

Merrickville-Wolford and District Chamber of Commerce
Board of Directors Meeting Minutes May 11th, 2021

In Attendance: Robyn Eagle, Yves Grandmaitre, Jennifer Ritskes, Nick Previsich, Robyn Fredrickson, Bob Foster, Mary-Kate Laphen

Meeting called to order at 7:02 pm

1. Approval of Agenda:
 - a. Nick motions to approve, Yves seconds.
2. No pecuniary interests declared.
3. Approval of Minutes of April 13, 2021 meeting:
 - a. Nick motions to approve, Robyn F seconds.
4. Business Actions Items:
 - a. Map Update
 - i. Jennifer reports all 20 ad spaces purchased and paid. Map is currently in for printing and should be completed in 5-8 days. Jennifer has documented a process for the map process and has been added to the share drive.
 - ii. Yves requested how much the map will net in profit. Jennifer reports the cost of printing is \$1135.65, the income from advertising is \$2500 therefore net \$1364.35 with Janet's bill for design still outstanding.
 - iii. Yves suggested **Robyn E reach out to Pamela from Brockville to discuss distribution of maps/rack cards** and to keep an eye out for emails from other distribution groups.
5. Council Liaison:
 - a. Post office signage usage by Chamber decision was deferred at last council meeting. After further discussion, the proposal will be made and voted on at next council meeting that Chamber has use of 2/3 of the street facing sign and 1/3 will be used by the municipality to communicate community interests/events.
 - b. No information yet to sign for parkette. **Bob to email when further information is received.**
 - c. Community Grant status. Bob reports that no information has been provided to council members from staff. Nick highlights that the deadline for submission was April 16th and that is was due for discussion at the May 10th council meeting.
 - d. Bob reports 0% tax increase for 2021 and that reserve fund contributions have increased, and the debt ratio has decreased.
 - e. Robyn F asks about the municipality's plan for the approx. \$186k in budget assigned to economic development. Also noted by Robyn F and Yves, is municipal programs to support local business in Smiths Falls and North Grenville.
 - f. Bob confirms Stacey Lloyd is still working at the municipality and Doug Robertson would still be the best contact.

- g. Robyn E highlights the desire of the Chamber to work in collaboration with the municipality in general and more specifically with a re-opening strategy following lock down.
 - h. **Bob to inquire as to plan for expenditure of economic development funds and possibility of collaboration for a Merrickville re-opening strategy for the summer season.**
- 6. No Correspondence
- 7. Treasurer's Report:
 - a. Jennifer reports a current bank balance of \$14879.79. No new expenses other than map printing. Still working with accountant and CRA in order to complete tax returns however taking additional time due to covid restrictions. Still looking for someone to fill the Treasurer position.
 - b. Note: Official Treasurer's report not available at this time due to time constraints however it is noted that there are still anticipated expenses for CRA submissions (accountant and bank) and insurance of approx. \$10 000.
- 8. New Business:
 - a. Edible Ottawa magazine May edition will have a Merrickville page as enough local businesses purchased ad space. Robyn F recommends we consider co-operative advertising for fall edition.
 - b. Chamber to Chamber has held 3 meeting so far with Merrickville, Brockville and North Dundas each hosting. Common themes/issues have been identified. A collective letter to the CTC will be sent to discuss the limitations of rural broadband access. It was also discussed that local groups felt that the OCC program for covid rapid antigen tests were out of the scope of what should be managed by the Chamber (reporting, hazardous, etc.). **Robyn E to send an email to the Health Center to see if it is a program better managed by them.** Yves reminded about the requirement of businesses to have a Covid Safety Plan and to follow protocols as inspectors are out and issuing fines. **Robyn F to post Safety Plan information in the FB Group.**
 - c. Chamber board member recruitment – it was suggested to compile a list of local business sectors and specifically approach people. Yves to email a list of sectors in order start building a list of possible people to approach regarding becoming a board member.
 - d. Reminder by Robyn E to continually update the game plan and annual work documents in the share drive.
 - e. Nick brings up concerns about the means available to address the public with the possibility of the NG Times removing the Merrickville section and the Phoenix only publishing every 2 months. **Robyn E to reach out the NG Times regarding the plans for the Merrickville page.** We anticipate that the Phoenix will resume a more regular publishing schedule in as businesses and events resume and our focus should be on our local publication.
- 9. Committee Reports:
 - a. Membership: Yves reports updated membership list should be posted by the end of the week. Alessandro is still available to assist with the membership list. Will need some collaboration to update the mailchimp lists however they were updated a few months ago. Membership flow system has been established. Jennifer reminds for the need to complete the application form for the

membership. **Robyn F and Yves to look into where the electronic form is sent to ensure it is in the process.**

- b. Marketing & Promotion: Waiting on community grant request to move forward with bulk bag ordering. Focusing on social media for advertising and using ads to expand reach. Robyn F motions to allocate \$250 to spend on social media advertising in 2021. Seconded by Jennifer, all in favour. Jennifer inquires as to the possibility to promote specific businesses in paid posts...Robyn F to look into it.
- c. Communication:
 - i. New format for the website is almost complete and will be able to begin filling in the details for the general pages and business feature pages soon. Overall good feedback and will be able to tell more as the information is added. Still waiting on photos from John Chambers and will need to get some additional information from members. Yves asks about the possibility of banner ads for the future.
 - ii. Merrickville Minute quarterly newsletter created to send to website subscribers and posted on FB Page. Other communications to FB Group (businesses) and Merrickville Phoenix (no May edition) and FB Page and Instagram (public).
- d. Partnerships:
 - i. Looking at combining the event organizers and service clubs and hosting a zoom call within the next few weeks to discuss plans for this year. Nick reinforces how important events are to many local businesses.
 - ii. MOCA has plans for an event Aug 28/29th and highlights the importance of hearing back from council re. community grant in a timely fashion to ensure there is enough time to plan for the event.
 - iii. Robyn E asks what the municipal plans are for Canada Day festivities. Bob confirms that fireworks are on the budget for 2021. **Bob to inquire and provide update on Canada Day festivities.**

10. Question Period

11. Next meeting scheduled for June 8, 2021 at 7:00 pm. Robyn E motion to adjourn meeting at 8:35 pm.