

TOWNSHIP OF BILLINGS
Economic Development Committee
MINUTES

January 18th, 2022, 7:00 pm

Electronic Meeting (Zoom Meetings)

PRESENT: Ian Anderson (Mayor), Councillor Sharon Alkenbrack (Chair), Suzanne Darlaston, Chris Dietrich, Councillor Sharon Jackson, Diane Larocque, Tracey Paris
Staff: Todd Gordon, Economic Development Officer

REGRETS: None

Members of the Public: None

1. Opening of Meeting

Motion by Suzanne Darlaston; Second by Diane Larocque:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sharon Jackson; Second by Tracy Paris:

That the agenda for the January 18th, 2022 meeting be accepted as written. Carried.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None

4. Adoption of Minutes

Motion by Diane Larocque; Second by Tracey Paris:

That the minutes of the December 15th, 2021 meeting be accepted as presented. Carried.

5. Delegations

None

6. Council Update Report

Chair Alkenbrack provided a brief overview of the previous Council meeting – January 17th, 2022).

7. Financial Report

The EDO reported that there was no formal financial report and that there had been no EDC-related expenditures since the December meeting.

8. EDO Update

The EDO provided an update on various municipal projects. This included his role change from Economic Development Officer (EDO), to Municipal Project Manager (MPM). The MPM will continue to work with the EDC, as staff representative/liaison.

9. Old Business

a) Winter Promotions Campaign – Discussion

Committee discussion regarding follow-through with a January FB post – it was agreed that a generic first FB post should be made.

b) EDC Mandate/Regrouping - Discussion

The Chair asked committee members to each identify two “assets” about Billings that represent opportunity for community/economic development.

Councillor Jackson identified the reality that most people in attendance were *relative* newcomers – and asked them to use that perspective in thinking about assets/opportunities. As in, “what attracted you initially to Billings/Kagawong? She went on to highlight the trails and plenty of natural spaces/recreational opportunities as assets that always come to mind for her.

Chris Dietrich highlighted the history of the township – the richness and diversity of it, as assets. He used the examples of the Danny Dodge story and Harbour Island. He suggested that although the Museum and Heritage Centre have profiled these stories and others, there may be other ways that the community could harness history for community economic development. Secondly, he highlighted the environmental/natural assets of the township.

Diane Larocque spoke about the summer market/summer activities, including unique businesses, and the attraction quality of the waterfront, as well as the overall landscape, particularly Bridal Veil Falls.

Suzanne Darlaston responded to Councillor Jackson’s query and thought about when she was first attracted to the area, speaking about the appeal of a small community with ready access to services in slightly larger centres. She would like more thought given to services and activities for seniors – which may cross into the realm of the Parks, Recreation and Wellness Committee. She is also concerned that in making infrastructure improvements to Kagawong – needed though they may be – some of the character of the community may be lost, including some of the natural beauty. She’d like to see effort put into re-greening and preserving the hamlet character – encouraging pedestrian movement, and not giving way too much to vehicle movement and parking.

Tracey Paris thought the proximity to abundant and diverse natural spaces, and the “rustic” feel of Billings and Kagawong appealed to her when coming here to live. She thinks that the balance between vehicles/parking and pedestrian movement can be maintained in Kagawong going forward, and that 2021 saw a lot of pedestrian movement in spite of it being a construction year.

Mayor Anderson spoke about consciously thinking about much of the island – at least Central and Western Manitoulin – when choosing a place to build and settle earlier in his work career. He spoke of the ready, safe access to the North Channel, as well as a good feel/good “fit” with the community of Billings and Kagawong, as a factor in staying in the area.

Chair Alkenbrack also highlighted the abundance and diversity of green space and the natural environment, the relative quietness of Kagawong – even during the busy Tourist season. She’d like to see that balance maintained – enough economic activity for people to maintain decent livelihoods without so much activity that the shared benefits of living in Billings are not lost.

10. New Business

- It was not formally on the agenda, but the Chair reminded the MPM that he had agreed to discuss the possibility of the municipal marina stocking angling supplies with other staff (treasurer, marina manager, CAO). The MPM agreed to do so.
- Not a formal agenda item - The MPM reminded the committee that budget discussions should be on the agenda for the February meeting

11. Correspondence

None

12. Information

None

13. Recommendations to Council

None

14. Next Meeting: February 9th, 2021 at 7:00 pm, Zoom Meetings

15. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:05 p.m. on a motion by Chris Dietrich.