THE CHAMBER.
GREATER VICTORIA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Chamber Board Meeting Minutes

September 24, 2024 | 7:00 -9:30am

Attended: Christina Clarke, Dean Clarke, Deborah Huelscher, Frumsa Ibrahim, James Gatsi, Jessica Stigant Josue Dubon, Judith Ethier, Captain (Navy) Kevin Whiteside, Kris Wirk, Richard Michaels, Bruce Williams, Ashley McCartie (staff), Julia Banks (staff)
Regrets: Ann Squires-Ferguson, Rose Arsenault, Pedro Marquez

We gathered in the ancestral lands of the Ləkwungen speaking peoples who have been the stewards of these lands for thousands of years.

Motion to approve the agenda with the addition of a discussion around our top 5 BC Election priorities and an update on the Ports Conference to the CEO Report.
MOVED by Kevin Whiteside SECONDED by Deb Huelscher CARRIED

Motion to approve the minutes from the previous Board meeting.
MOVED by Judith Ethier SECONDED by Dean Clarke CARRIED

Motion to move in camera.
MOVED by Christina Clarke SECONDED Josue Dubon CARRIED

Motion to move out of in camera.
MOVED James Gatsi SECONDED Kevin Whiteside CARRIED

Chair's Report

a. Board election is underway. Please encourage members to submit their votes for their organizations. Cumulative turnout is 254 of 1256 (20.2%))
b. Out of awareness for the upcoming election the Chair reminded the Board of the Non-Partisan Policy (attached)
c. In line with the Non-Partisan Policy John Wilson has resigned from the Executive Committee and has taken a leave of absence from the Board.
d. Family Business Update – deferred for Dean to speak to later on the agenda
e. Moving committee was struck at the May Board meeting and consists of Richard Michaels, Dean Clarke, and Josue Dubon. Their responsibilities will include reviewing sub lease contract, help us decide on a length for our term of lease, review improvement costs, review our new lease agreement, help identify and cost out all moving costs (furniture, moving truck, insurance, staff time, etc.) Will be invited to join the staff for a walk through of the two contending spaces to be involved in the final selection of a space with staff's input.

CEO report

a. Event Updates
    i. Sonia Furstenau event was a smaller affair held at The Chamber office. It was an engaging discussion.
    ii. Business Hall of Fame inductees have been announced and ticket sales are open for the October 29th gala event at the Empress. 2024 Inductees are: CHEK Media, Alan Lowe, Times Colonist, Michael Williams, Yuen Family – Fairway Market.
    iii. Marketplace Mixer is scheduled for November 21 at the Songhees Wellness Centre. It will feature booths and high top tables for 60+ Chamber member businesses and hopes to attract 250-300 guests. It will include hors d'oeuvres prepared by Songhees Events and Catering and a cash bar.
    iv. We are now accepting Chamber Member of the Year nominations from the Board. They are due by November 15th to be voted on at the year-end board planning meeting.
    v. Discussed possible Award of Distinction nominees. Chair highlighted that nominees should be in business or be business owners. Nominations will be accepted from Chamber Governors, Chamber Board members, and Chamber Champions. The same groups will be invited to vote on the final candidates.
        vi. Reminder to register for events on our website or use the Upcoming Events Board Registration Google Doc to have staff register you for events

b. CEO provided an update on the office move. The Chamber is looking at two spaces that we will tour with staff to get their opinions and help us select an option. Signage and visibility is important, as well as minimizing the upgrades needed to be made. Both spaces we expect to be less than what we are paying now in monthly rent. Both would require the addition of a kitchenette and cosmetic upgrades. Suggestion to consider seismic upgrades when reviewing the options. The Chamber is preparing to receive a sublease offer on our current space, potentially requiring us to be ready to move shortly. Discussion was had around the support offered by the City of Victoria to encourage The Chamber stay downtown. CEO is creating a fee for service exchange proposal should an opportunity arise that their support would be needed.

Action Item: Add cost review of what we are paying now versus what we would be paying in one of these new spaces and the possible relationship with City of Victoria to ensure we have addressed any conflicts of interest to the next Executive Meeting agenda.

c. CEO announced that the updated, more modern looking website is now live. Reported that we had a very challenging time with the company we hired to create the website, with both project budget and timeline overruns, despite strong project management on The Chamber's part.
d. CEO reported that the current Membership and Sponsorship Manager has moved on to a new role with the City of Victoria and our Membership & Marketing Assistant is moving to RBCM/IMAX. Decision has been made to move sponsorship over to the events team and we will be hiring a new membership role and a retention focused role. The Chamber welcomed a new Co-op started in September.
e. In the update on the Chamber Champions retention the CEO noted a trend across the country that members are having challenges financially and chamber memberships are declining. We will be looking at other non-dues revenue options to diversify our revenue to address how this trend may impact our Chamber. We will also be reviewing the Chamber Champions program to better align it with current priorities and the benefits that echelon of membership is interested in.
f. Canadian Chamber AGM 2026 has confirmed Victoria will be the host city. We will be responsible for supporting one social evening and are working with Destination Greater Victoria staff and Victoria Conference Centre staff to support event planning for the conference as a whole.
g. The new Member/Guest Code of Conduct has been implemented and can be seen on our website, membership form, and acknowledged during event registrations.
h. CEO reviewed the BC Chamber of Commerce election priorities that were just announced.
i. Canadian Ports authority conference took place last week and CEO attended as a moderator and to represent the Chamber.

Finance & Audit Committee

a. Reviewed the financials Jan – August 2024 and noted that we are in an overall positive position. Revenue from dues is ahead of budget timing, events revenue is currently down, but offset by reduction in budgeted costs. Salaries continue to be over budget due to the new structure and team members and will be reflected in 2025 budget. Senior Management team has identified a trend in members cancelling due to financial challenges across the country including well established businesses. Saw a loss with the additional expenditure toward the website upgrade and will recommend to the Board to cover with funds from reserve funds.

Motion to accept the Financials as presented.
MOVED by Christina Clarke SECONDED by James GatsiCARRIED

b. Investment management suggest moving to a private investment management process and allows RBC to have more flexibility to make decisions on our behalf
c. Addition of term deposits discussion for a future meeting

Motion to accept the finance and audit committee's recommendation to update it from A+ account to the PIM account for our investment management.
MOVED by Judith Ethier SECONDED by James GatsiCARRIED

d. Finance and Audit committee welcomes new member Ryan Gerwing from Island Savings

Executive & Governance Committee

a. Reviewed the External Board Appointments and discussed assigning a Board liaison to support each appointee.

Motion to approve the Board liaisons for external Board Appointees as presented.
MOVED by James Gatsi SECONDED by Josue Dubon CARRIED

b. Reviewed the Board Skills matrix and noted updates to be made to the document before sending to the Board to complete for 2025.
c. Discussion regarding the Board Nomination Committee

Motion to appoint the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary as the Board Nomination Committee.
MOVED by Kevin White SECONDED by Josue Dubon CARRIED

d. Committee recruitment is open for all committees. Interested members should connect with the Committee Chair and/or staff liaison to express their interest in joining. Each committee will use their needs, terms of reference and applicable skills matrices to determine suitability.

Public Policy and Advocacy Committee Report

a. No formal report to share. Chair encourages all Board members to attend the meetings as the guest speakers are interesting, engaging and provide a good overview of the topic of discussion and how it is impacting our community and informing our advocacy priorities.
b. Question regarding the Terms of Reference's requirement that members have been members of the Chamber for a minimum of one year. Tsartlip Nation (Mark Breyer) is interested in being a part of the committee. Committees have the opportunity to request adjustments to their Terms of Reference at the November Board meeting.
c. November policy meeting speaker is focused on the US election
d. Port Angeles Chamber visit being rescheduled in February 2025

Family Business Committee Report

a. The Family Business Program has had challenges growing and adding new members to the FBAT groups. The willingness for FBAT members to pay the fees has also been challenging and the support from the committee members was minimal. Decision has been made to move the committee to an advisory group to review the format of delivery and how we can reimagine the program. The FBAT and Family Business Association format may have served its purpose recognizing that workforce and HR requirements and policies have changed over the last 30 years.
b. The program will be put on hiatus and three members of the committee will form the advisory group to meet to see what changes can be made. Possibility to offer this as a value-add program within the Chamber as a mentorship/peer group support program.
c. Looking at synergies between the redevelopment of this program and the Emerge mentorship program

Motion to adjourn the meeting.
MOVED by Kevin Whiteside SECONDED by Judith Ethier CARRIED

Secretary

Chair

Presentation & Q&A with Robert Lewis-Manning from the Greater Victoria Harbour Authority
Next Board Meeting – November 29, Year-end Board Retreat (7:30am – 3:00pm, University Club, UVic)