

Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce Roundtable Meeting Backgrounder

The fall season is upon us and with it comes the continuation of the Ladysmith Chamber of Commerce's Roundtable Discussions. The Roundtable process started early in 2015 as a result of feedback from the membership that they were looking for new ways to engage and mobilize around business initiatives. There have been three Roundtable Meetings so far and as a means of bringing you up to speed (or reminding you where we left off) here is a brief summary of the previous meetings:

Meeting 1:

Held on January 21, 2015 at Cottonwood Golf Course this meeting included a powerpoint presentation about the Chambers programs and services and an overview of the Strategic Planning process that was the focus of the organization in 2014. This was followed by a free flowing discussion around the table about the issues that were most pressing for business at the present time and what the Chamber (and the community) might do to have a positive impact on these issues. Issues and concerns regarding Economic Development predominated the discussion and the desire amongst those in attendance was to meet again soon to focus specifically on economic concerns.

Meeting 2:

Held on February 25th at the Ladysmith Little Theatre this meeting was facilitated by George Hanson and, as requested, was focused on how the Chamber of Commerce (and partners) could or should be involved in Economic Development and what tasks/priorities made sense to tackle over the next few months/years. Recommendations ranged from creating a business recruitment strategy to working with Town Council to develop a "can do," friendly approach to business development and support. More support and resources for small business were seen as priorities too. A key result of the meeting and a next step in coming up with a plan, was that members in attendance volunteered to review previously-produced Economic Development Reports, each would provide a brief synopsis, and be prepared to speak to these reports at the subsequent Roundtable Meeting. ..

Meeting 3:

The third and most recent Roundtable Meeting was held on Wednesday, March 25th at Ladysmith Little Theatre and was once again facilitated by George Hanson. The meeting included presentations by volunteers who provided reviews of 15 economic development reports that had been produced over the past decade. The objective was to try to find some initiatives, or "low hanging fruit", that the Chamber could take on that would require minimal resources but provide significant impact. One of the key outcomes of this meeting was the discovery of a Strategic Planning document covering the period of 2008-2012 that had been prepared by the now defunct Ladysmith Economic Development Commission. A cursory review of this document suggested that it was very thorough and much of it remained relevant. That is, the economic issues facing the community in 2008 were not so different than the issues of today. There is over 50 economic development projects outlined in this document ranging in scope, complexity and resource requirements. It was felt by those attending that there was a strong likelihood that within this collection of projects was the "low hanging fruit" that we were seeking. It was determined that this Strategic Planning document would be distributed to Roundtable participants for their review and the subsequent meeting would involve a discussion and selection of the appropriate project to undertake.