

# MINUTES OF THE MERRICKVILLE & DISTRICT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

November 10, 2020 - Merrickville-Wolford Public Library

Present: Yves Grandmaitre, Nick Previsich, Robyn Eagle, Alessandro Giuliani (via Zoom), Jennifer Ritskes, Mary Kate Lephin, Lisa Card, Anne Barr

## 1. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 7:04 PM.

## 2. Approval of Agenda

Robyn requested the addition of an item related to the Newsletter. Alessandro requested a discussion on signage for businesses off of St. Lawrence St.. Yves proposed removal of the need for an In-Camera session. Approval of the amended Agenda was moved by Nick and seconded by Lisa - carried.

## 3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

None indicated.

## 4. Approval of Minutes (October 13, 2020)

Moved by Lisa and seconded by Nick with one slight amendment (to include reference to the attendance of Lisa Card) - carried.

## 5. Correspondence

Yves reported on the situation involving the previous Chamber Board's with respect to the Bench Program. A letter was received from the bench supplier and clarified that the portion of the deposit they received has been reimbursed to the resident. As such, the Board has agreed to refund the \$200 Chamber portion of the deposit as part of the Program. The following motion was moved by Anne and seconded by Lisa: **Moved that the Chamber will reimburse the \$200 deposit for the cancelled Bench Program.** - Passed.

The Lions Club, member of the Chamber, contacted Yves inquiring as to the possibility of affixing Lions logo/signage on to the Chamber entrance signs. Historically these were on Municipal signs and for some unknown reason are now no longer there. Robyn suggested that the Chamber could take an advocacy role by co authoring a

letter to the Council/Municipality asking that the Municipality to consider offering service groups and volunteer/event groups to post signs/logos on Municipal entrance signs, as was done years ago, which would showcase the vibrancy of the Village through the variety of groups. Yves offered to work with the President of the Lions Club on such a letter - agreed by all. Pending the reply from the Municipality, this request may be revisited.

Nick and Yves spoke about a recent request that they received from the organizers of the Rideau Bridge to Canada to help support the arrival of the second Syrian family (the Al Abouds) in Merrickville-Wolford. Nick sent a request to MAG artists to donate a piece of art to be auctioned off by Rideau Auctions in Winchester and to date commitments have been made by 24 artists. Yves requested approval to approach the membership asking for donations of products or services that could also be auctioned off at the same event. Board members unanimously agreed. Nick and Yves will work together to write an article for the Phoenix describing this collaboration.

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

Anne reported that she has not been able to table a written report at this time. However, she did note that as of the end of October there is \$9887 in the bank account. She also mentioned that she anticipated receiving some membership fee revenues from new members but that there are also some outstanding revenue from invoices yet to be paid for the advertising related to the Map project.

Jennifer provided an update with respect to obtaining a quote for the filing of the Chamber's annual taxes for the past several years. The quote received was for \$4250. Nick noted that this will amount to app. half of current resources as members will not be paying for membership fees in 2021 if they already paid in 2020. Ultimately the Directors have a responsibility to ensure that all filings are done and the Board does not wish to leave this item linger longer as CRA have flagged the issue. In addition this is a required step before updates to the Letters Patent can occur. This may have a significant impact on the Chamber's ability to undertake programming in 2021. The following motion was proposed by Jennifer and seconded by Lisa: **Moved that the Chamber approve contracting the services of Henry Warren - LLP, to complete the filing of the Chamber's back taxes from 2012 to 2019.** Passed

## **7. Committee Reports**

### **a) Membership**

Robyn raised the need to have a structured process in place for soliciting memberships and for acknowledging when new members join. She offered to draft a policy on this issue for input by the other Board members. Yves noted that since there is no Chamber policy book as such that information/template might be obtained from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Robyn also suggested that names of the 2020 Chamber

members be posted on the Chamber's website and Facebook page. Robyn also reminded members that at the informal meeting held at her residence app. 2 months previously a number of action items were identified. She offered to post them to the shared drive for comments from the Board members.

#### b) Marketing

Robyn identified the need for a marketing strategy that focused on shopping locally. Board members agreed and suggested the development of a sub-committee to begin drafting a strategy. Robyn will chat with Mary Kate and begin the draft and other Board members can join if available. Jennifer also raised the need for a communication strategy but no direct action was proposed at this time.

Jennifer reported that work is proceeding quickly on the revamping of the Chamber's website by Kindred Social. She has passed on the comments received to date by Board members and will send out the latest draft for any additional comments. A clear process is needed to any updates and changes to the website. Janet Watson will remain the point of contact for posting the minutes and agendas of the Chamber's meetings.

Yves noted that we have a credit of app. \$300 with Moose FM. He proposed that we use the credit to promote Christmas in Merrickville which will be a two day event - December 5th and 6th, - agreed. Businesses will be asked to stay open until 7 PM and one of the key initiatives will be "Building a Mountain of Food" for the Christmas hampers. In addition, Robyn has offered to install her angels and Jennifer and Lisa have offered to help with the decorations. Yves will be responsible for decorations on the bridge, trees in the Cenotaph park and on the Chamber posts. Nick offered to assist Yves with these decorations.

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

With respect to the posting of the Chamber's Newsletter, Janet Watson will oversee posting the Newsletter for public and Robyn agreed to post the Newsletter to Chamber members.

Yves tabled the four responses to the recent survey. While the number of responses fell far short of what was hoped for, the comments made were appreciated.

Yves presented the draft agenda for the Chamber's Zoom based AGM on December 8th which was approved by the Board members. He noted that the first half of the AGM will be devoted to reports, updates, nominations and election of the Directors, the second half will be the Board meeting to elect the Executive.

Nick suggested that each member should receive an e-mail inviting them to the Zoom AGM as well as advertising it in the Newsletter on Facebook and on the Chamber

website. The suggestion was made to have a pre-meeting of the Directors on December 1st to review the agenda and discuss the process.

The status of the Corner map was discussed and the letter from CAO Doug Robertson was also raised in relation to the map. Yves has asked a local expert on AODA requirements in response to the letter. Yves will draft a reply to the CAO based on the information provided.

With respect to the Chamber's request for a liaison from the Council, Yves reported that the recording of the Council meeting indicates that Council has asked for an opinion from staff. The liaison may be from Council or from the Municipal Office.

## **9. New Business**

Alessandro had sent an e-mail to the Board members prior to the meeting suggesting the need for signage on streets other than St. Lawrence St. This will help meet the needs of businesses who are located on Main St. or the other streets intersecting St. Lawrence St.

Signage has been an ongoing Bylaw issue and Alessandro indicated that there may be a need to challenge the existing Bylaw. Yves suggested that the Sub-committee on a Marketing Strategy that Robyn proposed could look at this matter in its first meeting. Robyn and Alessandro agreed to discuss the matter further. Robyn requested that the signage Bylaw or any related information be downloaded to the Shared Drive.

Alessandro also raised the recent issue of the vandalization of equipment and graffiti on equipment owned by Jonah Robinson while construction was taking place on the new corner square. The Board members unanimously condemned the actions of the perpetrators and asked Yves to draft a letter of support from the Chamber to Jonah Robinson.

## **10. Question Period**

Ann asked if the Board members wished to continue with the practice of adding the \$10 for membership in the Ontario Chamber of Commerce (OCC) in the invoices that she is sending out as part of the new membership fees. The decision to continue this practice was deferred to a future meeting.

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

The meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM. The next meeting will take place on December 1st at 7 PM and focus on preparations for the AGM on December 8, 2020.