President’s Report – 2019 Annual General Meeting
Submitted by Li Read, President

Welcome to the 2019 Annual General Meeting of the Salt Spring Chamber of Commerce.

An AGM is a summing up and a report on Chamber initiatives since the 2018 AGM last June. In short, 2018/2019 was a year of change at the Chamber.

Between June 2018 and June 2019, the Chamber experienced some changes.

- Janet Clouston, the executive director for seven years, left in mid-September.
- The work at the Chamber office was ably managed by Gail Beattie and Len Brown. A thank you to them both, for their important extended efforts between October and January.
- October saw the annual Sip & Savour event, showcasing our agricultural community.
- The annual community/business awards celebration took place in November, an elegant event, organized in 2018 by then Director Deborah Osborne.
- Three Directors (Alex Brocklebank, Yvonne Poirier, and Martin Ogilvie) were tasked with searching out a new executive director. Several excellent candidates responded and were interviewed and a new executive director was announced in early January. A big welcome to Jessica Harkema, who began her Chamber duties on February 4th.
- March saw the busy Home and Garden Show, highlighting our local trades and suppliers.
- Both Sip & Savour and the Home & Garden Show were also events that were targeted to expand the offerings in the "shoulder" season.

The Chamber is a non-profit, dependent on memberships and sponsors. Thank you to all members for continuing their community support via consistent annual memberships.

Thank you to all the major sponsors who generously maintain the initiatives that help sustain our business community: Mouat’s, Country Grocer, Thrifty’s, Windsor. An additional thank you to the businesses that sponsor specific events, this is such a valued and appreciated connection.

The Chamber has taken over the Welcome Wagon opportunity and thank you to Director Terri Skjaveland, the liaison between the Visitors Centre and the Chamber Board, for overseeing this.

In August, 2018, a spate of disturbing vandalism began to occur in Ganges Village. This damage continues today. Several storefrons saw broken windows, some more than once. The homeless situation also was making itself felt in seaside Ganges Village.

The Chamber spearheaded a viable effort to solve some of these big picture societal problems. Several important meetings, involving several different community sectors, were organized by Director Ian Clement, between December and early June. A task force is now in place. Advocacy is definitely one of the important roles of the Chamber.
During the economic downturn, which afflicted secondary home areas such as Salt Spring, the Chamber, as the DMO (Destination Marketing Organization) worked to bring back tourism. In both 2017 and 2018, businesses noted that their summer season had returned to (or been better than) pre-downturn days.

Three years ago, Destination B.C. required communities to work together re funding/grants for tourism support. The Salt Spring Chamber worked to help begin and to sustain the Experience the Southern Gulf Islands project. This involves Salt Spring, Galiano, Mayne, Saturna, and Pender Islands. This work continues, and led to the creation of a DMMO (Destination Marketing and Management Organization) in 2019. This has involved both the Chamber and the EDC (Economic Development Commission), a portfolio under the CRD. Director Jeremy Millsom was integral in the DMMO creation. The DMMO is unlikely to be ready to act on its own for perhaps another year.

Jeremy Millsom also wrote to the Trust, on behalf of the Accommodations sector, in response to the Trust Bylaw Enforcement Officer’s stance on vacation rentals, as published recently in the Driftwood.

As the president, I wrote several letters to our MLA (about the water moratorium, which stops construction of four funded and permitted work rental/affordable housing projects, in support of the boardwalk completion process, in support of the completion of the Salt Spring Marina's new docks, in support of the community work to solve the vandalism problem).

Perhaps seven years ago, Director Matt Steffich began his work to bring the Boardwalk to completion. Matt has been involved in many meetings with all the stakeholders and has kept the focus on the final version of the Harbour Walk. Matt has given us all a lesson in directed patience.

The following Directors have also given hugely of their time, and all have worked to create solid outcomes for the business community: Yvonne Poirier, Ken Marr, Dennis Maguire, Matteo Hermani, and Martin Ogilvie. All Directors are volunteers and the membership can be assured that the entire Chamber Board is proactive.

As we enter into the 2019/2020 Chamber year (June to June), there are new initiatives underway. Our talented Executive Director, Jessica Harkema, has the best interests of the Chamber firmly in mind, and will be sharing new projects with the membership.
Submitted by Gail Beattie, Financial Services and Membership

Revenues are below budget in several areas.

- Our membership revenues are below our rather aggressive budget projections. It should be noted that they are on par with last year, up 4% over fiscal 2017 and up 25% over fiscal 2016. We hired Len at the beginning of fiscal 2017 and this is reflected in the increase in membership revenues beginning that year. For the purposes of budgeting, history shows that we we should expect only a modest increase in membership revenues for fiscal 2020, unless membership fees are increased.
- We only received 50% of our Canada Summer Jobs Grant due to not being able to find qualified students. This has been made easier this year because the pool has been opened to include all youth under 30 regardless of their school status.
- The accountant has rearranged our accounting for Visitor Guide and Map revenue for reporting purposes. Actual sales are on par with last year.

Expenses for the year were within expected ranges. We spent more on bookkeeping and admin and contract labour and less on payroll as a result of being without an ED for several months. Event expenses exceeded projections as a result of having to hire a coordinator for Sip and Savour and Home and Garden Show. This situation results in not just having an extra expense for the coordinator but also the lack of control from within the office over operational expenses for an event. This will not be an issue going forward. A broad observation is that we tend to undercharge for our ticketed events, compared to ticketed events in other communities. This will be carefully reviewed for future events.

Overall, in spite of the fact that the Chamber year for fiscal 2019 did not play out in the way we envisioned when the budget was constructed, we managed to finish the year in a reasonable financial position. It is anticipated that we will be able to more accurately plan for activities and expenditures for fiscal 2020.

Respectfully Submitted Gail Beattie
Financial Services and Membership
“Project Ganges” Committee Report – 2019 Annual General Meeting
Submitted by Ian Clement, Director

The last 12 months have seen some very significant, and exciting, additions to the mission of your Chamber Board.

These changes were precipitated by a widespread sense of an ‘absence of governance’ following the incorporation referendum in 2017- and were then accelerated by events in Ganges that included blatantly lawless behaviour and conspicuous vandalism. The separation of governmental jurisdictions -and absence of any structure that provides coordination between the various agencies that provide services on the island - has made it apparent that the community itself must find a way to navigate through these challenges.

Among other developments, these factors and forces resulted in your Board convening many meetings - and much the eventual creation of a “Ganges security Task Force”, which has already attracted community support. Perhaps more importantly for the long-term, consideration of the situation has also caused your Board to recognize that it is legitimate for the Chamber to seek to promote and improve the civic and social welfare of the community* – in addition to its traditional role of supporting economic vitality.

In recent months, this realization has further evolved into an appreciation that, since there is in existence no other broadly-based community organization with both credibility and an appropriate mandate, it effectively falls to the Chamber to act as a “‘placeholder’ for governance” - until some other form of governance takes its place. This represents both an awesome challenge, as well as an exciting opportunity to truly provide enduring value to our community.

Background

In the aftermath of the Incorporation referendum, a number of organizations on the island acknowledged that the need for better governance for the island remained a continuing and live issue - that could benefit from a continued search for solutions. The focus of the Chamber Board became achieving better governance for Ganges, which we had come to see as the “beating heart of our community”. This led to the idea of “Project Ganges” – a Chamber initiative to undertake an annual volunteer clean up of the streets and sidewalks in the Village, whilst at the same time raising awareness around other gaps in services and governance.

This Chamber exploration of governance gaps and deficiencies in turn led to participation in the Salt Spring Community Alliance (SSCA) Governance Working Group (GWG), which produced a 54 page report (link: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1pSfTULEwgmOSbLalywAmqIxTgZk5CCbl/view ) in September, 2018. During its participation in the SSCA GWG, the Chamber advocated for consideration of the creation of a Local Community Commission (LCC) for Ganges - as opposed to a single such commission that attempts to address the challenges confronting the island in its entirety.
A few months later, the smashing of various Chamber members’ windows during a power outage launched the Board into a series of meetings with stakeholders in the Ganges community, including business owners, landlords, the RCMP, CRD, Islands Trust, Coast Guard, HASSI, Community Services, Church leadership, Ganges residents and others. Some of these meetings, including two well attended ones held in local convention facilities, were in fact convened by us at the specific request of our CRD Regional Director. A Summary of the second such meeting can be viewed on the Chamber website (under the “About us”, “Advocacy and Community Involvement” tab): https://www.saltspringchamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Meeting-SUMMARY_SSI-safetyhomelessness_April-15.19-final.pdf

These meetings (which are anticipated to resume in the Autumn, and will include members of the island homeless community) have been well received and have produced many favourable comments. One of the concrete and positive results has been the formation of a “Ganges security Task Force” that has attracted participation from a number of prominent and motivated community members. The Task Force is in the final stages of surveying businesses and residents in Ganges, in preparation for the creation of a community policing initiative and a deeper engagement with policing on the island.

Your Chamber Board has been involved, at a foundational level, in these evolving community initiatives and aims to stay at the forefront of positive and constructive changes in the community. We look forward to engaging with, and drawing upon the many talents and skills of, our membership in the months to come.

Ian Clement
Director
June 7, 2019

* The Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce is incorporated as a board of trade pursuant to the (federal) Boards of Trade Act. S.44 of the Act provides:

44 (1) Any number of persons, not fewer than thirty, who are directly or indirectly engaged or interested in trade, commerce or the economic and social welfare of any district, whether residents of the district or not, may associate themselves together as a board of trade for the purpose of promoting and improving trade and commerce and the economic, civic and social welfare of the district.
Executive Directors Report – 2019 Annual General Meeting
Submitted by Jessica Harkema, Executive Director

It has been a busy few months since I started as the Executive Director on February 4th of this year. I hit the ground running to catch-up and get a footing in the position which I am finally getting a hang of. The Chamber is very fortunate to have Gail Beattie and Len Brown, who stepped up to the plate to do all the heavy lifting during the four month period without an Executive Director. The two of them, along with help from Board members and a hired event coordinator successfully planned and executed Sip & Savour and the Salty Awards, as well as kept the office running.

In March we hosted the 3rd Annual Home & Garden Show. The event planning was well underway before my start date, and was successfully planned and executed. I was lucky to be able to participate in conjunction with the event planner to identify successful aspects and areas for improvement. The event attendance was lower than the previous year, but the amazing March weather likely had a significant impact. The follow-up response was very positive from participating businesses to expand the event in 2020.

Since my appointment, there have been many changes. I have shifted the day to day focus to members, working on how to best serve the large variety of business types that make up our membership, and plan to further dial in on membership in the 2019/2020 year. Since starting, membership has increased, which I hope to keep expanding.

One major change is better utilizing the Chamber’s online tools. Though our two websites are very powerful, fully Search Engine Optimized and mobile first, many adjustments have been made with more to come. In addition to working on the websites, similar work has been put into Social Media. Our reach is increasing daily with a lot of headway to go. Be sure to interact with Salt Spring Chamber and Salt Spring Tourism on social media to help further your reach and connect with businesses, locals and visitors!

A first for the Chamber, the Board’s advocacy initiatives are now being shared publicly. An on-going project, you can find the current advocacy initiatives and community involvement on our website – in particular Ian Clement’s efforts in addressing the issues facing Ganges specifically vandalism, safety and homelessness. Posted on this page is the Community Meeting Report, where Ian successfully coordinated a meeting with over 30 individuals representing a variety of organizations. This webpage is in its infant stage, check back for updates.

The conversation around the Chamber’s role in the Salt Spring Community is becoming more relevant. Looking at the past, the Chamber has been chameleon like, changing its colours as the community’s needs change. When there has been a gap, the Chamber filled it – an important example is the need for Destination Marketing. The Chamber stepped up to marketing Salt Spring and the Southern Gulf Islands. Since then, tourism numbers are very high during the summer months, and the work to promote Salt Spring in the shoulder seasons is showing its results now. Whatever the issue is, the Chamber’s fluidity and ability to adapt to the local needs, the Chamber is on it!
From this, stemmed the concept of the Destination Management and Marketing Organization (DMMO). Jeremy Milsom worked in conjunction with a volunteer committee to bring the DMMO forward. Please refer to the distributed document. The creation of the DMMO is a success for Salt Spring, and one of my key roles to date and going forward is to transition the Chamber away from the marketing of the Southern Gulf Islands, and back to focusing on Salt Spring and the needs of our business community.

Lastly, the planning process for Sip & Savour 2019 has already begun. A save the date, sponsorship package and returning vendor registration packaged was distributed in May with a positive take up on registrations.

I would like to thank Gail and Len who have graciously guided me through my transition into this exciting role. And a special thank you to the Board of Directors for warmly welcoming me and instilling their trust in me to move the Chamber forward over the next few years.

Lastly, a special thank you to our premier sponsors: Mouat’s Trading, Thrifty Foods, Country Grocer and Windsor Plywood. All of whom I have had the pleasure of working with already, and I am excited to continue the positive relationships that exist between us.

Jessica Harkema
Executive Director
Board Walk Update
Salt Spring Island Chamber of Commerce AGM - June 12, 2019

Much has happened regarding the steps taken towards completing the Harbour Walk since the last AGM.

The CRD has completed four studies: Archeological, Seismic, Structural and Environmental. All four reports came back positive and confirmed that there is no reason why the Harbour Walk can't be completed. A updated site survey confirms that the right of way is all on Crown Land and not on private property.

In April the provincial government agency responsible for granting the water lease to the marina, met with our group from Salt Spring for two hours and came to the conclusion that we, the islanders, have an very good case for completing the project.

Our Salt Spring group will again meet with the government along with the marina owner to try and hammer out a deal that works for both parties. If that meeting does not produce results, then the government is prepared to engage a mediator in a further attempt to find a solution. That meeting is slated for the end of June.

Matt Steffich
Vice President
Chair of the Harbour Walk Steering Committee
Destination Management and Marketing for the Southern Gulf Islands

WHAT IS IT? THE BIG PICTURE ACCOMPLISHMENT
Starting in late 2016, our Chamber has supported the process that will allow the 5 Island “SGI” communities, as a region, to raise substantial & sustainable funds for improvements in year-round tourism sector management and marketing. In brief:
- The visiting guest pays – a 2% MRDT is a “pass thru fee” and is added to the guest’s accommodations.
- Preliminary support was received, in this initiative, from a majority of PST collecting tourism properties and rooms on the 5 islands.
- In May 2019, approval was received from the BC Legislature for MRDT to be collected from guests by the accommodators starting in September. It will be returned by the Province back to the local stakeholder managed SSI-SGI Tourism Partnership Organization (the DMMO) and invested in accordance with a strategic business plan primarily focused on growing shoulder season business volume within the existing strengths, environmental sensitivities and rural culture of our islands.
- The DMMO will be directed under the BC Societies Act by a local member elected board and will be financially accountable for the DMMO funding.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND GOALS EXPECTED
Enact a planned strategy to promote the attractiveness of the SGIs as a year-round, regional destination that will create a longer, gentler tourism pattern reflecting community needs and values, and encourages broader community participation and benefit.

Strategy & Focus:
- Cooperative marketing campaigns in sectors such as biking, wellness, arts and personal growth, Agri-tourism, boating, hiking, and weddings, educational and cultural events; ie Yoga, personal growth, self-awareness, and a special “Place to Unwind”
- Nature travel and experiences that tie into, or partner with neighboring communities and regions that have complimentary traits. To recognize and promote “Eco-Tourism” and “Edu-Tourism” as growing trends and opportunities.
- Building more full-time employment opportunities that will attract younger families and needed workers; enhancing economic sustainability and more balanced demographics.
- Increasing awareness of, and setting environmental leadership in being the recognized place for more “Green Business” start-ups
- Building resources and opportunities for more shared labour and workforce housing
- Growing activity partner relationships with the other SG Islands and surrounding communities.

THE NEXT STEPS
- Initiate transitional directions for the Chamber and the DMMO to provide Community leadership and advocacy for business and economic resilience and sustainability.