

MARKDALE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

2010 – Year in Review

Presented as an annual report to the membership of the Markdale Chamber of Commerce at the Annual General Meeting, held Nov. 18, 2010 at Steven's Restaurant in Markdale.

HIGHLIGHTS

We were successful in a bid to obtain funds from the estate of FT Hill as a bequest to form a FT Hill Economic Development Trust. A cross-sectoral Business Retention & Expansion study was conducted in the winter and early spring of 2010 with funds from the Community Futures Rural Development Fund 9as provided through the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation). Chamber applied for and received \$25,000 grant from the Ministry of Culture's Creative Communities Prosperity Fund, to look at integrating local culture into municipal planning. Chamber has successfully partnered with the Highlands Community Co-operative on a Healthy Communities Fund grant from the provincial Ministry of Health Promotions. A new JCP staff position was created, starting November 2010. A Markdale Farmers' market was successfully launched in the spring and drew 7 vendors (new Chamber members) in the summer.

CHAMBER INITIATIVES

FT HILL ESTATE FINANCIAL TRUST:

Beginning back in 2006, the Chamber submitted a case to the Office of the Public Trustee to receive bequest funds from the estate of FT Hill (a town father who was a founding influence on the village's business). The funds available were to "promote economic development in the Markdale area," as stipulated in Mr. Hill's last will and testament. Since at the time of the bequest (10 years after the death of any of FT Hill's relatives) came after the dissolution of the corporate entity of the Village of Markdale, the Chamber felt it was important for an organization representing the village make representation for the funds. Wayne Fitzgerald, who was president of the Chamber at the time (2006) made a written submission. This was followed up with a further updated submission in 2009. After some legal procedures and discussions between a distant relative, the municipality (which also applied for the funds) and the Chamber, as well as the Office of the Public Trustee and the Estate's Legal Representation funds were awarded (after costs) to several parties to the claim. By court order, the Chamber was awarded 80 per cent of the funds (approx. \$82,000) to "establish a segregated charitable trust known as the "Franklin Thomas Hill Memorial Charitable Trust for the Advancement of Industry, from which the income and capital shall be used in the discretion of the Markdale Chamber of Commerce exclusively for the public benefit to promote industry and commerce within the geographical boundaries of the Village of Markdale or within 3.2 kilometers (two miles) thereof."

The municipality received 20 per cent of the funds, with a direction to "establish a segregated charitable trust, to be known as the Franklin Thomas Hill Health Care Memorial Trust, from which income and capital shall be used in the discretion of the Municipality of Grey Highlands exclusively for the benefit of the Community Health Clinic in Markdale, Ontario."

Copies of both the 2006 and 2009 Chamber submissions and the final court judgment are available at the Chamber of Commerce offices at the Olde Firehall in Markdale.

MOVING FORWARD: The funds were received and have been on deposit at a bank in Markdale. The Chamber has met with the estate lawyer (Eber Willis) who is working with a colleague on drawing up the paperwork necessary to establish the fund as outlined above. The Chamber will report to the membership once this process is complete.

BUSINESS RETENTION & EXPANSION (BR&E) STUDY:

The Chamber embarked on a BR&E survey to look at the challenges and opportunities present in the local business community. This was a cross-sectoral study, which saw 52 businesses surveyed across Grey Highlands. Businesses surveyed were not necessarily Chamber members. With funding from the Community Futures Rural Development Funds (CFRDF) administered through the Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC) this project was funded from November 2009 to the end of March 2010. This allowed a project coordinator to be paid to administer the project. A volunteer leadership team, led by Chair Charmaine Peever (Markdale Chamber vice-president) and including representatives from the Flesherton & District Chamber, municipal council as well as the SEDC, was recruited to oversee the survey process.

Project Coordinator Kate Russell and Ms. Peever received training in the BR&E process through the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. OMAFRA developed the program over a decade ago to aid rural communities in analyzing local business climate and identifying area needs for existing business to thrive and expand the business and employment opportunities of rural residents. Volunteer visitors were recruited to interview randomly-selected businesses on a standard survey. The information collected was entered into an online database, which generates reports on the data for analysis and local priority setting. An interim report on the information collected was prepared, presented to municipal council and copied to participants and volunteer visitors for their information and follow-up.

After an April hiatus, a Task Force was formed, again under the leadership of Ms. Peever, to look at the data, determine local priorities and begin defining an implementation strategy to address business barriers and opportunities in the community. The task force consists of representatives from both local chambers, the Four County Training Board, OMAFRA, the Municipality of Grey Highlands, the Y Employment & Community Services; SEDC and interested local businesspeople and residents.

MOVING FORWARD: The Task Force has determined local priorities, is researching those priorities and developing recommendations to take to a public meeting to be scheduled sometime early in 2011.

MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLANNING INITIATIVE:

Leveraging the BR&E, the Chamber applied for a Creative Communities Prosperity Fund grant from the Ministry of Culture, to include cultural businesses in the BR&E, to create a cultural assets inventory for the municipality of Grey Highlands, to host public meetings to identify cultural stakeholders in the community, to host a 2-day municipal cultural planning workshop, update the community profile with cultural content and generally work towards including a “cultural lens” in future municipal planning initiatives. This grant of \$25,000 supports this project and is paying John Harrison, of Harrison Design & Research Corp. to guide the process and compile a final report for submission to the ministry and use by the municipality in future strategic planning and other planning areas.

The grant work plan has proceeded with cultural businesses included in the original BR&E, a draft cultural assets inventory (under review at public meetings and by stakeholders); two public meetings hosted at the Osprey Museum sites (Feversham and Rob Roy) in September; a 2-day municipal cultural planning workshop held at the Centre Grey Recreational Complex in Markdale at the end of October (featuring speaker Dan Taylor, Economic Development Officer from Prince Edward County) and the ongoing collection of information and photos for inclusion in an updated community profile. Many regional organizations attended the workshop to learn of this local initiative, which is blazing a trail for other regional municipalities to follow into the municipal cultural planning future.

The second day of the workshop included an opportunity for residents to brainstorm on local cultural ideas and initiatives, to find the local stories to create the local “cultural lens.” From this brainstorming session, a further “cultural think tank” has been created, with an inaugural meeting held on Nov. 13, 2010. This group is forming its structure to further guide the cultural planning process from a grassroots perspective.

MOVING FORWARD: The final reporting for the grant and the updated community profile is pending, with a deadline of March 31, 2011 (completion planned for February 2011). This report will be copied to all partners and submitted to the municipality for consideration in upcoming strategic planning, official plan review and other planning initiatives. The cultural “think tank” could potentially become a committee of council, a

subcommittee of the Economic Development Committee of the municipality and inform and develop future municipal cultural planning – as determined by the receptivity of the municipality and other parties to the creative cultural development of the municipality of Grey Highlands.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE:

The Chamber took a lead role in applying for a Healthy Communities Fund grant through the provincial Ministry of Health Promotions. This project was the brainchild of Carol Gott, General Manager of the Highlands Community Co-operative (formerly the Delphi Fitness center in Flesherton). The Chamber stepped up to be the lead partner, as the Co-op is so new it did not have a financial nor granting history to apply successfully. In partnership with other area and regional agencies (South East Grey Support Services (SEGSS); Markdale Agricultural Society; South Grey Museum; Grey Bruce Dragonboat Club; Grey Bruce Public Health Unit) this grant has provided fitness opportunities for clients of the SEGSS through the ALFA (Active Living For All) program. This program provides fitness training and opportunities for 45 clients, family and staff of SEGSS and will allow that organization to train the trainers in dealing with this specific population. The grant also calls for the expansion of the Good Food Box (currently organized by the Markdale Ag. Society in Markdale) into Flesherton; healthy eating workshops provided by the health unit as well as the purchase of capital items for the Dragonboat club.

This project is well underway, with over 45 people already participating in the fitness portion. The Good Food Box expansion is underway, with the expansion looking to also enhance this program with the addition of products like honey and syrup to the monthly offerings (above produce) and the idea of a “half” box for seniors and singles. A local food broker is looking into ways to have the contents be more locally sourced than the traditional “food terminal” produce in the Markdale box. Healthy eating workshops are planned for early December and February and the Dragonboat club is offering “on land” training and looks forward to their new life jackets and oars to increase their participant numbers in 2011. The project coordinator on this grant, Ms. Russell, is working out of the Chamber office at the Olde Firehall, so is able to maintain that office access to residents and visitors alike throughout the winter months.

MOVING FORWARD: This grant will be finalized by March 31, 2011. There is some interest in re-applying for a Phase 2 in 2011. Since the Highlands Community Co-op is also in receipt of Trillium funding (coming soon for a separate project) and has applied to the federal Rural Secretariat for other project monies, it is thought the Co-op will be in a position to take the lead in any future projects of this kind. The Chamber board may consider potential partnering on future grants and may provide support letters where requested.

JOB CREATION PROJECT – ANOTHER BR&E

The Chamber originally applied for a Job Creation Project (JCP) to conduct the cross-sectoral BR&E mentioned above. The funding for this program stream through the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (OMTCU) was expended in late 2009, so another funding source was found in the CFRDF (as noted above). But, the original application, with some modifications was kept in “queue” at OMTCU, with a second BR&E to look specifically at the agricultural sector, and continue the work of the municipal cultural planning initiative.

After a year of continued badgering of our regional OMTCU representative, the Chamber’s project coordinator was finally able to guide this through the contract process. Resumes for the position of Community Development Administrator are now being screened through the Y Employment & Community services for eligibility (participant must be EI eligible) and interviews were conducted this week with a start date of November 22.

MOVING FORWARD: The participant in this project will do several things, including: agricultural BR&E; maintain Grey Highlands business directory; assist in updating the community profile to include cultural assets; gather business and cultural industry profile data and photos for inclusion in cultural planning initiatives and the community profile and generally guide the forward motion of the BR&E task force and municipal cultural planning initiative, under the direction of the Chamber board and supervision of the Project Coordinator.

MARKDALE FARMERS' MARKET LAUNCHED:

In the Spring of 2010 (Victoria Day weekend) the Chamber opened a Markdale Farmers' Market, located in the southern truck bay of the Olde Firehall in the downtown. This garage opens directly onto Hwy. 10 north and is well positioned to attract both resident and tourist traffic to the market. Without much effort in attracting vendors, Ron Gillespie of Product of Ontario Market quickly became the "anchor" vendor, bringing in glass cases and a refrigeration unit to sell preserves, produce, local meats and cheeses. He was quickly joined by other vendors: Monkton's Organic Farms & Bakery (local farm which grows, mills and bakes organic spelt); Trillium Springs Fish Farm (fresh farmed rainbow trout); Acadian Shamrock Farm (garlic lady with fresh garlic, pickled scapes and jellies); Casa Del Sol Farms (greenhouse plants, herbs, strawberries and corn); Eternal Bee Candle Co. (locally sourced beeswax candles and beeswax-based facial products); Penny Calder (homebaking). These vendors were joined on occasion by bake sales by the Markdale Agricultural Society (which also promoted the Markdale Fall Fair and a Poultry for Profit campaign at the market); the Markdale Arts for Youth group (playing guitar and singing folk songs) as well as campaigning councilors. The Chamber Project Coordinator worked the market, running the Product of Ontario booth, as she also started her own market garden and preserving business this year as part of the Farmers' Market success.

Rushing to keep up with the market idea, the Chamber's Project Coordinator attended a spring Farmers' Market network meeting sponsored by the Grey Bruce Local Food Project. That meeting was an excellent start to sourcing ideas and protocols from established local markets (including the Flesherton Farmers' Market, which celebrated 20 years in 2010). A co-marketing radio campaign idea was suggested by the coordinator, who then recruited the support of the Grey Bruce Local Food Project, the Grey Bruce Public Health Unit, the Markdale Chamber, Markdale & Rocklyn & Feversham Agricultural societies to support a \$10,000 summer-long radio campaign to promote markets throughout Grey Bruce. The Chamber joined the Grey Bruce Agriculture & Culinary Association and is now listed on the Grey Bruce map produced by that group. The market was a great success, drawing the interest of residents and visitors alike. From the original launch, where the Chamber hosted municipal councilors to a local food luncheon (prepared by the coordinator at no cost to the Chamber) to the Bayshore Broadcasting "Meet the Neighbours" tour, which saw Mix 106 radio broadcast live from the market from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. just a week before the Thanksgiving closing, the Markdale Farmers' Market drew many to shop in downtown Markdale at minimal cost to the Chamber.

All vendors became members of the Chamber and paid prorated membership fees and a \$50 market fee. This totaled to the usual \$125 for members who pay prior to the early bird deadline for regular membership. The Project Coordinator met with the Public Health Unit inspector prior to opening, to determine rules and regulations governing the market. That inspector paid a "courtesy call" to the market on opening day and found no worries with the market. The market was covered under Chamber liability insurance, at no extra premium cost. Signage was placed south of the village on Hwy. 10 with better sandwich board signs provided by the Project Coordinator replacing those signs only on the final Friday of the market.

MOVING FORWARD: The Chamber board has requested a more formal arrangement for the Market, by creating a policies and procedures manual, as well as appropriate contracts with vendors. A fee similar to that of 2010 was agreed upon at the board level, with vendors becoming regular Chamber members. A budget for 2011 will be established as part of the overall Chamber budget. Vendors will meet in late winter to create a schedule of special events at the market to continue to draw more visitors to Markdale. Invitations to community groups will be sent out to invite the community to participate – with the potential of community BBQ's, fundraising bakes sales as well as music and such to continue to increase the viability and draw value of the Market as a resident essential and a tourist destination. The Chamber has also approved in principle the opportunity for the Project Coordinator to seek capital and project grants to support the market and potentially redevelop the Olde Firehall to further leverage this local food security project.

TOURISM:

The Project Coordinator attended the spring Regional Tourism Marketing Partnership brochure swap in the spring. This event annually allows for the Chamber to network with regional tourism operators and attractions, as well as regional Chambers and other information organizations. Annual brochures, publications as well as souvenir post cards for sale at the Chamber's information booth were obtained at this time. In 2010, information was also collected and distributed to the Flesherton & District Chamber for its use in its tourism booth. Regional maps and other information are also made available to village locations include Foodtown and Sidekicks, who regularly come to the Chamber to provide this resource to their customers.

The Chamber was once again successful in obtaining a summer student to man the tourism information booth. This individual was trained on the local and regional offerings, attended the FAM Tour (Familiarization with Area Market) hosted by Grey County Tourism. Both the summer student and Project Coordinator attend this 2-day bus tour annually. Some of the areas on the tour are in Grey Highlands, so the coordinator takes this opportunity to promote Grey Highlands to other tourism professionals.

This year's summer student was a student of Fanshawe's Hospitality & Tourism department. As such, she presented well in her resume and history. This was, though, her first job. As such, she was shy with visitors and was reluctant to survey visitors for the Grey County Tourism survey in 2010. Despite a variety of methods applied, it was difficult to get this student out of her shell, so it is advised there be a more careful screening process of summer students in the future.

The Chamber summer student is also to work on the Markdale Fall Fair and promote the Farmers' Market, this is done in partnership with the local agricultural society and the market. These duties reflect the local priorities for the Canada Summer Jobs program and without including these as duties of the student, it is doubtful the summer student program would continue to be such a success. The Chamber also advised the Flesherton & District Chamber in their summer student application, assisting that organization's success.

The Chamber's Project Coordinator continues to sit as a member of the Grey County Tourism committee. As such, she has been aware of and involved in the county's strategic planning process; is kept up to date on the Regional Tourism Organization and is able to advocate for tourism inclusion and destination ideas for Markdale and the municipality of Grey Highlands. The Regional Tourism Organization (Region 7) has been established by the province – it includes Grey, Bruce and Simcoe Counties. An information forum was held in Markdale on Nov. 16th. The Project Coordinator attended to hear about this organization.

The Project Coordinator also attended the annual Regional Tourism Summit at the CAW Centre in Port Elgin in late October. This event featured Terry O'Reilly of CBC's Age of Persuasion; an IPSOS REID presentation on selling to the South Asian & Chinese markets; a tour-package seminar as well as networking with regional contacts. These kinds of networks keep Markdale Chamber top of mind with many regional networks.

The Chamber info center has developed trail resources (map books of the Beaver Valley & Sydenham parts of the Bruce Trail and Dufferin-Grey ATV maps) and has had Telfer Wegg postcards for some time. The Chamber has recently taken on the sales of local history books (all income to municipality and library – Split Rail Country) and is also offering collectors plates with the Olde Firehall on them (donated by Cathy Hamilton of Hamilton's Home Shop).

MOVING FORWARD: There is still an idea to create a Markdale postcard – it has been budgeted for in the past, but has yet to surface. Summer students need to be further vetted and interviewed by board members to ensure quality of participant. Project Coordinator may offer to continue to sit on Grey Tourism committee as it is a great resource and opportunity to feed Grey Highlands concerns to the county level. Information booth needs a facelift – with the potential to budget to have the front painted. There is also the opportunity to have a new sign made for above the office window.

PROMOTIONS

CRUISE NIGHT: Cruise Night was held in downtown Markdale on July 2nd, 2010. This was the 8th annual event. It was once again a great success with live music downtown, over 130 cars parked downtown, fundraising barbecue and more. The Chamber had a committee handle all the organizing and sponsorship, so this was a completely volunteer-driven event.

MOVING FORWARD: There has been some feedback received for the 2011 event: ie. More space for parking on main street rather than up side streets. JD Daly offered he will sit on this committee and do a BBQ in 2011. There needs to be some determination of the 2011 date as July 1st is a Friday (event is usually first Friday after Canada day) and the following Friday (July 8, 2011) is Rotary Street Frolic date. Eugenia Gold Rush (who we usually co-promote with for this weekend) is planned for July 2nd, 2011.

EVENT LISTS – The Chamber annually compiles an events list for Grey Highlands with regular/annual events. This is then posted to the Chamber, county, FEO and provincial websites and distributed to the municipality, other area Chambers (Flesherton) and media outlets.

MOVING FORWARD: This list is underway at this time – with postings to website expected shortly.

RADIO – Bayshore Broadcasting on-air personality (Jenn Rock) has provided a steady opportunity to promote local events and initiatives. Coordinator was contacted and interviewed several times about local events and initiatives on Country 93. As mentioned above, the Farmers’ Market radio campaign also allowed for more contacts like this with others in the Bayshore newsroom including Manny Pava and others.

MOVING FORWARD: Hope to expand this contact and potentially be on more local radio in 2011.

SHOP LOCAL CAMPAIGN – was hosted on Bayshore Broadcasting (Country 93 & The Mix 106) with regular “Shop Local” messages sponsored by the Chamber on this co-marketing radio opportunity. This was essentially a year-long expansion of the traditional Moonlight Madness co-marketing campaign. It was an opportunity for the Chamber to leverage group involvement in radio, with businesses who bought in regularly advertised on local stations.

MOVING FORWARD: A decision and budget considerations must be made whether to continue to pursue this type of campaign in 2011.

MIX 106.1 LIVE AT THE OLDE FIREHALL – Olde Firehall and Farmers’ Market hosted live broadcast of Mix 106 “Meet the Neighbours Tour” on Friday, Oct. 1st. This opportunity saw on-air personalities attend at the Olde Firehall and host special guests, on-air interviews with several Chamber-related initiative representatives (cultural grant consultant, coordinator on grants and indicatives including Farmers’ Market and Welcome Wagon organizer). Several local businesses supported this opportunity, as did the Chamber itself at a relatively low cost considering the coverage. Some local businesses sought to be involved without a buy-in and were not included (though they were offered the opportunity to have a flyer on hand for visitors to the Market).

MOVING FORWARD: These kinds of opportunities provide excellent media coverage. There is a potential to pursue this kind of involvement again in 2011 – especially with the potential to co-market the Farmers’ Market again. Perhaps we could do a “Report from the Market” segment with local radio. This will be explored for 2011 budget consideration.

OTHER INVOLVEMENT (NETWORKS)

FLESHERTON CHAMBER – business directory/mutual project development – update completed with municipal staff and now posted on municipal website. Link on Flesherton site. Markdale website hosts a list of member businesses and provides a link to the comprehensive local business list.

MOVING FORWARD: A 2011 update and review of this list is part of the JCP job description.

GREY COUNTY DISASTER RELIEF COMMITTEE – the Chamber coordinator accepted a nomination onto this volunteer committee and subsequently offered shared office space to the committee’s administrator. This was offered at no cost. The committee installed a second phone line to the office; this was subsequently disconnected when the committee completed its term. As this was a committee in response to a local crisis (2009 tornado) there is no expected further contact or need from this committee.

MAS – The Markdale Agricultural Society (of which the Chamber coordinator is president) has been ostensibly sharing office space at the Olde Firehall to allow for a central location for information, promotion and storage for Markdale Fall Fair files and supplies. This shared space allows the Chamber to include duties related to agriculture in its annual Canada Summer Jobs application (hence the success of this application for the past two years). With the Canada Summer Jobs program facing regular cutbacks, this shared space opportunity continues to benefit both parties. The MAS also utilizes the Farmers’ Market to promote its Poultry for Profit, which is also delivered to and distributed from the Olde Firehall. MAS also hosted a bake sale and a pie sale at the market. There is a storage freezer in the hall. This partnership is consistent with the Chamber’s “non-exclusive” lease on the building and backs the general mission of the Chamber to support the “socio-economic welfare” of the community.

MOVING FORWARD: The MAS has requested this arrangement continue – though many MAS files have been moved off-site to the secretary’s home. MAS archives are stored in the basement of the Walter Harris Memorial Library. The MAS will pay a non-profit membership to the Chamber annually to maintain this arrangement. Its involvement in the Farmers Market is at no-fee as it is irregular and supports a local community-based charity.

MAFY – The Markdale Arts for Youth program practiced in Olde Firehall south truck bay each Tuesday all summer. Organizer David Fries thought this was an excellent opportunity to get the youth group into the public eye in a downtown location. They had lots of interest and even had some donations through this outlet during the summer. The Chamber office is generally closed on Tuesdays in the summer, so this was a way to keep the Olde Firehall info booth open (unmanned) and the building used for community. MAFY also had the guitarists in the group out to the Farmers’ Market on occasion, but was not consistent due to availability of teachers and students.

MOVING FORWARD: This group would like to do this again in 2011.

MARKDALE ROTARY CLUB – Dave & Marion Thompson of the Markdale Rotary Club ran the annual Alzheimer’s Coffee Break day out of the south truck bay at the Olde Firehall. Again this was a way for this community group to get out to the public in a very visible location and meets the mandate of the Chamber and its lease of the building. Rotary also will provide a BBQ at the Olde Firehall on Moonlight Madness evening – starting at 6 p.m. This partnership is an excellent expansion and opportunity for community involvement in this annual downtown event.

MOVING FORWARD – These opportunities will be offered to the Rotary again in 2011.

WELCOME WAGON – The Welcome Wagon local coordinator Catherine Coakwell approached the chamber to get involved in this initiative. She participated on the radio during our Mix 106 “Meet the Neighbours” broadcast on October 1st and was grateful for the opportunity. The Chamber and Welcome Wagon have come to an agreement about a contra membership in exchange for inclusion in the Welcome Wagon package. She will include local brochures and Chamber information to new residents/new moms.

MOVING FORWARD: Chamber will participate in Welcome Wagon initiative in 2011. Will provide brochures, local maps etc for inclusion. A pending member benefit brochure will also be included in the package.

PHONEGUIDE – For the past few years the Chamber has had a contra listing with this publication in exchange for Chamber membership. Includes two display listings as well as regular listing of phone number.

MOVING FORWARD: This will be continued in 2011.

GREY BRUCE CULTURAL NETWORK – Chamber coordinator, at request of cultural grant consultant John Harrison, made a presentation to this regional group re: cultural grant. This meets the grant's mandate of providing a model to other groups and communities to pursue their own grants and municipal cultural planning initiatives.

MOVING FORWARD: The Chamber will keep contact with this group and provide support letters where applicable to their grant applications.

GREY BRUCE MULTI-CHAMBER NETWORK: The Markdale Chamber has been participating in this regional networking group for four years. The group hosts informal meetings twice a year to share information, network and support other Chambers across the region. Chamber coordinator recently attended a meeting to report on grants and receive information of strategic planning and other initiatives. A "GreyBruceChambers.com" website was established – at a cost of \$50 a year to each Chamber. This invoice is now due for the past three years (see payables). A co-marketing advertisement is also placed annually in the Grey Bruce Escape, to encourage visitors to investigate Grey Bruce as an area to relocate or start their business. Ad includes logos and contact info for participating Chambers.

MOVING FORWARD: Chamber will maintain contact with this network, support the website (\$150 for three years) and support the co-marketing ad (approx. \$250 + tax).

GREY AGRICULTURAL SERVICES: The Markdale Chamber provided an introduction letter, with corporate seal, to this organization, which traveled to Saudi Arabia on a trade mission for the National Forage Council in the spring of 2011. This organization has also provided meeting space for the BR&E process and will be kept informed of the upcoming agricultural BR&E.

MOVING FORWARD: Ag Services will continue to host meeting space and will be approached to be involved on the agricultural BR&E leadership team/task force and potentially provide agricultural businesses and networks to contact in regards this BR&E.

GREY COUNTY TOURISM – The Chamber coordinator has sat as a "member at large" on this county committee for the past four years. In this capacity has been the "voice of Grey Highlands" in regional tourism, encouraging the consideration of more "inland" locations for tourism promotion. Grey Tourism currently promotes a waterfall tour (with two Grey Highlands waterfall – Eugenia and Hogs) as well as a motorcycle tour, which includes Grey Rd. 13 through Beaver Valley. The Grey Tourism vehicle also attends local Grey Highlands events, including Cruise Night – to promote the area to our visitors. Surveys completed at various locations (including some taken in Markdale) were included in annual surveys throughout the county over the past two years. A report on these surveys is available electronically from the Chamber office.

MOVING FORWARD: Coordinator may stay on this committee and continue to promote Grey Highlands at this county level.

DOWNTOWN BEAUTIFICATION

HANGING PLANTERS – The Chamber has installed hanging planters in downtown Markdale for the past two years. This entailed purchasing the planters, hanging them on downtown light posts and ensuring they are watered. Watering involved the purchase of a tractor and watering tanker for this purpose. A local resident, who

did the watering in 2009, was unavailable in 2010 – so the local horticultural society assisted to water these plants with members and student volunteers. There were quite a number of difficulties met with the tractor, as it is old and could not maintain a good battery charge to run the watering tanker. A new battery, a battery charger and some repairs and parts needed to be purchased throughout the year. The planters have now been removed from downtown and returned to the supplier and will be purchased again in 2011.

MOVING FORWARD: The planters will need to be placed in budget for 2011 again. The Chamber will also have to consider purchasing a better lawn tractor for use in watering downtown plants in 2011 budget.

GROUND PLANTERS - The Markdale & District Horticultural Society partnered with the Annesley United Church's woodworking group to build and install wooden ground planters at the four corners of the downtown. These were supplied and cared for by the horticultural society at no cost to the Chamber. The planters have been taken down for the season and are stored in the rear of the Olde Firehall.

MOVING FORWARD: Chamber will coordinate return of planters to streets with horticultural society in 2011.

BEAUTIFICATION COMMITTEE - As the Chamber has been doing more downtown beautification, it has come to the attention of the coordinator that a partnership model for beautification works well. The idea for beautification committee was previously put forward to include the Horticultural Society, the Rotary, the Markdale Agricultural Society and the Chamber. This committee's first priority would be new gateway signs and plantings at gateways to the village. This has been previously discussed with all partners as a must to beautify and show pride in the village. Costs will be investigated with potentials to work together with partners to fundraise for installation in 2011.

MOVING FORWARD: Coordinator will approach the partner groups to see if there is a willingness to form this ad-hoc community committee. Costs for signs will be assessed with a view to potentially adding to 2011 budget.

OTHER EVENTS

ALL CANDIDATES MEETING – The Chamber participated in Election 2011 with an all candidates meeting hosted at the Centre Grey Rec. Complex in Markdale. This was a board volunteer initiative (in partnership with the Flesherton & District Chamber and focused on business and economic development issues. The event was well attended and considered a success by the board. It was an excellent opportunity to show

MOONLIGHT MADNESS/SANTA PARADE: These events are scheduled for Nov. 26th (MM) and 27th (parade) in downtown Markdale. A special event budget was approved by the board and the majority of sponsorship has been received. There is a current shortfall in the budget – with more funds required for advertising and candy for Santa to hand out at the library after the parade.

MOVING FORWARD: More businesses will need to be approached for funds or Chamber will have to pick up the shortfall. One volunteer judge is still needed. Chamber is approaching Wendy Webb to offer opportunity to take photos of children with Santa. Volunteers for parade day (registration and muster) are needed.

ADMINISTRATION

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: Chamber coordinator attended several opportunities for professional development in 2011, including a Grant writing workshop in Walkerton in Feb. 2010; OMAFRA BR&E Training in December 2009; Tourism Conference in October 2010; 2-day municipal cultural planning

workshop. Information and regional networks also provide ongoing information sharing and professional contacts to ensure the resources are available for Chamber initiatives and strategic planning.

MOVING FORWARD: Coordinator is attending local agri-food related programs (Local Food Summit; Local Food Direct Marketing workshop) as well as establishing local food networks in support of the Farmers' Market development. Continued municipal cultural planning work with consultant; agricultural BR&E and other projects will continue professional development opportunities.

OFFICE ENHANCEMENTS: New desktop computer was purchased in 2010. This replaced a 10-year-old machine which was on its way out. Three old computers were also donated from a local business (IDI) and are available for use in future business incubator or training sessions. A MAS computer is now at the office for use by staff and is available as an internet connection opportunity for tourists.

MOVING FORWARD: Another laptop coming in late 2010 or early 2011 under the JCP program (for use by participant in doing BR&E and other functions). MTCU has provided \$500 toward this purchase in a reimbursement program. Software will be included in this purchase – or the Chamber may need to consider purchasing software applications for the new laptop (which would also update desktop in office).

WEBSITE – Improvements to the village website at www.village.markdale.on.ca have moved this into a more self-administered website – allowing for addition of events and updates to business directory without requiring webmaster billing. All minutes and reports from the Chamber are being made available online. The site is very much Web 1.0 and needs a refresh to enter the interactive Web 2.0 model.

MOVING FORWARD: There is some JCP money to be put towards website development, so this will be assessed to ensure the Chamber is getting the most out of its online presence.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS BROCHURE: This has been under consideration for sometime. A previous 4-page brochure included details on what the Chamber does and how it benefits members and the community. There is an idea to make this into a folding brochure with highlights and bullet points, to direct potential members to the website for further information. The Grey Highlands Community profile will be updated under the cultural grant, so will potentially provide some material and benefit to membership brochure.

MOVING FORWARD: Coordinator is prepared to produce this under the direction of a board member. There is also the potential for a “Relocation Guide” to be developed by or with the cooperation of the Chamber for new residents. This could become an annual local guide and would be an excellent addition to the community development mix.

CONCLUSION

2011 has been a very busy, proactive and community-development focused year at the Chamber. Due to the complexity and intense amount of projects and work undertaken in 2010, it is recommended the Chamber enter into a strategic planning process for the 2011-12 years to determine future directions from the current initiatives. It has been suggested the coordinator provide an outline of her position, what it entails and the future perspective of the coordinator position. This will be brought forward at a later date, at the direction of the Chamber's indicated forward moving strategy.

Respectfully submitted by Kate Russell, Coordinator – Nov. 17, 2010.