

## **Bridgewater Area Chamber of Commerce July 9, 2021**

**Attending:** Leitha, Stacey, Jayme, Rae, Cheryl, Brooke, Mark Powell, Blair, Dan, Bruce

**Regrets:** Josh, Jim, Shawn, Debra

**Call to order at 8:37**

**Additions to agenda:** none

**Correspondence:** none

**Approval of the minutes:** - no minutes! Technical difficulties :)

### **Mark Powell - Town of Bridgewater - Chamber Chat**

**Passport to Taste** - Downtown Bridgewater, both sides of the river. 13 restaurants have signed up. Go out to eat, get three stickers from participating restaurants, hand it back in to the Town office, win \$100 to eat at any of these restaurants. Promoted by South Shore Breaker, CKBW, etc. Excellent response from restaurants. Should be 20 participants as the campaign rolls out.

BACC has contributed \$300 towards this.

A specific **Business Improvement Area** approved by council (Business improvement association). One is Zone 1 - downtown, Zone 2 Along Aberdeen to Town limit, and also along Dufferin to Town limit. Set up by and run by businesses in the area. May have someone from the Town represented on the board, but very much arm's length.

Council passed a resolution around a business improvement area - as a non profit - any funding mechanisms would have to be approved by council and voted on by members. Approx 20 business owners interested in participating, asked them to keep the commitment small 2-4 hours a month to see how far they can get. Met with them all individually once, and plan to create a steering committee in the next few weeks. What needs to be addressed to make this successful? All baby steps - but direct and ongoing consultation with businesses - town will be supportive, but it's of/for/by the businesses.

### **Discussion:**

Bruce: What is the Goal? Goal is to strengthen and diversify the business community. Evidence out of Ontario shows there is plenty of benefits - increase in businesses, foot traffic, employee retention, increase in taxes collected, etc. Would be good to have those goals and objectives up front and clearly defined to ensure progress and success.

Stacey: How is it going to be funded? A budget must established in terms of the charter of the group, the activities from those goals, perhaps it will be project based? Could come from grants or sponsorship. Maybe a membership fee. Maybe an area rate for commercial property owners, potentially matching funding from the Town. Start with the budget and potential projects FIRST and then look at funding opportunities.

**Facade Improvement Program:** It has been very successful, running for a few years, over \$200k in projects have been done, \$100k rebated from the town back to participating businesses. Businesses see a REAL uptick in business from facade improvement. Provincial Program - AccessAbility -has now been mentioned in the facade program. Energy Efficiency comes in with new windows/lighting etc so Efficiency NS is also mentioned in the design manual. Synergy. The program itself hasn't changed. The program has started again as of April. By next week expect up to 6 more applicants. The challenge has always been the shortage of trades people - so Mark contacted the local building supplies companies - he passes along the names of the businesses and they work with contractors to ensure the work is done. There is also an events kit - see how well it works for an event that is happening this fall - using the facade improvement program idea for an events program - encourage businesses to work together to put on events supported by the town, using the events kit to ensure the event is consistent - perhaps could have some funding from the Town - very much a pilot project.

## **REPORTS:**

**Education** - no update. Schedule full for this year, starting to book for Lunch and Learn programs next year. The three part series with Paul Pickering hasn't had much uptake - so needs a push of promotion.

**Government Involvement** - no report at this time

**CME** - Subcommittee of the CME - Something big in the works! Rae, Josh and Brian Geddes. Putting together a social media plan. We had agreed to go ahead with Hoot Suite. The purpose of this is to have scheduled 2 posts a week. One is to showcase a member - this is a great company, here is a small story about them. That will happen over ten weeks. The second post would be something about the benefit of being a member (eg loyalty program, gas discount, staples discount, etc) - something quick and straightforward. Want to encourage people who are members to be part of our committees.

Also should be a member card, maybe with a QR Code - would need a programmer to do it and set it up with a card, but it's not hard or complicated. Repetition breeds recognition. Also consistent messaging going out from one location. Ensures that our message is clear, concise, and coming from the chamber, not individuals. Also have members submit video - short video - funny or otherwise - the winner would get a final edited video to promote their business. This is a benefit of membership! (eg lunch and learn, education - these are available to everyone). We're going to need some insight on the technicalities of how these benefits work. Right now - putting together a list of what we're going to do for those ten posts, and working on the ten member highlights.

Note - Brian Geddes has really jumped onboard and gotten involved. A great volunteer. Stacey mentioned that Again - there is a need to have more volunteers/engaged members. Maybe give a benefit back to a member if they are volunteering and involved - maybe one year free membership if they are committing to 5 hours a week etc... something like that.

**Nominations** - no update

**Financial** - copy of financials was circulated. No questions, they are self explanatory.

**Executive Governance** - no report

**Executive Director** - Still working with TD to get direct e-transfer payments without passwords. Two payments have come in that we can't decipher who sent them - BUT - money is coming in. Membership is coming in. Online programs are ongoing, new ideas for new sessions in August or September. A good start. Online programs are bringing in new members - they can see the benefits!  
There have been a few membership cancellations.

**Cheryl TOB** - Thanks the chamber for sponsoring the Public Transit - 100 000th rider - approx \$600 contributed by the BACC. Lots of activity with the town and development. King St and Maple Street housing development. All affordable housing! Excellent news!  
Recent motion to change the name of Cornwallis Street. Need to revise their street naming policy.  
Recreation programs moving ahead.

**Leitha - MODL2040 Visioning update.** Paving continues on Harold Whynot Road. Excited to hear about affordable housing and hopeful MODL can make some announcements in the near future.

**Rae** - what about those live Mayoral updates? We would love to see that happen again. Create set dates again. Put this on the next agenda - touch base with Mayor Mitchell and Mayor Bolivar Getson - would be great to set these dates.

**Discussion:** Passport event is only for the Town of Bridgewater? Some feedback from Rodney at Best Western and 27 South. We are only supporting the restaurants in Bridgewater. Could there be a corresponding initiative within MODL? Could we tie in Mark Strickland into this? Maybe the TWO Ec Dev'T officers should get together and create a program that encompasses the Town and MODL...  
Once again highlights the need for Municipal units to work together. The elephant in the room! Who is going to take the next step to get the two units to work together? So many reasons why the Town and MODL could work together on these initiatives. Could the BACC facilitate this? BUT keep in mind - we are a SPONSOR - we aren't putting on these events, we are supporters.

#### **Old Business:**

Chamber Strategic Planning - pending  
Orange Shirt Initiative - pending  
Bridgew The Gap Campaign - no update - Josh was working on this ... hope for update next meeting.  
Graduate Ad - ran an ad congratulating 2021 graduates  
Bus Sponsorship - excellent.

#### **New Business**

Matt Heffler? Spelling. Press Secretary. Premier's Event- Waiting to firm up a date. BUT got a message about maybe taking a different approach.. Dan speaking to Matt this morning - will find out what they're going to suggest.

**Reopening Plan** - We are doing the \$50 promo which we need to accelerate (only half of the \$50 have been called for... businesses are just on edge right now)... how do we help the reopening.

**Bruce** - Post Covid, working with the Town and MODL - we should get into looking at a work force study/labour market study - large employers are looking at affordable housing but also AFFORDABLE DAYCARE!!!! Yes. We need to look at all market segments and see where we can advocate. Transit plays into this as well. An expanded transit service will impact the economic growth. Again - the need for MODL/TOB to work together. Labour force issues - people are intimidated by immigration programs etc. People want to support or local economy... We need to provide the feedback to Government that our growth will be stunted if we don't address this. Daycare is a huge puzzle piece. We should be lobbying on this.

Do we want to jump into anything large this summer? We are doing things... \$50 cards, promotion, providing info to assist businesses... so maybe this is the soft launch of a bigger opportunity down the road. What everyone is really missing is the networking opportunities... maybe in September/October we could hold some kind of outdoor networking event? BBQ in a park? Just a chance to do something normal and IN PERSON to provide an opportunity to network. And maybe a network event specifically targeting women in the workforce to increase awareness of opportunities... but has to be lined up around a daycare option... But this is an important observation that we shouldn't lose sight of. Reopening - should wait a little longer until we have solid vaccine numbers and get the go ahead from the province...

MODL should request a labour market study - Specifically daycare, housing - so **Leitha will raise this.**

Should be a sub committee to discuss what should be addressed in a labour market study. Should have clear objectives for this sub committee so it has a clear end. **(sounded like Bruce was taking the lead on this).**

Adjourned: 10am

Next meeting August 13th at 8:30

Submitted with errors and omissions and editorializing by Leitha Haysom