

Business Improvement Association plans WWW expansion



Dianne Eastman, while on contract to the Business Improvement Association, developed possible new logos for the town. The first is essentially the current town crest, developed after Bancroft and Dungannon were merged in 2000. The second is a more 'stylized' rendering, based around the heraldry of some of the original settlers; it includes the English and Irish, but excludes the Scots and Natives. The third transfers the focus to the area's resources, namely minerals and forestry. In each case, the slogan is 'Mineral Capital of Canada?'. TONY PEARSON Special to This Week

By Tony Pearson

Several months ago, the Bancroft Business Improvement Association was questioning whether it had the energy to continue as the organizer of the town's popular Wheels-Water-Wings (WWW) event. But an informal poll of the community, including its membership, town officials, and community associations convinced the board to carry on in the lead role. Now with a new structure, the business group is well along in plans for an expanded event in 2016, which it is hoped will also expand a newly-discovered niche for the area's tourist industry.

After Chris Drost, the BIA's executive officer, left to manage the new 'Heart of the Park' complex for Bancroft Community Transit, the board decided to contract with its former chair, Jody Didier, to supervise a series of BIA projects, including WWW. At the association's annual general meeting last Friday, Didier outlined two new elements. One will be a 'rat rods' display on the Saturday. A rat rod, a genre growing rapidly in popularity, is an imitation of a 1940s-'50s hot rod, but less finished than the usual (and expensive) fully-restored showpieces, and meant to be driven. The other expanded element will be a motorcycle Show and Shine

event on the Sunday.

The motorcycle event ties in with a rise in attention among cyclists about the Bancroft/North Hastings area as good place to ride. WWW was featured in a couple of cycling magazines, and has been well noted among riders on social media. Since the last WWW, some businesses have seen an increase in cyclist traffic, and the BIA hopes to keep the momentum rolling.

Dianne Eastman reviewed another BIA initiative meant to improve the attractiveness of the town, namely the design project. This summer saw phase one, with new heritage banners all over the downtown (including a unique banner celebrating the 50th anniversary of Canada's maple leaf flag).



The banners, in combination with the historical walking tours, have brought repeat visits to the town from people with family ties here; many have come back just to have their photo taken with a 'heritage family' banner.

Phase two is already underway. This part of the project hopes to see businesses refurbish their street facades. Eastman mocked up dozens of examples of potential storefront makeovers which could be achieved with only fresh paint and a new sign. With the township agreeing to waive its customary fees for businesses that carry out such improvements, the BIA hopes to see lots of activity next spring.

Eastman was also tasked with designing possible new logos for the town and related organizations, like the museum and the Earth Sciences Centre. The BIA itself has adopted her suggestion, and it will shortly be installed at the association's new quarters off Hasting Street.

The BIA's next venture is the kick-off to its 'Buy Locally' campaign, with special shopping days on Nov. 5 and 12 under the theme Christmas in November. It is also hard at work on holiday street décor. And it's already asked for quotes for next summer's flower barrels.

Another main thrust in 2016 will be to attract new volunteers, notably for WWW, but also for the various committees. The board's budget adopted at the meeting sees no increase in the member levy - again, counting on lots of volunteer help, and grants from other levels of government, especially for the promotion of WWW (budgeted at double the 2015 expense; the total BIA spending for the whole event is estimated at close to eighty thousand dollars, offset by about \$45,000 in revenue).

The main presentation ended with thanks to the staff and council of the town of Bancroft, and the hope that everyone will continue to work together 'to make 2016 a memorable year.'