

Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

Tuesday, November 25, 2008

11:30 am

Fort Frances Curling Club

MINUTES

Christine Denby	P	Cathy Emes	A	Nancy Daley	A	Janet Plumridge	A
Gary Rogozinski	A	Wanda Barker	A	Barb Cournoyer	P	Lillian Gerley	P
Bev Kotnik	A	Krista Mauro	A	Leo Melanson	P	Pam Parsons	P
Anne Renaud	P	Paul Sunstrum	P	Ken Perry	P	Angela Halvorsen	P
Patti Anderson	P	Christine Jourdain	A	Jane Gillon	P		
Dawn Booth	P			P - PRESENT			A - ABSENT

GUESTS:

Bill Gushulak – Fort Frances General Supply
 George Emes – Edward Jones
 Judy Koski - RR District Social Services Administration Board
 Randy Thoms – B93
 Deb Emes – B93

Raeann Watson – Contact North
 Duane Cridland – Gillons’ Insurance Brokers
 Trevor Fitzgerald – Gillons’ Insurance Brokers
 Darryl Skinner – Wal-Mart
 Kim Finlayson – TD Canada Trust

Call to Order

11:42 am
 President Christine Denby welcomed everyone to the meeting.

President’s Message

“To begin, I’d like to do as I always do as I start my speech, and that is to thank each and every one of you for coming today ~ showing your support for not just the Chamber but for Fort Frances and district. As we planned today’s meeting, Dawn went over the agenda with the executive and looked at me and said ... you ok with doing the President’s message? Of course I said yes and have been mulling over exactly what I would say today for over a week. I considered giving the same speech I gave last year but knew that Bill Gushulak would likely be here and would remember, so that just wouldn’t work.

It finally came to me while I was curling. You can do a lot of thinking while you’re sweeping the rocks into the house. I thought of Cheese. More along the lines of ‘Who Moved My Cheese’ by Dr Spencer Johnson. I had read the book a few years back and got to read it again this spring along with my colleagues at the office. I’m sure there are others here who have read this fun little book. The book is about change in our work and day to day lives. The foreword tells us that it’s a simple story with four characters (two are mice and two are little people) who live in a Maze and look for cheese to provide both nourishment and happiness. Our friends in the maze ~ Sniff and Scurry & Hem and Haw ~ face change and need to deal with that change. One is successful, having seen the proverbial writing on the walls. The others, not as much. If you haven’t read this book, take an hour or so out of your life, and give it a read. I’d like to think the Chamber is like that successful mouse ...reading the writing on the wall, anticipating change and adapting.

We started out the year with new and old faces. We experimented with immediate change – we went from two meetings a month down to one, and reduced the number of working committees by almost half. We set goals and priorities. As a Board, we determined which programs, projects and events would have the most relevance to our members. Not only did we need to be relevant but fiscally responsible as well, with a careful eye on our budget.

The Business Retention and Expansion Project, started in 2007, went into full swing with newly hired Community Development Officer Cassandra Parise, volunteer Irene Laing, and a dedicated working committee. After many, many meetings, the report was publicly launched this past October, outlining actions and strategies intended to reduce barriers and encourage both new and existing business to flourish. Along with community partners, the Town of Fort Frances, the Rainy River Future Development Corporation, Confederation College, and others, the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce will make every effort to ensure the plan is carried out.

With BR& E well under way, the Board set out to map our Strategic Plan. Strategic planning was something I had wanted to see happen in 2007. How tough could it be, I thought. Well, it was tough. It didn't happen in 2007. It did happen in 2008 though. We met in March with the help of Geoff Gillon as facilitator. Like the BR&E project, and many meetings later, and fine tuning by Dawn Booth our Chamber Manager, the Strategic Plan was passed by the board to be presented to you today.

Working on the BR&E and Strategic Plan made many of us very aware of our relationships with our community partners and others as we dealt with change ~ with looking for that elusive cheese in the maze.

We continued to work with the Town of Fort Frances, presenting to the Town when needed, especially providing input on the budget process. The Chamber continued to work with various committees including EDAC, the Diversity Committee, and the BIA. Representatives from the Chamber attended both teleconference and regional NOACC (Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce) meetings. Looking forward, we now have someone from our Chamber sitting on the executive of NOACC ... a local voice at the regional level, advocating to the provincial and federal governments.

In terms of events and projects ~ it's been a busy year for our Manager and volunteers. Our events and projects serve a dual purpose. Depending on the event or project, will serve the business community and community at large in one-way or another. These same events and projects also provide the much needed revenue in order that we may be able to function as a Chamber. The Home and Leisure Show this spring was a big success thanks to the volunteers who organized and worked the event, the businesses and groups who participated and the public who attended. Quest for the Best held in July was another event, partnered with the Bass Championship folks. For the audience and those on stage, the event was a great success. Budget wise, not nearly the success we would have liked ~ the event may see some interesting changes next year. Remember...it's about reading the writing on the wall and adapting to change. Because of the shortfall, we had to look to other events that would both benefit the community and the Chamber. For those who missed it the first time round, we brought back the Discover our History tapestry for sale at Canadian Tire and other venues. In September, we partnered with the RRFDC and assisted with the Harvest Dinner celebrating the Agricultural community and its role in the Rainy River District. In October, we hosted a very successful Great Canadian Chili Cook Off ~ thanks going to participating teams, volunteers and of course everyone who came out to enjoy good company and hot chili! Earlier this month, we hosted the 13th Annual Business Awards, sponsored by Bell, recognizing and I quote "businesses, organizations and individuals for outstanding business achievement and the contributions made to the economic growth and prosperity of the Rainy River District". We had great fun that night with fresh faces and entertainment, with a full house. A successful night all around.

Other events included the Business After Hours in May on the deck at the Rendez-Vous and a Customer Service Workshop in October held at Confederation College, both of which were cosponsored by the RRFDC. Projects ~ in August consumers were surveyed and results tabulated providing valuable information to the Chamber.

So back to the Cheese – I'd like to think that the Chamber has been, and going forward, continues to read 'the writing' on the wall. Our world, and our little piece of it here in the Rainy River District, is continually changing. We can see the change coming and work with it and adapt to that change, like AbitibiBowater with its hog boiler, like Lowey's and its state of the art eco-friendly green house, like Cousineau's and Gillons' merging forces ~ or we can sit like 'hem and haw' and wonder 'who moved my cheese'? As President, now becoming past president, I'm confident that our new President and Board, will continue to look forward and work hard for our membership, to keep Fort Frances the great community that it is to work, live and play in.

In closing, thank you to the Board in allowing me the opportunity to serve as President of the Chamber. And to Dawn Booth ... thank you for all that you do for the Chamber! And remember, 'Move with the Cheese!'

Christine Denby
President 2007 & 2008

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the April 22, 2008 General Membership Meeting were presented for review.

MOTION: Edward Jones (Emes) – B93 (Melanson) to accept the minutes from the April 22, 2008 General Membership meeting as presented. CARRIED.

Treasurer's Report

As Treasurer Janet Plumridge was unable to attend, Chamber Manager Dawn Booth presented the year-to-date balance sheet and income statement ending October 31, 2008. Dawn noted that the financials presented were draft for October 31, 2008 as several adjustments were yet to be made; bank account has a negative balance which is typical at this time of the year due to cash flow; big chunk of accounts receivable shown is for the NOHFC intern wages as that project has just wrapped up; inventory of \$2,657 is for the tapestry project that Christine mentioned we brought back this year; gift certificates payable showing close to \$15,000 as that project has done substantially well this year and continues to grow.

On the income statement, Dawn explained that we are not likely to collect much more under membership dues meaning we won't reach our budget for that line item which is unfortunate but due to some unforeseen circumstances with staffing and the crunch that businesses are currently feeling, understandable. Recoveries line items were explained. Business Awards does not show up on this statement as it just happened but we do anticipate bringing in about \$5,000 from that project. Home & Leisure Show did extremely well this year. Quest for the Best, as Christine explained, didn't do as well as we had hoped and therefore, we have had to look at additional events and projects for the year which will all help in meeting a balanced budget at year-end. Bank charges are under budget but with us now in overdraft, charges will accumulate; Meetings is also under budget by almost half due to the fact that we're only meeting once a month now; Office expense is double from budget due to a mix up with our photocopy contract and having been charged incorrectly for four years which saw a bill come in at the early part of the year for close to \$3,000 which hit our budget pretty hard; Postage will likely see another \$500 in expenses between now and year end; Travel and Conventions is also over budget due to the fact that the Chamber Manager attended a Chamber Executives of Ontario conference in Hamilton back in February; BR+E Project will be finalized on the November statements and adjustments made as required. Everything else listed is pretty typical and right in line with other years. We do project a balanced budget at year end and the Executive has continued to review the financials in detail every month to ensure we are on track, making adjustments when necessary.

MOTION: Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) – TD Canada Trust (Cournoyer) to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented. CARRIED.

Strategic Plan 2008 - 2011

President Christine Denby presented the new Strategic Plan for 2008 – 2011 listing seven key strategic initiatives including:

- Communications & Image
- Member Recruitment and Retention
- Advocacy
- Economic Diversification
- Tourism & Marketing
- Financial Management
- BR+E Report

Christine explained that the strategic planning process started back in March with a session open to all Chamber members, lead by Geoff Gillon. After many meetings and discussions, and fine tuning by the Chamber Manager, the final document was presented and approved by the current Board of Directors in October. She further explained that it is a living document, which will be revisited and revamped as necessary. Although the original intent was for a five-year plan to be devised, we settled on a three-year plan (see attached).

MOTION: Enterprise Rent-a-Car (Andersen) – Canadian Tire (Sunstrum) to accept the Strategic Plan 2008 – 2011 as presented. CARRIED.

Proposed Membership Fee Increase

Barb Cournoyer, Chair of the Membership Committee explained:

"As chair of the Government Relations & Membership Development Committee, I have been asked to give a little background on our proposed increase.

- The last increase in membership fees was in 2004
- We contacted other Chambers and they have advised us that most of them have an automatic increase each year anywhere from 1% to 3% each year to account for inflation.
- Just as our members have seen rising costs over the years, so too have we. We continually look at fundraising to offset costs which can be a double edged sword as the more time spent on fundraising efforts, mean less time the Board has to focus on business issues and the concerns facing our membership.
- We had discussed increasing the fee by 5% but felt this seemed high, especially given our current economic times, so we settled on 2.5% in 2009 and 1% each year thereafter, reviewing every five years.
- To put this into a little more perspective, this increase means as little as \$2.83 annually for the lowest category and \$20 for the highest paying category.
- When paying membership dues, we currently offer payment plans monthly, quarterly, semi-annual or annually by cash, cheque, credit card or pre-authorized payment.
- Our Chamber has spent the last few years refocusing our efforts on increasing our membership, and have stepped up our government lobbying efforts. We also have become more involved in the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce (aka NOACC), Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.
- We are committed to working closely with the Town of Fort Frances, the BIA and the Rainy River Future Development Corporation and with other business and tourism associations in the area. We continue to do big things on a small budget but now need the help of our membership to continue to grow and prosper.

Current Chamber Projects

- Business Retention & Expansion Project (BR+E)
- Government Lobbying Efforts
- Election Debates
- Beautification Flower Project
- Business Awards
- Home & Leisure Show
- Quest for the Best
- Great Canadian Chili Cook-off
- Chamber Gift Certificates Program
- Fort Frances Tapestry Afghan
- Fort Frances Historical Calendar
- Tourism Marketing Campaign

Benefits of Belonging

- Group Insurance Program, Merchant Visa & MasterCard Rates & Discounted Fuel Program for members only
- Free advertising package on local radio stations.
- Free web-site and e-mail listing on www.fortfranceschamber.com
- Chamber lobbies Government through the Northwestern Ontario Associated Chambers of Commerce (N.O.A.C.C.) on issues of regional concern.
- Chamber makes presentations to local Town Council on issues affecting the business community.
- Networking opportunities by meeting socially and professionally with other business people.
- Informative newsletter on upcoming events and happenings within the Chamber.
- Mail-outs to thousands of tourists each year for inquiries received by phone, mail and e-mail.
- Chamber office receives thousands of inquiries on area businesses, to which Chamber members are first referred.
- Chamber organizes community events & projects such as the Home Show, Beautification Flower Project, Fort Frances Historical Calendar, Quest for the Best, and others.
- Reduced rates to businesses in the Business Improvement Area (BIA).
- Chamber holds two General Membership Meetings each year.
- Chamber awards area businesses and individuals for their efforts with the Annual Business Awards.
- From time to time, Chamber organizes advertising campaigns for its members.

In conclusion, the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce welcomes new members, new ideas and thanks you for your continued support.”

It was suggested that as a way to regain past members, we offer an incentive or discounted rates. Idea will be referred to the Membership Committee for discussion.

MOTION: Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) – TD Canada Trust (Cournoyer) to accept the proposed membership fee increase of 2.5% for 2009 and 1% each year thereafter, reviewing every five years. CARRIED.

Retiring Directors Presentation

President Christine Denby thanked those Directors who will be moving on for their hard work, dedication and commitment to the Chamber of Commerce including:

- Nancy Daley-Fulton who served on the Board in both 2007 and 2008
- Janet Plumridge who served on the Board in both 2007 and 2008

- Wanda Barker who served one term in 2008
- Paul Sunstrum who served one term in 2008
- Krista Mauro who served one term in 2008

Both Nancy and Janet received plaques of appreciation, those who served one-year terms will receive a Certificate of Appreciation. Chamber Manager Dawn Booth noted that Christine Denby’s term as President has also come to an end, thanked her for her time in that role over the past two years and ensured the group that an official presentation would take place at the Spring meeting where she will be presented with her President’s Plaque.

2009 Nominating Committee Report

Pam Andersen, Nominating Committee member gave the nominating committee report.

“Our Board of Directors graciously volunteer their time and come together as a team to focus on the needs of the business community, to set goals and objectives for the Chamber of Commerce and to work towards making our community the best place to live, work and play.

Our Board of Directors includes 13 Directors and 5 appointed members. The Nominating Committee met back in September to put together a slate of officers with distinct characteristics, skills and abilities to ensure the Chamber will continue to grow and prosper in 2009. This slate of officers include Jane Gillon from the Ministry of Northern Development & Mines who will return as an ex-officio member of our Board. Although this is not an appointed seat according to our by-laws, we feel having such a representative at the table is a definite benefit to our Board of Directors.

In addition to our elected members, the Chamber reserves seats on our Board for representatives from the Town of Fort Frances, Economic Development office, Business Improvement Association, Couchiching First Nation and Abitibi-Bowater. The following individuals will sit as our appointed representatives:

- Patti Anderson for the Business Improvement Association
- Angela Halvorsen from the Rainy River Future Development Corporation
- Christine Jourdain for Couchiching First Nation
- Gary Rogozinski from AbitibiBowater
- and Councillor Ken Perry from the Town of Fort Frances

As I stated, there are 13 seats available for Directors on our Board. The following individuals have put their name forward for consideration:

- Pam AndersenEnterprise Rent-a-Car
- Mark Caron..... M.L. Caron Electric Ltd.
- Barb Cournoyer.....TD Canada Trust
- Cathy Emes..... Skills & Employment Source
- Lillian Gerley..... The UPS Store
- Bev Kotnik Good Impressions Printing
- John McEvoy..... Bell
- Leo Melanson B93 fm
- Anne Renaud Confederation College
- Darryl Skinner Wal-Mart

Thank you to these individuals for their interest in the Chamber of Commerce. I will now accept nominations from the floor. Are there any other nominations from the floor? Are there any nominations from the floor for the Directors seat? Again, are there any other nominations from the floor? If not, I will now close nominations for the 2009 Board of Directors.

I will now ask for a motion to accept these individuals as Directors for the 2009 Board of Directors.

MOTION: Fort Frances General Supply (Gushulak) – Canadian Tire (Sunstrum) to accept the ten individuals as named in the Nominating Committee Report to the 2009 Board of Directors. CARRIED.

Pam continued, “As there only 10 individuals vying for the 13 seats, our nominating committee will continue to approach members between now and our December 16 Board meeting to fill the additional 3 seats.

From the Directors elected, 5 of those will be chosen at the first Regular Board meeting in December to make up our Executive, which includes the President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President and Treasurer along with Christine Denby of Gillons' Insurance Brokers who will sit as Past President.

Again, thank you to everyone who put their name forward. We appreciate your interest in becoming involved and look forward to working with you! Congratulations to those elected to the 2009 Board of Directors! All nominations will be in effect from December 16, 2008 - December 15, 2009.

Thank you!"

Introductions

As we had a small crowd and weren't pressed for time, it was suggested that everyone introduce themselves as not everyone knew each other. Will add introductions as a regular agenda item at all future General Membership Meetings.

Guest Speaker

President Christine Denby introduced the guest speaker of the day, Councillor Ken Perry from the Town of Fort Frances.

Councillor Ken Perry's Presentation

"I was approached by Dawn last Wednesday morning and she asked me if I would be the guest speaker at today's meeting. I listened to how she was told that the Mayor will be out of town and Mrs. Tibbs, the Deputy Mayor, is unavailable. I told her that I would talk to the Mayor and the CAO and get back to her. Wednesday afternoon I was reading my e-mail and I noticed a note from the Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce about the Annual General Meeting and a large note, in bold, in a box, that me, Ken Perry, Councillor, was the guest speaker. It said that I was going to talk about the strategic plan, economic development plan, the official plan review, 2009 budget process, future road construction and other projects. Dawn, what do you think I might know about any of these topics? I'm a first year Councillor - I'm still waiting for a key to the executive washroom. They tell me to go to meeting after meeting, listen, and then vote the same way the majority votes. And on some of those committees and boards, I don't even have a vote. So go figure. And Dawn, to answer your question, the answer is no.

I spoke to the CAO before I got a chance to speak to the Major as he was too busy when I went to see him. When I explained to Mark that I needed some power points so that I could give some accurate information on the given topics, he told me that he had to talk to the Mayor first. I told him that the Mayor was too busy. Some time later, the Mayor phoned me and said that he would write me a speech. I'm still waiting for it. He did tell me to just cut his article out of last Wednesday's paper and read that to you. Mark gave me a few points yesterday and I spoke with the Mayor again but wrote my own speech.

The Strategic Plan began with all of Mayor, Council and Administration doing some homework answering questions. Some of us could have finished that chore in a couple of hours but I took a couple of days. I'm sure that all involved did due diligence because we all showed up ready to get to work. The strategic planning session took place on a single day at Sunny Cove. We all stayed 10 ½ hours and believe me, we hashed out everything to do with the Town that anyone could think of. We grouped the goals and strategies into four general areas:

- Economic Development
- Essential Services
- Quality of Life
- Corporate Initiative

Every item in their perspective groups have been given a time-line for implementation or completion. Most time lines are within the current Council term of office. Some are not attainable in the next two years and some are either on-going on annual endeavours.

Economic development strategies were happening before this plan was implemented but we have given some of the ideas a shot in the arm. We have begun an evaluation of all municipal properties in the Town. We hope to identify information on development policies and permitted uses for industrial, commercial and residential lots throughout the community. The financial incentives plan will help create financial programs to meet the Town's long-term goals and incentives for development and

capital investment within our Town. This economic development plan is being done in conjunction with the RRFD. The Town has committed financing to this plan over a three-year period. FedNor is matching funds for this initiative. We have started looking for a partner or partners in the development of another condo project. We are seeking a private developer. We will facilitate the process but don't want to get involved in any construction or long-term financial considerations. We are also investigating the feasibility of structuring an Economic Development Commission.

The Official Plan Review was mentioned in the strategic plan. We hope to have the review completed by September 2009. The official plan and zoning by-law will accommodate amendments to the Provincial Legislation Planning Act and Bill 51. The review provides the citizens the opportunity to provide input and affect changes to long-term orderly development of the Town.

The 2009 budget process began in September with a public meeting on September 22 and the passing of the budget time-table. We had but one submission from the public at that meeting. Thank you Fort Frances Chamber of Commerce. The Town divisions have compiled their needs and wishes and it has gone through executive committees without a hitch. Can you believe that? Well, don't. The entire budget will be presented to Council on December 22 and then the carving begins - just in time for Christmas! The first three months of 2009 will see special budget meetings on the Mondays between Council meetings and as we get near the end, as often as is necessary to get the job done. The significant impacts that are facing the Town's budget considerations this time around are tax revenue losses attributed to a recent terms of settlement for Abitibi and a reassessment for the large industrial class.

We are also committed to our share of several capital projects we have received outside funding for which must be realized in 2009. We hope to have the underpass project completed in 2009. This project is the first phase in the Abitibi Alternative Energy Roads Project. This project has received funding from NOHFC. It includes the reconstruction of Portage Avenue from First Street to Nelson Street – Nelson Street from Portage Avenue to Victoria Avenue – and Victoria Avenue from Nelson Street to Front Street. A new parking lot will be built in conjunction with Abitibi off Nelson Street and behind St. Mary's Church. A connecting link project will commence on Scott Street from Reid Avenue to Colonization Road East. The Town receives 90% funding from the MTO for the roads portion of this project. We will replace any and all outdated or deteriorated sewer and water infrastructure under these roads during the reconstruction in these programs.

The library board has been given a favourable response from Council to proceed to a Request for Proposals for the construction of the new library and technology centre. Most of the hoped funding is in place and they hope to get construction rolling in the spring of 2009. Phase II of the Heritage Tourism Project is slated to commence next year with the relocation of the Lookout Tower and Hallett from the Point to the Marina area along the riverfront.

Before you ask me any questions, I have the answer to the first several. No – Maybe - I'll take that under advisement - We'll have to refer that to the CAO - The clerk would be best to answer that - I'll look into that and get back to you.

Thank you".

Christine thanked Ken for taking the time to join us and for providing our members with great information on Town plans, projects and priorities.

Question & Answer Period

Members had a chance to ask questions.

Adjournment