



APPROVED  
Minutes of the Seaforth BIA Meeting  
Wednesday, March 11, 2015  
Council Chambers Seaforth Town Hall

Present:

Board of Management:

Chair Melody Hodgson Directors: Carolanne Doig, Shelly McMillan,  
Brenda Campbell, Kim Blok, Betty Small, Councillor Bob Fisher

Municipal Support: EDO – Jan Hawley

Guests: Maureen Agar, Shannon Craig, Jared Gowan and Chris Lee

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 pm in the Huron East Council Chambers

1. Chair Hodgson welcomed the members and guests to the meeting and thanked them for coming out. She also indicated that the format of the meeting had been designed to allow an idea session, at which time the general membership was invited to provide input. Chair Hodgson advised that she had been to many of the BIA members since the AGM and invited them to attend the meeting.
2. The meeting minutes of February 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015 were adopted as presented on a motion by Shelly McMillan and seconded by Brenda Campbell – *Motion carried*.
3. New Business:
  - i. A motion to accept the nominations of Maureen Agar and Shannon Craig to fill the two vacancies on the Seaforth BIA Board of Directors for the 2015-2016 term was made by Carolanne Doig and seconded by Brenda Campbell. – *Motion carried*.
  - ii. Chair Hodgson then asked for any additional nominations. Since there were none, a motion was made by Kim Blok and seconded by Betty Small to close the nominations. – *Motion carried*.

- iii. A motion was made by Shelly McMillan and seconded by Betty Small to acclaim Maureen Agar and Shannon Craig as directors to the Seaforth BIA Board. – *Motion carried*

3.b General Discussion and Idea Session was opened up to BIA board and guests:

Chair Hodgson explained her wish to have everyone present at the meeting voice his or her ideas. Brenda Campbell was happy that the new Chair has been around to see about a third of the members in the BIA. Although the small turnout of guests was disappointing, it was agreed that this might be successful at another time. Ideas that came out of the brainstorming session included:

- Demonstrate to people what merchants have to offer
- Merchants feel there needs to be a better effort to keep the 25-60 year olds from going out of town to shop
- How to spread the word – Guest Chris Lee advised that social media can be used in conjunction with such initiatives as, “Win This Space” and all merchants could capitalize on this
- Maureen Agar suggested some form of “Secret Shopper” to determine comparisons of pricing, service etc. and compile the results for analysis
- Brenda Campbell expanded this idea and said the creation of a couple of “shopping carts” with price comparisons as well as taking into account time and money spent going out of town so a “true” comparison could be made.
- Others commented that it’s not just about price, but also about the shopping experience, service, time, emotional connection to community. How could this be measured and how could a loyalty program be created? \$mart Money is one program.
- Perhaps a report card could be created on purchasing experiences in town
- To make people aware of what is available by highlighting a “Business of the Week” could be done in the local paper and/or online. Director Agar suggested this could be expanded to employee and/or business of the week or month. This could be put on the Shop Seaforth website and Facebook site because the newspaper is expensive to advertise in and many in the 25-60 demographic don’t read the paper anymore.
- Expand the Christmas Promo idea and have a monthly contest for \$100.00 gift certificate for those collecting and submitting 5 receipts/month.
- EDO Hawley suggested using Survey Monkey to determine ideas and contest suggestions.
- Guest Jared Gowan wondered about an historical questionnaire using the storefronts as part of the contest, and the EDO expanded on this by advising that the historic plaques would lend themselves nicely to this type of Main

Street contest. This could be a stand-alone event or it could be done in conjunction with another special event or promotion.

- Chris Lee felt that the BIA needs to determine who its clients are. What do the BIA members know about their customers and what they want and where they shop? We should do a door-to-door survey of the householders, not just the merchants. EDO Hawley then felt we needed to create a more comprehensive survey such as a formal residential survey for Seaforth, Egmondville, & Harpurhay. An on-line version as well as a paper version should be created. In order to get a good return it would be wise to have prizes for survey participants. Chris Lee cautioned that we want surveys done by everyone not just people who enter contests.
- It was asked how the data collected is then handled and EDO Hawley advised that several agencies can assist with this, such as OMAFRA.
- Mr. Gowan reminded us that many stores use customer postal codes to determine where their customer base comes from.
- Chair Hodgson asked the group if a survey would help.
- Betty Small commented that we need more retail.
- It was agreed that a nice restaurant would be an asset. There was a long discussion about how tough a restaurant is to operate in a small community and Seaforth has a history of restaurants opening and closing. Director Doig suggested that the Chef's School in Stratford might be a good contact for recruiting a potential restaurant operator especially with the "Win This Space" contest. The EDO mentioned that Fanshawe and Niagara College also have cooking faculties which could be pursued.
- Maureen Agar expressed concern that we should also be doing something for the runners up in the "Win This Space" contest and have a plan prepared so that if the non-winners are still interested in setting up shop in Seaforth we are ready to help them. EDO Hawley advised that there are about seven empty storefronts, but a few are really not rentable and need work.
- What can't you get in town?
- Suggestions to increase foot traffic included:
  - Chair Hodgson suggested a Festival in Victoria Park – Blues & Brews
  - Director Campbell suggested a rib-fest, although it was noted that both London and Mitchell already have rib-fests
  - Invite chefs to come and do their thing
  - Invite new winery and brewery
  - Use food trucks as long as they comply with by-laws
  - Use service clubs
  - Create a "Win this party" .....music & food go together so use local talent too

- There was discussion about the digital economy and that rapid change is ongoing. Businesses need to do a marketing audit (social media can be used) and after the audit is completed, create an action plan that encourages sharing and collaboration. The Vanastra Recreation Centre has benefitted from this approach. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram can help create a method of measuring marketing success and BIA members should become educated on the use of these tools.
- Some of the ideas generated could be added to the Strategic Plan.

After the “**IDEA**” session concluded, the BIA executive resumed its regular meeting.

#### 4. Business Arising from the Minutes:

- a. EDO Hawley reported that the “Win This Space” project was creating a lot of interest by potential contestants as well as the media. She had already had several radio and television interviews and had five interested contestants. A good team has been assembled and there is a radio and social media campaign still to come.
- b. Website Maintenance – EDO Hawley has received a quote for website maintenance at \$35.00/hour. The maintenance person is familiar with the website and did previous work for Artech. The domain name may have to be re-registered. Changes are ready to be posted. Chair Hodgson suggested the map be changed as the current format does not work well on mobile devices and 2/3 of traffic is generated from mobile devices. EDO Hawley will give Chair Hodgson the contact information so she and Michelle Bauman can get the site updated.
- c. Seaforth \$mart Money 2015 Launch – Director Brenda Campbell informed the board that the video is ready to go and when the Shop Seaforth website is updated the link to the video can be embedded. Director Campbell will meet with the EDO to do this. It was suggested that the video link be sent by email to all BIA members so they can be ready for the launch. Director Campbell also thought the video could be added to the television monitor in the town hall and also on Facebook. Director Doig will go to Pete’s Paper Clip and order \$30,000.00 in \$mart Money in a new colour, in books of \$100.00 (10 x \$10). ***(Money has been ordered by Director Doig.)*** The Chair will go to Pete’s and have a new signing stamp made. When the money is picked up Director Shelly McMillan’s team will stamp and seal each bill. Director Maureen Agar reminded BIA to set \$500.00 aside for the Christmas promotion. EDO Hawley will have two poster boards made advertising “Seaforth \$mart Money on Sale Now!” so we won’t have to write on the dry erase board anymore. **(Posters ordered March 30, 2015.)**

- d. **LED Lighting Report** – EDO Hawley reported that all was going well. It was suggested that a demo of the lantern lighting be given to the sub-committee regarding the light level.
- e. **2015 OBIAA Conference** – it was noted that attendees this year would be the Chair Hodgson & Directors Agar and Campbell. EDO Hawley will be attending on behalf of the municipality with her costs coming out of the economic development budget.

5. Unfinished Business:

- a. **Seaforth \$mart Money Video** – Changes have been dealt with, although it now needs to be uploaded to the Huron East YouTube site. Director Campbell to contact the EDO to arrange.
- b. **Welcome Bags** – Chair Hodgson reported that her committee was polling BIA members to determine if gift certificates, a coupon book, or actual items would be part of the bag. It was decided **NOT** to include a welcome bag with Seaforth \$mart money purchases.
- c. **Rain Barrel TD Initiative** – Councillor Fisher advised that the grant from TD was approved, they were buying rain barrels at \$50.00 each, and that an irrigation system and raised beds would be added to the Food Bank garden.
- d. **Christmas Decoration Storage** – Director Agar reported that because of the deep snow, the decorations were still inside the info booth and would be removed and stored in a better spot when the weather is suitable.
- e. **Strategic Plan** – It was decided that at a future meeting we would compile all ideas including those generated at this meeting and create a sub-committee to plan for “what’s next”. A reminder was given that we stick to the “one off then one on” format so things get completed in an orderly fashion.
- f. **Year End Seaforth \$mart Money Reconciliation:** 92% has been redeemed as of year-end and it was suggested that the money be picked up at the bank every month and organized at that time.

6. New Business:

- a. Councillor Fisher reported that the Optimist Club was not available to conduct the Easter egg hunt on Saturday April 4. Since this is just a couple of weeks

away and March Break is in between, it was decided that the money in the budget for the candy would be used to create small baskets of candy for storeowners to give to children on Easter weekend when they come into the stores. The Looking Glass will donate 20 lb. of chocolate for this cause. ***(Candy has been purchased and is waiting for pick-up at The Looking Glass.)*** The Chair and Director Blok will get the candy and distribute it to the stores. Director Betty Small will put it on Facebook “Hop into downtown stores and have an Easter candy compliments of the Seaforth BIA” or similar will be posted.

- b. Director Brenda Campbell asked if the BIA was putting a soup into the Souper Saturday competition. It was determined that most BIA members were already involved.
- c. It was decided that we would not send flowers to Janet’s Donuts celebrating their 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary because we have never done this for any other business.
- d. EDO Hawley will contact the Hillsview Farms about the Farmer’s Market for the upcoming season. ***(The Hill Family have confirmed that they will be returning and plan to open 1 day a week starting mid-May, and 2 days a week once the strawberry season starts.)***
- e. EDO Hawley will contact the owner of the info booth property and we will plan to keep the tourist info booth there for 2015. A motion was made by Director Maureen Agar and seconded by Director Shelly McMillan that we continue to lease the info booth space for another year. *Motion carried. (EDO confirmed that the owner of 40 Main Street South has agreed to rent his property for the year 2015. A lease agreement will be prepared and sent to the owner in the next few weeks by the municipality.)*
- f. Director Maureen Agar mentioned that we should be planning now for Christmas lights for this year. It was agreed that the group going to the OBIAA conference would check-out light manufacturers at the trade show while there.
- g. Director Betty Small complained about the A-Frame sandwich boards purchased a few years ago from Artech. It was determined that nothing could be done about these at this time.
- h. Director Carolanne Doig suggested that thank-you letters be sent to Maplewood Manor for hosting our AGM and to the Huron East/Seaforth Community Development Trust for assisting us with our light program. Director Doig will

prepare the two thank-you letters and send them to Chair Hodgson for approval before sending out. ***(Both letters have been prepared, signed by the Chair and will be delivered by hand.)***

7. Correspondence – there was no correspondence
8. Date of Next Meeting – Wednesday, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at 7 pm on the second floor of the municipal offices at Town Hall – Director Brenda Campbell advised she'll be bringing supper for all at 6:30 pm
9. Meeting was adjourned at 9:45 pm on a motion by Director Kim Blok.

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Chair Melody Hodgson

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Secretary Carolanne Doig