

## St. Marys Business Improvement Area (BIA)



Board of Management Meeting  
6:00 PM at Damen's  
Thur April 7, 2011

### Minutes

1. Call to order and confirmation of quorum and Chair's remarks  
Present: Chair - Bill Chmura, Secretary - Charlie Hammond, Treasurer - Sue Hyatt Griffiths, Kate Stewart, Burt Damen, Carey Pope,  
Regrets: Tammy Kempen, Michael Buranyi, Kelly Lyn Baird  
Guests: Tim Wolfe, Parks Department Town of St. Marys
2. Approval of the printed agenda Motion Kate, Second Sue  
Additions: none
3. Minutes of previous meetings  
3.1 March 17, 2011 Motion: Sue, Second: Kate, Passed  
Errors and Omissions: None
4. Reports
  - a. Secretary - Charlie:
    - i. BIA conference in London in April. It was decided that Sue would attend on the Tue.
    - ii. There is a meeting "The Perth Community Futures Development Corporation", "Notice of Annual Meeting". Charlie will attend with Kate as it is at her store location on April 12<sup>th</sup> at 9 AM.
  - b. Treasurer - Sue:
    - i. HST and GST refunds have been applied for. Total rebate should be \$2858.09.
    - ii. A list last months expenses were presented.
  - c. Town Council –
    - i. Carey gave us an update on Council. She reports they are having a Public meeting on the budget at the Golf Club on April 13<sup>th</sup>.
    - ii. Discussion on many complaints of slow snow removal this winter. Carey attended a Public works meeting on Tue. at which Charlie and Bill presented the BIA and DMA concerns regarding snow banks and sidewalk clearing. After much discussion it was decided that the town would clear snow banks once they reached 2 ft. in height. The town is looking at a grasshopper style snow blower that could do clearing of the sidewalks. Charlie and Bill pointed out the recent appeal court decision that sidewalks must be treated the same as road ways by the town. The town can not pass responsibility off to the merchants or property owners for snow clearing. It is in every ones best interest to work together to solve the snow clearing

problem. Ice and water coming from store property and creating a hazard for pedestrians must be addressed by the store owners. The town is going to seek legal advice on their responsibility.

- iii. BR&E study report- Town of St. Marys Economic Development received a grant to work with the business community in St. Marys and that a coordinator would be hired on contract to carry out the research. A search for coordinator has been held Carey does not know if any were hired yet. The BIA will inquire as to its progress.

d. DMA Report - Sue

- i. The DMA did not meet since last meeting.
- ii. The DMA they are doing 8 programs with BX93 this year.
- iii. They are looking into placing bus ads in Stratford.

e. Economic Development Committee - Michael no report

f. Tourism - Kelly Lyn no report

5. Regular Updates

- a. Banner Program - Winter banners will come down this weekend.
- b. Directional and Street Signs – Sue has looked into the costs of placing ads on a Stratford bus. We have a budget of \$4000 for billboards. This was discussed and approved by the board.
- c. Recycling Units and Town benches:
  - i. Rob Brindley is looking into getting the town to do garbage pickup downtown. We would like the town to do recycle bins as well as garbage. We asked the Works committee to looking it. Charlie is to send a letter.
- d. Sidewalk- DMA is concerned about empty store that were very poorly shovel this winter. The town failed to enforce its cleaning responsibility.

6. New Business: Tim Wolfe made a presentation about doing a major face lift to the downtown landscaping.

- a. He proposed removing several trees on Queen St. and placing interlock brick in space left. He would then recommend placing 31” Brunello style planters in those spots. He felt the trees have become deformed and cut down so much they add nothing of value to the appearance of the downtown. After mush discussion he got support from the BIA to order 20 of the unit in Black and to go ahead with the project.
- b. Tim wants to concrete in the holes left on the sidewalks on the side streets. This was agreed to for safety reasons.
- c. The town will pick up the cost of soil and plants if we buy the planter. This was agreed to by all.
- d. The BIA wants to install bike racks on the space left by the trees. Tim agreed the town would have no objections to this and would store them and the planters for us in the winter.
- e. The BIA passed a budget of \$5000 for the planters to come out of our Capital fund.

7. Outstanding bills to be paid: Approved

8. Next meeting May 5, 2011. Location Damen’s.

# Down shovels: the city should clear the sidewalks

IT'S THE MIDDLE of March and winter has yet to relax its icy grasp on Canadians. Last week, much of the country faced a late-season snowstorm and the prospect of yet more shovelling. Regardless of the snowfall, however, the burden of hoisting snow and chipping ice is not distributed equally across the country—particularly when it comes to sidewalks.

Many Canadian cities plow their sidewalks, as well as roads. Like drinkable water and street lights that work, clear sidewalks are a basic municipal service in these urban centres. And yet numerous other cities have abandoned their sidewalk plows and dumped the job on residents instead. Is this fair?

Last month, Calgary received two snowy surprises. An early February blizzard left much of the city under a thick white blanket that required removing. Calgary residents must clear the sidewalk in front of their homes down to bare pavement within 24 hours of a snowfall, on pain of a \$150 bill for a city crew to do the work. To the surprise of many, however, it was subsequently revealed that residents are responsible for shovelling any community trails that abut their property as well. A homeowner's obligation to clear Calgary's 700-km-long pathway system was apparently added to the books in 2004, but

left unpublicized until now. Hey Calgary: don't forget to stretch.

No Canadian city would ever expect residents to keep the roads in front of their houses clear of snow and ice for the benefit of cars and buses. Yet Vancouver residents are expected to have their sidewalks cleaned for pedestrians by 10 a.m. daily. Saskatoon gives its citizens 24 hours to get the job done. Numerous other cities, including Edmonton, Windsor, Ont., Hamilton, Kitchener, Ont., and Waterloo, Ont., have also off-loaded responsibility for sidewalk shovelling onto residents, although Calgary appears to be breaking new ground with its demand that citizens shovel the path behind their house as well as the sidewalk out front.

Curiously, many other Canadian cities, including Winnipeg, Ottawa, Montreal, Quebec City, Fredericton and the majority of Metro Toronto, manage to keep sidewalks clear as part of their routine duties. Sidewalks may be lower on the priority list than roads and bridges, but the effort is there. So what explains this snowy divide?

Cities that require citizens to do their own shovelling frequently cite the heavy cost of sidewalk clearing and limited budgets. But sidewalk plowing appears to be one of the



TOM HANSON/CP

great bargains of municipal governance. Winnipeg, for example, manages to keep its sidewalks free from snow and ice for \$2 million a year, or less than \$7 per household. Try finding a teenager willing to shovel your driveway just once for \$7, let alone a whole season.

Some civic politicians may hope off-loading responsibility for snow removal will help them avoid lawsuits. But a municipality cannot

dodge its liability for slips and falls on icy sidewalks simply because it forces homeowners to do the job. According to a 2000 Ontario Court of Appeal decision that has been cited nationwide, "snow and ice accumulating on public sidewalks... are the legal responsibility of the municipality, not the property owner." And this holds regardless of bylaws or fines. The city owns the sidewalk and is ultimately responsible for keeping it clear.

TARA WALTON/TORONTO STAR

Beyond the financial or legal issues, however, the attitude of a city toward its sidewalks says a lot about political commitment and public concern. Nearly every Canadian city has recently made some sort of pledge in support of active transportation or becoming "pedestrian friendly." A city that refuses to clean its own sidewalks makes a mockery of such commitments.

"Sidewalks are a fundamental element of the urban transportation infrastructure," says Barry Waller, professor emeritus of geography at the University of Ottawa and creator of a walkability index for Canadian cities. "It is bizarre that any city would fail to provide the same level of service for sidewalks that it does for roads. This makes its pedestrians second-class citizens."

Homeowners coerced into doing the city's job will inevitably produce widely varying results; and this has nothing to do with good citizenship or courtesy. Chopping ice and clearing snow are hard work, particularly for elderly residents. When some sidewalks are bare and others covered with snow, pedestrians and joggers migrate onto roads, making life difficult for everyone. Driving a plow down the length of a sidewalk keeps everything consistent and safe. Besides, sidewalk-clearing bylaws encourage neighbours to complain about each other's snow-clearing habits. There's no upside to sidewalk shovelling.

In the interests of fairness and common sense, next winter all Canadians should demand their cities provide snow-free sidewalks. Exhausted shovellers unite! ♣