

Report to Council

Report Title: Walkerton Business Improvement Area Strategic Planning Session

Prepared By: Fiona Hamilton, Clerk

Department: Clerk's

Date: September 8, 2020

Report Number: CLK2020-31

File Number: C11CL

Attachments: N/A

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Municipality of Brockton hereby approves Report Number CLK2020-31 - Walkerton Business Improvement Area Strategic Planning Session, prepared by Fiona Hamilton, Clerk and in doing so accepts with regret the resignation of Randy Saunders as President, appoints Jessie Bates as President and Richard Popiez as Vice-President;

and further directs staff to bring forward a report exploring the feasibility of using the lower level of the Walkerton Public Library property as a possible combined BIA office and Visitor Information Centre;

and further directs staff to bring forward a by-law revising the governance structure of the Walkerton Business Improvement Area to be seven levied members.

Report:

Background:

The past number of months have been a challenging time for the Walkerton Business Improvement Area (the "BIA"). As Council may be aware, Alishia Oberle started her parental leave and Lindsay Hill took over the position of BIA Manager. Randy Saunders also resigned as BIA President on July 17, 2020 to focus on his business.

The BIA held a board meeting on August 12, 2020 and approved appointing Jessie Bates as President (Ms. Bates formerly held the Vice-President position) and Richard Popiez as Vice-President. It was noted that Anita Gathercole had also resigned from the Board of Directors.

Given the relatively new leadership and staff turnover at the BIA, the board decided to hold a strategic planning session on August 12, 2020. The Strategic Planning Session was held at the Walkerton Community Centre and broadcast using Zoom. Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer and Fiona Hamilton, Clerk facilitated the Strategic Planning Session.

Analysis:

The strategic planning session demonstrated the cohesion of the board in that a consensus was reached on many of the issues facing the BIA. The level of commitment and passion for creating a strong and vibrant downtown core was also readily apparent among all the directors.

The strategic planning confirmed that the top goals and priorities for the BIA were advertising, events and decorations. It was noted that while Christmas/Winter is always the busiest time, additional promotions should be planned for the summer months as that is the slowest time for most businesses.

The BIA board also discussed the location and hours of operation at the current BIA office location, noting that the BIA was spending a large portion of the levied funds on rent. In an effort to allocate more funds directly to promotions and beautification, the BIA board passed a resolution asking that Brockton Council direct staff to explore the feasibility of using the lower level of the Walkerton Public Library property as a possible combined BIA office and Visitor Information Centre location.

Staff are also in support of this recommendation, as the Walkerton Public Library Location would maintain a highly visible and accessible downtown location while still allowing more levied funds to be used directly on achieving the core mandate of the BIA.

The BIA board also discussed the ideal governance structure for the BIA to function efficiently. By-law 2017-060 currently sets out that the BIA board would consist of nine (9) directors with a maximum of three (3) for “voluntary membership”. As the BIA no longer has “voluntary membership”, the BIA board agreed that the overall number of directors should be reduced to seven (7) with at least one member representing a business from outside the downtown area. Staff are seeking Council’s direction to bring forward a by-law at the next meeting changing the governance of the BIA board to be seven (7) members (with all incumbents to remain directors until such time as they resign or the next election occurs), such that there would be no need to accept application to fill the vacancies caused by the resignations of Ms. Gathercole and Mr. Saunders.

Staff will continue to work with the BIA in an effort to support them moving forward in a progressive manner.

The Terms of Reference for operation of the Brockton Visitor Information Centre will also be further evaluated. While a location for visitors to attend for information is important, the majority of tourism related promotions within the past year have been significantly, if not been solely, managed and prepared by Municipal staff. As a result, the extent of functions being conducted by the BIA and the associated supporting budget will be further evaluated and a follow up report provided.

Sustainability Checklist:

What aspect of the Brockton Sustainable Strategic Plan does the content/recommendations in this report help advance?

- Do the recommendations help move the Municipality closer to its Vision? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Cultural Vibrancy? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to achieving Economic Prosperity? Yes
- Do the recommendations contribute to Environmental Integrity? Yes

- Do the recommendations contribute to the Social Equity?

Yes

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding:

- Do the recommendations represent a sound financial investment from a sustainability perspective? Yes

The recommendations in this report may result in more funds available for beautification and promotion, and would allow staff to begin planning for the 2021 BIA budget.

Reviewed By:



Trish Serratore, Chief Financial Officer

Respectfully Submitted by:



Fiona Hamilton, Clerk

Reviewed By:



Sonya Watson, Chief Administrative Officer