

Minutes – Chamber Board Meeting – January 25, 2022 | 7:30 – 9:00am

THE CHAMBER.

GREATER VICTORIA
CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Virtual: John Willson, Rose Arsenault, Richard Michaels, Bruce Williams, Cheryl Wirch-Ryckman (staff), Christina Clarke, Judith Ethier, Pedro Marquez, Moira Hauk, Kris Wirk, Paul van Koll, Ann Squires-Ferguson, Dan Dagg, Tom Plumb, James Gatsi, Jessica Stigant, Captain (Navy) Jeff Hutchinson

1. Approval of the agenda and minutes:

Motion to approve agenda as is.

Moved by Moira Hauk

Seconded by Jessica Stigant

Carried

Motion to approve minutes from previous board meeting.

Moved by Ann Squires-Ferguson

Seconded by Pedro Marquez

Carried

2. Chair

a. General comments

The community has had to pivot yet again since the last meeting in December to virtual in order to combat COVID. Although infection numbers hit a new high in January, there is evidence of being past the peak on this new variant and a glimmer of hope that we will be able to return to in person events by March. We have a resilient community and will continue to encourage vaccination, booster shots and safety to get us through this hopefully final wave.

Motion to appoint James Gatsi and Jessica Stigant to the Board of the Greater Victoria Chamber.

Moved by John Wilson

Seconded by Rose Arsenault

Carried

BC Chamber membership was reviewed again in terms of historical decisions and current operations. In addition to challenges discussed previously, in the last year the BC Chamber has reduced Island representation on the board without consultation with existing members and have been quiet during a turbulent year that required leadership. The board requests that the CEO and Chair once again request a meeting to get more information on the progress of the reconfiguration and value proposition. The results of that meeting to be brought to the board at latest by the mid-year planning session. The board consensus is to defer rejoining the BC Chamber but to maintain a dialogue with their leadership. The recommendation is to wait as BC Chamber continues their rebuild and revisit this at latest by January 2023. As the board is in consensus on not rejoining and continuing to evaluate this annually, no motion was made on this.

Motion to accept the Terms of Reference for the 2022 Committees as they were presented.

Moved by Christina Clarke

Seconded by Richard Michaels

Carried

3. CEO

- a. Island Chamber Policy Alliance has focused its efforts on shoring up the supply chain issues that are impacting the island. There needs to be a deep-water port on the island and Port Alberni has been held up as an option. The Board has requested more information on what shipping companies say about Port Alberni as an alternative or an addition to their current routes, issues surrounding both rail and the use of Hwy 4 as a major thoroughfare.
- b. A coalition of lower Government Street merchants have reached out to The Chamber due to issues related to recent changes that have resulted in lower traffic to their locations and the resulting financial issues.
- c. A request was made to recommend a member business to represent local businesses in the corridor heavily affected by the new accommodation for the previously unhoused. VanCity will be providing that voice and first-hand experience.
- d. The first cruise ship is anticipated to arrive in April. Discussions are under way with GVHA to provide a similar welcome with a flotilla similar to the welcome back for the Clipper and Coho.

- e. Events were reconfigured to virtual or rescheduled for the months of January, February, and March. A new digital platform for mixers was rolled out and it is working well, providing more options for independent networking.
- f. Business Awards – Chamber Award of Distinction has been awarded to Josh Handysides

4. Committee Reports

a. Executive & Governance Committee (covered above, minutes attached)

b. Finance & Audit

- i. End of year financials were presented to the Board. The Chamber budget reflected positive results in large part due to two programs, the COVID CEWS program and Chamber Champions, providing a foundation that allowed support for programs supporting the hardest hit members of The Chamber. The investment account continues to provide a very positive return.

Motion to approve the December Financials as presented.

Moved by Moira Hauk

Seconded by Pedro Marquez

Carried

- ii. KPIs for the year were on track in terms of connections through social media, advocacy, and revenue, but COVID restrictions negatively impacted membership growth and events.

- iii. Discussion around how to share the benefits of membership and what if any 2nd year incentives are available to members. Review of new membership portal and how the current software is being used to highlight membership benefits such as first job of year being free, use of member benefits, use of free events calendar, etc.

Motion to approve an early draft budget of \$185,000 allocating financial resources to support both a legacy project and celebration of The Chamber's 160th anniversary in 2023.

Moved by Rose Arsenault

Seconded by Moira Hauk

Carried

c. Public Policy & Advocacy Committee

Met with Dr. Michael Benusic the local Medical Health Officer from Island Health. It was a useful discussion on this variant of COVID and how it is impacting our health system and community. There was a clear request for input from business on how health orders are impacting their business and needs around rapid testing.

The Chamber will work with stakeholders to address the disturbing messaging around international tourism from the Federal Government and their reluctance to bring back international visitors and/or understanding of the local tourism cycle.

Discussions around Municipal elections in the fall, and the importance of remaining non-partisan while ensuring key issues such as workforce housing and public safety were front and center in candidate debates.

Policy committee to provide a draft version of Key Priority internal and external versions for communication purposes to the board in March.

d. Ambassador Committee & 160th Committee

Have pivoted how the Ambassadors will be managing events and helping members – both future, new, and new to events – socialize at the events. Request from the board to better acknowledge new members at mixers and give them acknowledgement from “the podium” perhaps raise their hand. Ask the Events Manager to figure out the logistics. 160th Committee will be meeting on February 10th.

e. Prodigy Committee

First meeting in 2022 and the committee has great board support. Looking for additional committee members. Prodigy Committee rebranding for 2023 will need external support and budget to do that work. Quotes to follow.

Motion to accept Board Committee Reports as presented.

Moved by Rose Arsenault

Seconded by James Gatsi

Carried

5. Next meeting March 29th Board meeting to include presentation from Victoria Airport Authority.

Motion to adjourn

Moved by Rose Arsenault

Seconded by Moira Hauk

Carried

Secretary



Chair

