

## AGM 2023 President's Report - Janice Christie

### Sheet Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs

1 February, 2023

It is my pleasure to address you this evening to share with you what the Chamber of Commerce and Civic Affairs has been working on - on behalf of the catchment area of the Eastern Shore – East Ship Harbour to Ecum Secum.

When I was elected as President last spring, I immediately looked up the mission of the Chamber: To paraphrase:

“We provide a *voice* for the local business community” - having been established in 1935 – 88 years and we are *still* going strong.

The Sheet Harbour and Area Chamber of Commerce's *main objective is to facilitate the growth of the economy of this region.*

The benefit of *being a member* of the Chamber and *Civic Affairs*, as a business or an individual, *means you'll be a part of shaping the community.* You are part of the voice of the Chamber.

The Chamber *hosts business and social functions* which provide the opportunity to *network*. These events allow you to expand *your* business and social contacts.”

Early on last spring - I made the observation that really we all have the same objective: to prosper in *whatever our personal objectives* are : whether it be a large business providing service and employment to our area; a small business – perhaps with only one employee; a new business – struggling to get established ; recreation and leisure endeavours to bring balance to your work and home life.

The important thing is that while we work individually, we also work together with the common goal in making our communities welcoming and viable... respecting our traditions passed down over generations while being open to newcomers and their ideas and energies and expertise and desires and goals.

And so : I listened to what was a common theme at last years AGM –

“Who are we as group and what do we want to achieve?”

Well – in my mind we are an eclectic group who, each in their own way, are contributing to the success and growth of the Eastern Shore...individually *and* collectively.

A few years ago our communities were dangerously close to literally and figuratively dying..... but because the 'hidden gem of the Eastern Shore' is being re-discovered -partially because of the effects of the pandemic- we are celebrating a boom.... newcomers, new homeowners, new businesses, new retirees..... new families.

We want to be a welcoming, thriving community to live , work and play. We have breathtaking scenic beauty and geography and wonderful , friendly people who contribute so much to the vibrancy of our region.

Our new school, Marine Drive Academy, is close to capacity..... housing is on the agenda in many communities.....recruitment and retention for medical staff is in the works.

The Chamber has countless **volunteers** working behind the scenes : in between these monthly Chamber meetings.... Talking and planning and doing.

The committees of the Chamber are active and busy: MacPhee House has a seasonal staff of students who bring activity and residents and visitors – managed by committed volunteers.

Mainstreet Streetscape has its own set of volunteers – decorating, clean up - and installation and maintenance of the trees and Banners, to name a few.

The Marina committee, after a decade of commitment has made huge strides this year with acquiring land and a dock... hosting a celebratory barbeque on site in July and a fall banquet and are now moving full steam ahead with their plans and endeavours. This marina will prove to be a huge asset to the Eastern Shore.

The Eastern Shore Lifestyle Centre is getting traction. The site, while not formally announced, is being prepared and the plan for design and construction is starting to take shape. The communities all along the Eastern Shore have been unbelievably supportive in the fund-raising efforts of this facility – raising over \$150,000 (*Update: As of March, 2023 the amount in trust with the Sheet Harbour Lions Club currently stands at \$160,000.*) - over and above the 9.6 M committed by HRM, the Province and the federal government. Those monies raised will be for the 'extras'.

Our Social committee hosted a welcoming barbeque for newcomers, and sponsored a highly successful 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Christmas on Main Street with over 50 vendors. A banquet and auction is currently being planned for April 29<sup>th</sup>.

The marketing committee has been active developing a plan of action for promoting greater communication between members, to the community at large and outward to the province and beyond. The website and calendar - dormant during the pandemic - is currently being updated and revived with even bigger plans for the future. Starting March 1 the minutes and news of the Chamber will be updated frequently on the page. The marketing committee has also been active in communicating with resources within government as to how they can benefit this community. Staff members from TIANS (Tourist Industry Association of Nova Scotia) participated in a local workshop to further promote the community and a Farmers Market was introduced over the summer which gave vendors and customers an opportunity to share their wares.

The committee that is currently vacant is the important Economic Development so I would like you to give some thought of volunteering for this position.

A number of business COURSES are offered frequently via ZOOM, coordinated by a Chamber volunteer, are both beneficial to the residents of the community and profitable for the Chamber with \$1000 contributed per course, to the Chamber.

It was shocking to us this past August to have Scotiabank abandon the Shore after a century .... But thank you to Credit Union who still provides services here.

And of course we have our *anchor businesses* from the Shore who contribute so much to our economy – and new large companies who have chosen our area to do their work and business. We acknowledge them for their contributions to our locals who have secure employment with them...

The Chamber has been busy hosting guests throughout the year:

Discover Halifax made a presentation and impressed upon the Chamber the benefit of becoming a member – and they offer a free membership. There are kiosks throughout HRM that promotes local attractions in those areas. We can have our own kiosk that tourists can, at a glance, see our beaches, museum, restaurants, cafes, motels, breweries, shopping, artistry, activities, trails, and *so much more*....but it takes the effort of those involved in these areas to reach out and participate..... Again we all have the same objective – and working together to promote ourselves and each other - benefits us all.

The Community Advisory Committee which has the mandate of health care professionals' recruitment and retention - as well as community visioning - has been welcomed as a committee under the Chamber. This committee has a large mandate and is making big strides..... More to follow in the coming weeks.... Members of this committee and MLA Kent Smith were guests at the January meeting and were forthright with the challenges being faced by the community regarding health care at a local level for this catchment area.

Greater Halifax Partnership made a presentation to the Chamber members to illustrate the benefits and what is offered to our community.

Michelle Williams, a Wellness Hub Navigator spoke of her work in the community- particularly for seniors.

Mayor Mike Savage and Councillor Hendsbee were guests of the Chamber executive at a luncheon where a frank discussion took place about the challenges of being a volunteer organization that benefits the community of the Shore at large – but really requires paid employees on many levels... *including* further development of the website and communications.

Sean Fraser, MP for Central Nova chaired a Round Table for a dozen representatives of small businesses, particularly tourism based, from the catchment area. His intention was to hear what challenges these businesses face in a rural setting and to provide information about the variety of funding opportunities offered by the federal government. His assistant, Jennifer, is coming back for a follow up and forwarded links to current funding applications which has been shared via Email with the membership.

Individual businesses have reached out offering support to the Chamber in a variety of ways and expressed interest in what we see as our mandate .... *“Being the voice for the business community, and the civic activities within the area.”*

How does being a member benefit you? You receive up to date emails about what is being offered... such as what I outlined above. You have the opportunity to be informed and to have a voice.....by attending the meetings you have the opportunity to be involved in the current activities. By participating you are part of the vibrancy

of the Chamber. Your membership dues are a much-needed financial support for our endeavours.

In addition to the Chamber there are so many organizations all along the Shore that bring life to their communities.....the new Ecum Secum playground, coordinated by six local mothers. The Moser River Community Centre that hosts a wide variety of events; SR Balcom Centre in Port Dufferin that is a beehive of activity; the Sheet Harbour Legion that has been upgraded over the past decade and hosts so much for residents; The Lions who continue to support community events, especially Seaside Festival and to serve their fellow residents; Ground Search and Rescue ; The ATV Club and Trails Association; The Friends of Taylors Head; Mushaboom Fire Hall; Tangier Firehall; Spry Bay Church Hall; Ship Harbour Legion... all of the churches and church groups. So much *activity*. So many *volunteers*. So much *life*. So much *civic* life.

Next week, Feb. 7, 2023 at 6:30 pm Doug Griffiths author of 13 Ways to Kill Your Community will be speaker at the Musquodoboit Rink to share his insight as to how to make communities grow and prosper. It is a free event. There is still room on the Lions Bus at \$10 pp. Contact Meryl Atkinson if you are interested in coming on the Lions Van. Sponsored by three Chambers and a number of businesses. Coordinated by our MLA Kent Smith.

As a result of one of his suggestions – Engage the youth- it is currently in the works to see about creating a Junior Chamber – engaging youth from ages 15- 30.

I challenge you to do two things. *Pay your dues* in a timely manner and maintain your membership. And send out an email to anyone of the committees I mentioned or any organization and say to them :

“This is what I’d like to do to support my community....”

And then tell them how.

Is it financial? Labour? Technical? Moral support? Peeling vegetables or selling tickets?

Your community wants you and needs you.

You can decide how - but make a decision to do something within your means and ability to participate.

Thank you to every single Volunteer who has contributed time and talent to the work of the Chamber this year and in some cases....every year.

***You are the lifeblood of the community.***

I wish to acknowledge the **Directors** and their dedication to the Chamber. Your volunteerism is next level and, on behalf of our community, I thank you.

It is my honour to have worked with and for the community during this past year.

My goal as I stated from the first meeting I chaired is to represent all of you....

1. I am trying to Focus on the value of the Chamber at large and how every spoke in the hub improves the wheel.
2. I am working to improve Communication ; a work in progress.....but we *are* progressing.

We, as members, should know what other members are working on to see the big picture of what this community has to offer our residents, our newcomers, our guests and our tourists.

So read the minutes and attend the meetings and keep in the know.

3. And to be Welcoming. The community needs to know we are open to all .... businesses and individuals.

**Talk about us.**

**Be proud of us.**

**Attend the meetings.**

**Invite others.**

Thank you.

*Janice*