



Call to Order

An Executive Meeting of Strathroy's BIA was held on **Wednesday, December 9th, 8am** at the Strathroy Seniors' Centre. It was officially called to order at 8:00am, presided over by Past Chair Dave Brock, with General Manager Raegan Harding as secretary.

Attendees

Voting members in attendance included Dave Brock, Brad Richards, Chris Traczuk, Demetri Makrakos, and Robin Tiller. Regrets were sent by Sue Looman.

Approval of Minutes

Motion 20-12-01 was made by Demetri to amend the Business Advocacy portion of the November 9th Executive meeting. Chris seconded. All in favour. Carried.

Motion 20-12-02 was made by Chris to accept the amended minutes of November 9th Executive meeting. Robin seconded. All in favour. Carried.

Actions/Main Motions

- In-Camera session

Motion 20-12-03 was made by Dave to go in camera to discuss financial and personnel matters. Brad seconded. All in favour. Carried.

Motion 20-12-04 was made by Demetri to go out of camera. Chris seconded. All in favour. Carried.

The Past-Chair reported that an in-camera session will need to be held by the new Board, in 2021, to address many of the issues brought up here.

- Dickens Dollars discussion and update

It was noted that close to \$60K worth of Dickens Dollars have sold thus far, with the Municipality reporting \$35K and Mainstreet reporting almost \$24K in sales. It was also noted that Mainstreet has opened a separate account to manage the Dickens Dollars, and that the Municipality should transfer those funds from sales over to the BIA before the end of 2020.

There was some discussion of Dickens Dollars and the potential for them to be misused in being purchased fraudulently, for personal financial gain. It was noted that the program will be shut down immediately if there is any evidence of members abusing this privilege, and subsequent action would also be taken as the program was not rolled out to line the pockets of any particular BIA member(s). It was also suggested that the purchase of Dickens Dollars is limited to those over the age of 18yrs.

The Board would like to remind members that the scope of the Dickens Dollars promotion was to supplement the Victorian Christmas event, showcasing our downtown as a shopping destination and increasing sales at our pandemic-affected, independent, local and family-operated small businesses.

- General Manager and office space

Dave noted that Raegan had submitted a letter on November 30th indicating that she will not be signing the proposed Independent Contractor Agreement for the next term, set to begin January 1st, 2021. Raegan will continue to provide services, as per the existing Agreement, until the end of December 2020. It was also noted that, in the future, the General Manager's term should be offset, or staggered, with the BIA Board's term in the interest of continuity. It was suggested that perhaps the new BIA Board, to be appointed in a few weeks, should be the ones to decide what the next steps are regarding the General Manger position, but there were some opposing viewpoints in regards to that.

Motion 20-12-05 was made by Brad to advertise for the BIA General Manager position as soon as possible. Chris seconded. All in favour. Carried.

There was some discussion about the hiring and training process, and Raegan was asked if she might be available to participate in both. She noted that full-time work, the holidays, and the pandemic will make in-person hiring practices and training procedures prohibitive, but she is certainly available to answer any concerns or questions anyone might have.

Dave noted that the Seniors' Centre will be closing as of December 31st, 2020 and suggested that BIA Board meetings may have to take place off-site, via Zoom, for the time being. Chris has offered up his space at the Rusty Wrench for Board meetings, stating that physical distancing is easily accomplished there. Dave also noted that he has not yet collected the 2020 rental fee for the BIA office space and will be sending that invoice out very soon, which is usually \$100/month.

- Budget 2021

It was suggested that a new line is added in Beautification for Caradoc Street banners and planters. It was also suggested that Hometown Hockey and Wellness Wednesday lines are removed from the existing BIA ledger. Dave noted that the 2021 budget will ultimately be set by the new Board. Raegan noted that she had eSolutions set up a separate email so that the BIA can accept electronic funds, so payments@downtownstrathroy.ca has been added to the BIA's web services and this email will forward to: downtownstrathroy@gmail.com, as info@downtownstrathroy.ca already does. It was also noted that this email will need to be changed in Mainstreet account settings (note: login required)

Officers' Reports

Treasurer's Report

Dave noted that the BIA account balance sits at \$70,333.28, noting that \$22,503 of that is in the Operating and \$33,826 is from Reserves (the \$13,540 surplus is from Dickens Dollars sales, which will be paid back to BIA businesses in the coming months)

Motion **20-12-06** was made by Dave to accept the BIA financial statement as presented. Brad seconded. All in favour. Carried.

Communications

There was a meeting held on November 18th and whether or not we should consider print advertising to promote Dickens Dollars was discussed, as we've traditionally advertised the Victorian Christmas event with the Banner, Daytripping, The Gazette Transcript & Free Press and The Standard Guide Advocate. The general consensus was that the Dollars are selling well and there's no need to fund additional ways to advertise at this time. There was also some discussion of adding a BIA Twitter account to our social media outlets. The upcoming meeting has been communicated on Facebook.

Beautification report

Rob Lilbourne has reached out to Raegan to discuss the six (6) new poles that have been put up along Caradoc Street, noting that the town has put up three (3) municipal banners and there are currently three (3) Happy Holidays banners on poles that have been offered for the BIA's use. Rob has proposed the occasional use of these poles for non-profits and service-oriented groups to promote events, but does not think it would be a good idea to use them as an advertising venue for independent businesses that operate for profit.

Rob plans to develop a banner program which would be presented to Strathroy-Caradoc's Community Development Advisory Committee (CDAC) for opinion. In the meantime, Raegan proposed the purchase of three (3) 24" x 48" blue and green "Shop Local" banners for these Caradoc Street poles, noting that these were ordered back in 2017 from Signs and Designs, at a cost of approximately \$120ea. These will be ordered before the end of the month.

It was suggested that the BIA look into the possibility of offering our BIA businesses the opportunity to sponsor one of the Caradoc Street planter boxes, noting that the sponsored box would have a visible recognition plaque mounted somewhere on the planter itself. This would be a great program, operating in lieu of the ad space we used to have at the corner sign at Caradoc & Front Streets, which was removed during construction this past summer. It would also augment the BIA's budget for flowers, etc. Raegan noted that watering and weeding considerations have to be discussed with town, adding that we do pay a fair amount into the annual Horticultural Maintenance program (\$15K/year)

Promotions report

Chris reported that the merchant-driven event, Dickens' Downtown Days, ran successfully last weekend on Friday December 4th and Saturday December 5th. He says businesses were busy and that people seemed to be shopping a lot (i.e., carrying lots of bags, etc.)

It was suggested that a Promotions meeting should be held in January.

General Manager's report

Raegan noted that the 2021 myFM coupon book, which the BIA buys every year, is now available for sale, valued at over \$2,500 and costing only about \$275. This promotion offers lots of free ads, as well as the on-location Victorian Christmas 2hr "remote" which is valued at over \$1,500. Raegan also noted that the 2021 Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) membership fees will be due soon, should the new Board decide to renew, adding that the OBIAA newsletter has been very informative throughout the course of the pandemic. OBIAA membership benefits include guidance and support, including best practices, members' assistance and many other valuable resources, and costs about \$250/year.

It was also noted that Back Alley Burrito has already expressed interest in taking part in a Your Town Rising "Makeover on Shoestring Budget" should the BIA choose to run another promotion in the springtime.

Raegan noted that Demetri's a great resource who seems to have a very good handle on the GM role and she will ensure that Demetri's updated on the CTV account, as well as outstanding patio fees, etc. She has also been deliberately including as much info as possible in the minutes over the past few months, and encourages the new Board to refer back to them as much as possible.

Business Advocacy

Demetri noted that the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc has partnered with TechAlliance, Middlesex County Tourism, and EXAR Studios to launch The Most Local Time of the Year, an interactive, augmented reality community collaboration project, kicking off on Thursday, December 10th and running throughout the new year. Interested participants are invited to download Engage for free through the App Store or Google Play.

Demetri also noted that he will ensure that minutes from the BIA's 2020 meetings are populated to the town's website as they should have been throughout the year. He will make sure it's on Council's Agenda for discussion at the December 21st meeting.

Other:

It was noted that the scope of the 2021 Downtown Market should be considered as soon as decisions are made, since this decision affects our BIA merchants. Dave suggested that, given pandemic progression, it will likely be the same as last year, in a controlled lot. It was suggested that the Seniors' Centre lot might be a better venue for the reduced footprint, with just one entrance/exit point.

Next Meeting(s)

- Communications: Weds, December 16th 2020 9am
- Executive Meeting: Weds, January 13th 2021 (time?)

Adjournment

Secretary: _____ Date of Approval: _____