

# Manitowish Waters Board of Directors

## Minutes from 9/16/2021 Meeting

**1. Meeting called to order** at 8:39 am

**2. Board Members Present:**

Frank DiLeonardi, President  
Kristin Beischel, Vice President (via phone)  
Jan Santarius, Treasurer  
Bob Fuller  
Chris McMurray  
Mike Hoefler

**Board Members Absent:**

Linda Long  
Pat Pohler  
Abbie Schultz

**Others in Attendance:**

Patty Gauthier, Executive Director  
Town Chair, John Hanson  
Debbie Jones, Chamber Member and Proprietor of Little Bohemia

**3. Approval of Minutes from August 15, 2021:** A motion was made by Frank to accept the August minutes. Bob seconded the motion. Minutes were approved.

**4. Approval of September 16, 2021, Agenda:** A motion was made by Jan to approve the agenda. Chris seconded it. Agenda was approved.

**5. Committee Reports:**

**A. Governance & Finance:**

**i. Treasurer's Report**

- a. Jan reported that we still need to go into QuickBooks and recategorize certain line items. Patty said she would try to have that corrected by the next scheduled Board meeting.
- b. Jan also shared that we are "looking better" as a non-profit but cautioned that we should not dip into any reserve funds.
- c. Patty presented the proposed budget. It was approved with Jan giving a motion to accept and Bob seconded the motion. All were in favor of the new budget.
- d. John Hanson shared with us that the plans are moving forward for the new Recreation Center which will be established in the old fire department building. He asked that the \$16000, which has been earmarked for the Town to use towards the establishment of the new Recreational Center, be released. He informed us that the funds will be used to purchase equipment for a batting cage, a hockey goal, and a basketball hoop, as well as other necessary items.

## 6. Membership

- A.** Frank and Patty shared their plans to visit current and previous members to conduct introductions of Patty as the new Director and to solicit suggestions and opinions that could help improve relationships and services provided by the Chamber. Chris suggested this be done ASAP. Debbie added that it might be beneficial to have like-groups of business owners meet with Frank and Patty when we conduct the “Listening Exercises”.
- B.** As a part of the discussion on “transparency” Debbie Jones was asked to share her thoughts. She said that she felt the Chamber was not supporting businesses in the way they had done historically. Additionally, she voiced the opinion that businesses didn’t feel they were included in things and that it was too difficult to find information regarding Board meetings, agendas, minutes, and finances. Another thought she shared was that business owners who are members find it difficult to attend meetings if they are scheduled during the operating hours of their respective business and that we might consider changing meeting times to accommodate more working members.
- i. Jan proposed the idea of holding “Lunch and Learn” sessions to gather members together.
  - ii. Frank responded by explaining that we had been following procedures as they had traditionally been conducted. He also recommended that the meeting information be posted on the “Events Calendar” and those agendas, minutes and finances be made available for viewing on the website.
  - iii. Kristin suggested that members who are seasonal residents be allowed to “Zoom” into a meeting, particularly during the winter months.
- C.** Growth Zone – Patty explained that the training sessions for this newly adopted member platform have almost been completed and that it should be going live in approximately 2 -3 weeks. A letter introducing the new system was being sent to all members to make members aware of the upcoming opportunities that Growth Zone will provide for them. More detailed “User” information will follow.

## 7. Marketing

- A.** Patty explained that a new Home Page has been developed that will be updated after the fall season. This was accomplished with the valuable input Kristin provided and with the assistance of Scott Bartz. Based on analytics, it was felt that we were not delivering enough value and that there was a need to refresh the Home Page. In 2022, the website will be reviewed, and a discussion will ensue as to whether a professional marketing firm should be hired to oversee the overhaul. Kristin estimated that the cost for hiring a marketing support agency would be in the range of \$500 - \$1000 per year.
- B.** Patty shared with the Board the fact that she had read through the Roger Brooks assessment from 2015. Here she learned that his recommendation was to sell branded t-shirts and merchandise through local retail shops – not necessarily at the chamber office. Patty would like to eliminate the large collection of t-shirts hanging in the office and convert the “retail area” into a more visitor-centered space that better reflects the Northwoods. Chris felt this could lead to a loss of walk-up revenue, however, revenue could still be earned through an on-line store that would market a much larger assortment of MW branded items. This would also reduce staff time on task related to supplying, marketing, and accounting of merchandise. Other Chambers have successfully used Valley

Apparel as their online merchandise platform, and they would be the company we would use. More details to come on the process involved with establishing an account with Valley Apparel.

- C. Patty reported that 5Star has received 32 ad submissions for the 2022 Visitor's Guide. These have come through the new process of contracting out the sale of advertisement directly to 5Star.

## **8. Events**

- A. Patty led a discussion soliciting opinions on the purpose of the Chamber and how that purpose has been reflected in historic events hosted by the Chamber and what this should look like as we move forward. Debbie Jones asked, "What then is the job of the Chamber if not to host events? Chris felt there was value in events, however, there needs to be a more strategic approach to planning and organizing of the events. Jan mentioned that Minocqua has a group of "Ambassadors" who play the key roles in planning and organization of events and asked if this was something we could foster among our members. Since recruitment of volunteers has been a continuing challenge, installing Ambassadors might be just as challenging, especially during shoulder seasons when so many of our members are not available.
- B. Chamber After 5, which was scheduled to be held at Little Bohemia, on September 15<sup>th</sup>, was cancelled by Debbie Jones, proprietor of the restaurant. The reason being, she felt uninformed of the recent changes in how raffles need to be executed. She also felt that she would be presenting false intentions to the public if she held the Chamber After 5 under the corrected raffle laws. She also had concerns for non-profit organizations would now have to purchase their own raffle license to be the recipient of donation proceeds. The discussion continued with an inquiry as to what the purpose of holding CA5s. Debbie thought CA5 events were people to get to know what a business was all about, and Jan said it was a networking opportunity. Frank added that considering the information provided during the audit conducted by the Office of Charitable Gaming, it is now the responsibility of the Chamber to educate people and provide resources for others. That said, Patty agreed, and said she would send a letter to all non-profits explaining the changes to how raffles will be run in the future and providing contact information for the Office of Charitable Gaming.
- C. October 20, 2021 will be the final CA5 for the year. It is scheduled to take place at Ole Shillelagh with proceeds going to the Lakes Association.
- D. A meeting was held with Patty, Doug Zeise (Alliance Foundation), John Heusinkveld (NLDC), Ryan Wahlgren (NLDC), and Laurel Tschurwald via phone (Alliance Member) to discuss the possibility of bringing back Bad Dash in 2022. The Alliance Foundation, along with the Discovery Center are willing to oversee the event with the Chamber participating as a sponsor. There was talk about combining the Solstice Festival with Bad Dash and adding a paddling component. These details are yet to be determined.
- E. Friday cranberry marsh tours are now starting at the Cranberry Square Market, on Alder Lake Road. Attendance has been from 40 – 60 people and visitors seem to prefer the "one stop" variation over the traditional way of hosting folks at the Community Center first, and then asking that they drive over to the marshes following a brief presentation.

- F. Acquiring participants for the Taste of Harvest, scheduled to occur concurrently with Cran-a-Rama on October 2, has been challenging. The difficulty seems to be that staffing is low and that it would not be feasible to send people to an off-site event such as this. We will continue reaching out to local restaurateurs, offering volunteers to serve their food.
- G. A letter went out asking local restaurants to submit bids for the Chamber of Commerce Annual Dinner and Meeting. No bids were received. Larry Voss has offered to host the dinner should no Bids be received and if approved by the Board.
- H. Patty asked if the Board had any preference as to holding Marvel in Manitowish Waters at Christmas time in the traditional manner or keeping COVID in mind, repeating the "Drive Through Santa" experience that took place last year. No preferences were voiced. Patty said she would speak to Doug Zeise, since the Alliance plays a big role in the celebration, to illicit his thoughts on how the event should be organized this year.
- I. A bass tournament championship is being planned for September 24 -25, 2022. It will be hosted by Becky Gaskill and the Wisconsin Bass Team Trail. They held a similar event on the Chain in 2019 and it proved so successful that they would like to do it again. They have asked that the Chamber be a sponsor for the event. Board members appeared to be in favor of this. More details to come.

## **9. Director's Report**

- A. Bob Fuller updated us on the proposed Dog Park. He reported that he currently has 93 signatures and \$12,000 in pledges, but has not yet established a bank account because he still needs to set up a 501 3-C.
- B. A new indoor recreation center has been planned to be housed in the old Fire Department building. The Chamber is prepared to release a check in the amount of \$16,000 for the procurement of equipment and other expected needs to the Town, who will assume full responsibility for the renovation and management of the center.
- C. Patty reported that her first meeting with the Directors from Vilas County Chambers of Commerce, which was hosted by the Land O' Lakes Chamber was positive and engaging. The next meeting will be hosted by the Saynor Chamber on October 14, 2021.

**10. Date and Time of next Board Meeting** will be October 28, 2021, at 8:30 am, in the Manitowish Waters Town Hall Community Center.

**11. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 am.**