Minutes of August 11, 2020**

Motion to approve the minutes of August 11th moved by Robyn and seconded by Jennifer - approved and carried.

## **5. Correspondence**

Yves reported that he had received correspondence in the form of an outstanding invoice related to the bench program (which was cancelled in 2019). This program was facilitated and promoted by the Chamber as an intermediary between the Alloy Foundry Co. Ltd., the Municipality and those wishing to place an order. Unfortunately, one resident has still not received his/her bench despite having paid a \$1300 deposit (in 2018). Board members suggested that Yves contact the Foundry owners by phone first

to try and resolve the matter. If unsuccessful, this should be followed up by e-mail and eventually by registered letter. The Board agreed that if the order is not able to be fulfilled by the Foundry and a refund by the Foundry is issued, the Chamber will refund its portion (\$200) to the individual.

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

Anne reported that she has not provided a written report but gave a brief update on our finances (\$9166 in savings) to date. She noted that with regard to the Canadian Revenue Agency and the need to file returns since 2011 she is trying to locate the accountant who may have filed the 2011 tax return - located in Smith's Falls.

Nick asked if the \$9166 in savings was inclusive of the \$1800 that we were to receive via the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) and the response was no. This prompted a commitment by Yves to contact the OCC to ask about the status of funds.

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **a) Membership**

Robyn noted the need for better communications with members regarding the various levels of membership and fees. She reported that the printed brochures are now available as is the printed decals (for paid-up members).

Robyn plans to continue with producing short videos of member businesses and recounted how one business was surprised but appreciative that the Chamber was taking this initiative.

Robyn and Alessandro will be getting together to discuss the process for meeting the (67 current members and the list is being updated) members regarding renewal of their membership. Yves offered to write a piece for the next edition of The Phoenix regarding membership.

### **b) Marketing**

Yves reported that the Map brochure went out last week for printing and should be ready in time for distribution by Robyn at the Marker's Market on September 12th.

Yves also mentioned the proposal from Post Media for the availability of an Advertising Grant that must be spent by the end of September. Yves suggested that we use the same advertisements that the Chamber used for the OC Transpo ads - agreed by Board members. The Board also suggested that we use four of the five suggested target cities - these are: Ottawa, Brockville, Gananoque and Kingston.

Another opportunity identified by Yves were grants related to the use of social media and a brief discussion ensued regarding a cost sharing arrangement with local members businesses. Yves will request a more detailed proposal that outlines the costs of such an opportunity to maximize the effectiveness of using social media to promote businesses.

With respect to the need to update the Chamber website, a discussion with Janet of Mejan Graphics will take place when she is available post mid September.

Yves reported that he has been contacted by Le Boat regarding an upcoming visit by four representatives from Powerboat TV on Monday - September 14th. The Mayor is likely to meet them as will Yves. Yves mentioned that Powerboat TV has three million viewers in Canada and this represents a great marketing opportunity for our businesses. Robyn and Yves will work on a message to members and also solicit items for gift (loot) bags of local products.

Mary Kate indicated that opportunities exist to enhance advertising for events or businesses through the Jewel of the Rideau Facebook page with a modest charge. Nick agreed that this could be a very cost effective marketing tool and indicated that MAG has used it to elevate the public's knowledge about upcoming art events.

Yves suggested a "trivia question" section for insertion in The Phoenix to keep local interest in business activities.

## **8. Old Business / Action Items**

Yves indicated that local businesses have been reporting that business has been very good this summer. Yves would like to recast some of the questions in the survey to reflect more strategic and long-term issues of concern to our members. This suggestion was agreed to by the Board members.

On the issue of the Digital Main Street initiative, it was noted that the Municipality is actively encouraging local businesses to sign up. Nick noted that this was a bit confusing since the Chamber had a major Digital Main Street initiative earlier this year and it may appear that there is some duplication of effort. The Board decided to wait and see if any new or existing businesses sign up over and above those that the Chamber facilitated previously.

With respect to the letter received from Cardinal Law for "Corporate Records Organization" quoting \$3,170 plus HST and an annual update fee of \$400 plus HST, there was surprise that this had not been flagged earlier. Nick questioned the need for this activity and expressed concern about the unanticipated impact on our annual budget. He mentioned the relatively simple and inexpensive process used by MOCA to incorporate as a non-profit organization and the simple annual updates. The Board members suggested that further questions should be directed to Cardinal Law on the

need for this activity, what the alternatives are and the impact of not updating the information.

## **9. New Business**

Yves reminded the Board members that we need to begin organizing how we will structure our next AGM (possibly in mid December) and that two seats will need to be filled. Yves proposed that we discuss further at our next regularly scheduled meeting.

Robyn asked about the status of plans for holding the next Stakeholders Zoom meeting. Nick questioned the need for such a meeting given that many of the issues raised at the previous two meetings have been addressed. He suggested that a future meeting be deferred to the new year. Yves suggested that a question to that effect could be added in the survey.

Robyn raised the possibility of having a small scale after 5 PM event for October - a meet and greet for the Board Members and our businesses.

Yves cautioned that there have been a number of recent rumors that some local businesses are closing - which have been inaccurate. He asked that if Board members hear similar accounts that we should try and verify the source(s) of the misinformation.

Nick reported that MAG will be launching its Virtual Studio Tour involving 24 artists on October 3/4th using a professionally produced video platform. Nick also mentioned that he is working with another antique dealer to hold a small antique show on October 25th at The Knox.

## **10. Question Period**

No questions raised.

## **11. Adjournment / Next Meeting**

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 PM. The next meeting will take place on October 13th at 7:00 PM. Motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Robyn and seconded by Alessandro - carried.