

Bridgetown Area Chamber of Commerce General Meeting March 20, 2014

Attendance: Chair Neil Cook, Clark Morris, Gerry Bezanson, Janice Gattie, Mayor Hurlburt, Rita Hurlburt, Mike Gushue, Gary Olsvik, Diane Elliott, Norm Hamelin, Jennifer D'Aubin, Jason Rice, Kirk Lycett, Tracy Forbes
Guest Speaker Anne Crossman

Meeting called to order at 8:00 am by Chair Neil Cook with a welcome to all.

Minutes of January 2014 meeting were read and approved (no meeting in February due to weather)

Business arising: Membership was dismal for January and February, with only \$1030 received in fees to date. Several notices have been sent out with little response. The website will soon be completed to allow members to pay online. Mike advised he spoke with the owner of Bridgetown Motel and she asked what is the plan of the Chamber, what do we do? Discussion on this will be held next meeting. Tracy advised she will help with member calling, including past, present, and possible future members.

Finance:

Operating balance is \$6221.00

Community Fund balance - \$35.14

New Business-

Tourism:

Destination South West Nova has been dissolved and Nova Scotia Tourism Assoc. will take over until more permanent solution can be found, therefore funding for the VIC has not yet been approved. Judy Rafuse, NSTA will be co-ordinating until permanent positions are resolved. Jennifer D'Aubin will attend meeting with Judy next week to gather information. We may be dealing with provincial people in the future.

Guest Speaker Anne Crossman:

The Annapolis Future Forum group was formed in August 2012 to study the future of Annapolis County communities, with a focus on amalgamation, hoping to be the authors of change for future development. Anne advised that things cannot remain the same and that proper studies should be done, providing much needed information on our region and its future.

Conversations with Towns such as Antigonish on their past experience would be a great asset as they could advise what should and should not be done. Currently there are too many elected officials for our county population and the County is not willing to discuss this issue or listen to recommendations.

The BACC should look further at information provided by the AVCC on the Kings Group going forward with possible amalgamation. Experts from the Province are also available to help with these discussions. Mr. Fleury, transition co-ordinator has been visiting municipalities offering advice on how to move forward.

From the Town

Mike asked if Bridgetown were to dissolve would we then have Village Status. Mayor Hurlburt advised that Bridgetown would apply to URB for dissolution which would include a year-long review. Tax structure should remain within Town limits. Our debt load from past does not disappear, we are still responsible for this. Decisions have to be made based on facts, not emotions.

Mayor Hurlburt and Anne will be interviewed on CBC Radio, with topics such as fiscal budget, future governance. A positive outlook will be presented.

CAO Rachel Turner will be leaving March 27, 2014.

Next council meeting will be at the Fire Hall, allowing Forum for citizens to bring forward ideas on progression of the Town.

P-12 school, three sites have been selected and will be presented to School Board meeting in April.

A formal agreement on the REN will be signed today with Bridgetown as part of the signing agreement.

Annapolis County partnership committee will sign protocol on multiple levels of governance and shared services. The County does not have a contract with Kings Transit, information on rider data is still being gathered.

Neil asked if the BACC should facilitate conversation with businesses in Town, regarding options available and what are the implications if the Town is dissolved.

We must have a goal, with a clear message to present and engage citizens in discussion . The BACC should have active in publicising the issue of dissolution. Neil will lead a committee on this.

Winterfest was a huge success, with 150 runners taking part in the 5K run. Very positive response from all businesses offering merchandise.

Jennifer asked if the BACC offers professional development as she is involved in workshops for businesses. She would offer to BACC members at cost.

Meeting adjourned at 9:00 am
Next meeting April 17, 2014