

TOWNSHIP OF BILLINGS
Economic Development Committee
MINUTES

September 09, 2020, 7:00 pm

Kagawong Park Centre, Upper

PRESENT: Ian Anderson (Mayor, Ex-officio), Councillor Sharon Alkenbrack (Chair), Suzanne Darlaston, Councillor Sharon Jackson, Diane Larocque, Rick Rusk

Staff: Todd Gordon, Economic Development Officer

REGRETS: None

Members of the Public

1. Opening of Meeting

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by the chair.

The Chair welcomed Mayor Anderson to the meeting. The Mayor indicated that he would be attending all the committee meetings as committees return to activity post-pandemic shutdown, and stressed the importance of economic development, and the EDC, to municipal government. In addition, he stressed the need for Council, committees, and the municipality generally to continue to improve communication, internally and with the community/public.

2. Approval of Agenda

Motion by Sharon Jackson; Second by Diane Larocque:

That the agenda for the March 11, 2020 meeting be accepted as amended (Added items: New Business f) Poetry Boxes; New Business c) Bridal Veil Falls). Carried

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

4. Adoption of Minutes

Motion by Suzanne Darlaston; Second by Sharon Jackson:

That the minutes of the March 11, 2020 meeting be accepted as presented. Carried

5. Delegation

6. Council Update Report

Chair Alkenbrack provided a brief outline of the previous Council meeting (Regular Council of September 2nd, 2020).

7. Financial Report

8. Old Business

a) **Christmas in Kagawong** - Discussion

Is this even possible for 2020, given the pandemic and associated restrictions and uncertainty? Various options were discussed, including possibly holding the event earlier – at Thanksgiving, and using more outside space with/or without reduced indoor space in the Park Centre and other venues. There was recognition that the window for pulling an earlier event was short – about 4 weeks – and that the COVID-19 pandemic reality means that protocols/restrictions could change any time, thus preventing the event from happening. The committee decided that the EDC would plan to hold the event for one day during the Thanksgiving weekend, that vendors would be contacted to see who would support this idea, and that the committee would call a special meeting for planning/implementation somewhere near the end of September.

Motion by Diane Larocque; Second by Sharon Jackson:

That the EDC will plan, within the limits of COVID-19 pandemic, to hold Christmas in Kagawong during the Thanksgiving Weekend. Carried

b) Jabbawong Story-Telling Festival – Discussion

Now an objective for 2021. Tentative date: July 17th and 18th, 2021. Return to planning following Christmas in Kagawong 2020.

c) Business Map – Discussion

This idea was approved by Council at the March 16, 2020 regular meeting. The committee confirmed this as an initiative to be pursued in 2021.

d) Social Media Workshop – Discussion

The Township of Gordon-Barrie Island remains interested in collaborating on this initiative. The committee agreed to re-engage in this initiative for 2021. Discussion of timing – late winter, before businesspeople are engaged in preparing for the summer season.

e) Poetry Boxes - Discussion

This activity did not happen this year because of the pandemic. Boxes need new signage and a better quality of paper for 2021.

9. New Business

a) Economic Diversification - Discussion

The EDC Chair attended an online economic diversification course entitled “The New Local.” The course was hosted by The Village Well, included participants from all over the world, and emphasized new and re-worked principles as they apply to local economic development. The chair briefly took the committee through her experience of the course and some of the discussion that the group engaged in with each principle. The committee will consider working through the principles in a little more detail, with a discussion of an individual principle during future meetings.

b) Ideas for 2021 – Remember the EDC Mandate – Discussion

The committee discussed their mandate as guided by the Terms of Reference. The EDO encouraged the committee to continue their work but to also try to strike a balance between tactical activities like events (examples above) while also taking a bigger-picture, more strategic view of economic development. The need for additional committee members, and more business representation on the committee were also discussed.

c) Bridal Veil Falls - Discussion

The Chair shared a discussion she had had with a Kagawong Market Vendor earlier in the day, regarding ideas to get more visitors to Bridal Veil Falls to travel to Lower Kagawong to park and access the trails. IN addition to easing the parking situation at the falls, and improving public safety, this would improve economic activity in Lower Kagawong. The EDO and Mayor Anderson pointed out that these were very much overall municipal goals, and the committee agreed to keep this item on future agendas, and to continue working collaboratively with Council, the EDO, and other staff.

10. Correspondence

11. Information

12. Recommendations to Council

13. Next Meeting: October 11, 2020, 7:00 pm, at the Kagawong Park Centre

14. Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 8:43 p.m. on a motion by Diane Larocque

Economic Development Committee Meeting: Notes on Mandate and Moving Forward

Todd Gordon, EDO

September 9, 2020

From the EDC Terms of Reference:

1. ROLE OF THE COMMITTEE

(1) *The Economic Development Committee (the “Committee”) shall advise council on the development of initiatives to strengthen and promote economic development within the township for all sectors (e.g., tourism, arts and culture), including marketing strategies.*

(2) *In providing advice to council, the Committee shall have regard for the township’s Strategic Plan, the mission statement for which states:*

“Billings Township is a vibrant community where new people are excited to relocate and existing residents are happy to stay because of the sustainable economy, the artistic and cultural diversity, and the beauty of the environment. Guided by the vision of its citizens, Billings Township is a safe and progressive community that practices environmental responsibility, provides dependable services, and maintains its rich cultural heritage.”

Notes:

1. The **advisory role**: The committee can and should advise council on matters related to economic development. This normally takes the form of reporting to council, through the Chair, and with specific recommendations for Council decision/action. Decisions and actions are implemented through staff, including the EDO. However, there is also room for committee action, through (for example) EDC events, workshops, etc. as appropriate, but also in working collaboratively with the EDO on research/investigation of economic/business development needs, etc.
2. The promotion role: The committee can promote economic activity, including arts and culture activity, by advising council on promotion needs and, as appropriate, working with the EDO collaboratively on implementing promotion initiatives (like the business map idea, for example).
3. In general, in addition to the work EDC has been doing on specific things like the story-telling festival, or the social media workshop, I’d like the committee to develop and maintain a more macro (bigger-picture) view:
 - a. Thinking about municipal-wide economic development, while being mindful of the context in which we are operating – locally/regionally (Manitoulin/Northeastern Ontario); provincially, and even nationally and globally
 - b. Linking events, festivals, etc., etc. to a larger view of economic development and economic development activities.
 - c. I think we (EDC and the EDO) could do more on the “culture” side of things.
 - i. What is culture?
 - ii. What is “our” culture?
 - iii. What role does culture play in economic development, and therefore community development?
 - iv. How do we engage in/promote cultural activity and then reap the economic/community development benefits of it?
 - d. I think the committee could review the Township’s strategic plan, and where things are with respect to implementation.
 - e. The EDC needs more members, and I think the EDC needs more members directly from the business community. This represents a considerable challenge, given the small size of our business community
 - f. Could propose, develop, at least in a broad way, an economic development strategy for the municipality
 - g. COVID-19 Recovery initiatives
 - i. An example of this is the recent Digital Main Street, “Digital Service Squad” application which Council recently approved applying for collaboratively with Central Manitoulin.