

Claresholm Chamber of Commerce Society
Meeting Minutes
March 15, 2011

Meeting location: Casa Roma

Attendance: 12 including guest speaker: Russell Sawatzky-President, Jackie Chalmers-New Oxley Ranch, Roxanne Thompson-Director, Tony Walker-Director, Val Umscheid-Director, Linda Petryshen-Director, Betty Fieguth-Town of Claresholm Representative, Patricia Lett-new member, Terry Daniel-Fort Macleod Empress Theatre, John Vanderfluit-Lazy J Motel, Rob Vogt-Claresholm Local Press, Nancy McCance-Secretary

Call meeting to order: Russell

Additions to Agenda: none

Approval of Agenda: moved by Linda

Additions or corrections to February minutes: Tony pointed out although the museum requested additional funds (\$1500 instead of \$1000) from the Chamber this year, a motion was not made to do this. This was not an omission. We have not yet decided whether to go ahead and ran out of time at last month's meeting. Tony put forward a motion to accept the minutes as recorded. Seconded by Terry.

Guest Speaker: Jackie Chalmers – Slow Food – When Jackie attended the Chamber's AGM she realized that some of the initiatives she has been working on personally might mesh well as a partnership with the Chamber to “get our town going”. One of these concepts is “Slow Food”. Jackie hosts “Spirit of the Hills” yearly at her ranch west of Claresholm. The two local artists that she started with are now 10. She and her husband own a historic ranch which is the perfect setting for this event. It has been billed as a “Southern Alberta block party” including: bring your own lawn chairs, music, meet the artists, eat food, and visit your neighbours. Jackie planned for 200 and 500 people attended 500!

A new theme she plans to include this year is “Harvest of the Hills”: good, clean, fair, local food. In October of 2010 she attended a Slow Food conference in Turin, Italy. Some of the worldwide group's focii are: water, sustainability, the land grab in Africa and of course, slow food. We, as individuals, make a difference by supporting and showcasing our local producers and become a co-producer. Forming a local Southern Alberta slow food organization is now one of her goals. They will be meeting in Lethbridge tomorrow. Events would be organized to showcase local food. “Spirit of the Hills”, featuring “Harvest of the Hills” could become a slow food event showcasing our regional artists, musicians, but could also include local producers to promote and present their products. Jackie then realized she would need help to organize such a large event and that possibly the Chamber of Commerce would like to collaborate with

her.

“Spirit of the Hills” has taken place at the beginning of Fair Days and brought tourists to our town. Some stayed for the parade the next, stayed in Claresholm and spent their tourist dollars here. Visitors commented that they were impressed with the murals, the beautification of our town--Communities in Bloom/flowers.

The promotion of “culinary tourism” would benefit our town/chamber/businesses. Farmer's markets are another way to bring visitors to our town. People are looking for destinations away from Calgary/the city and we aren't that far. Collaboration and cooperation could help both of us accomplish our goals. Jackie needs community support to continue this project which will provide stimulation of our economy, a common goal that is shared with the Chamber.

Questions from members: “What are the “slow foods” grown/produced in our area?” The following were mentioned, but just as examples, this is not an exhaustive list: organic beef, lamb, feta cheese produced by a local dairy, cheese, buffalo mozzarella, honey, garlic, eggs, and sausage. “Slow Food” is the opposite of fast food. It promotes eating as a shared experience with friends and family. Slow food at home, in the community. Healthy/organic/local/self sufficiency. Creating a world where no one goes hungry.

Harvest of the Hills: Roxanne asked Jackie: What is your vision for this? Jackie suggests that the south side of her shop lends itself to an “art gallery”. She is confirming a booking with “Celtic Cowboy” – musical entertainment. Food: the health board must be approached, but she is working on that too. (Calgary: Feast of Fields). Booths/tents could be used by local producers to showcase their product(s). The conference in Italy took the form of a massive trade show: vendors gave samples and some sold small portions. In the past Jackie had a chef prepare 3 different items with local produce, but if the event grows, this may not work.

Her ranch is located 10kms from the highway and visitors had no trouble finding the venue with their signage in place.

Discussion re: Slow Food presentation: Russell: The Chamber could be involved with setting up a location downtown for local food, lots of vacant business properties right now, similar to present art gallery. This would be an ideal Chamber focus. This fits our purpose as the Chamber to promote Claresholm and bring people here. Nanton has antiques, FM has the Empress Theatre.

Val Umscheid – same goal for her Wellness Centre.

Committee Reports:

no financial report – Sue away

Memberships: Roxanne reports we have received about 75-80 so far.

Town Report: Betty: last night council accepted a bid for the downtown parking lot to be paved this summer including tie-ins. The sewer project on 50th St is proceeding.

MD Report: Glen was unable to attend but he reported that all MD parks will be open 1st April, weather permitting.

Flower pot program: Roxanne reported that the pots have been ordered (new pots donated by The Town of Claresholm). We need volunteers to solicit donations from local businesses in person. Cost of order: 30 baskets, around \$1200-\$1300 including delivery charge. No volunteers came forward at the meeting. We will ask for volunteers by next month. **Anyone who could help with this please contact us asap.*

Citizen of the Year & Junior Citizen of the Year Awards: Roxanne reported that some nominations have been received. **Please submit your nominations in writing to Roxanne at the Local Press.* The Volunteer Appreciation Night is planned for April 15th, 2011.

New Business:

New 2011 project: Russell proposed that we investigate the “slow food” idea and see what we can bring into this. He suggested that the Chamber would like to work with Jackie and asked if any of the Chamber members would be interested in working on this project. Both Linda Petryshen and Val Umscheid volunteered to help co-ordinate this initiative.

Russell suggested that the Chamber needs to finish Ringrose Park. The mural needs to be completed on the side of Al's Pets & Plants. An entrance sign is needed off 49th Ave. The cost of the existing sign was around \$2000-\$3000. The Chamber will also need donations/support to fund the mural. An estimate of the cost for the mural will be needed. Roxanne will get an estimate. Jackie wondered about using local artists. Although the mural is a very specific venue, Jackie will send out an e-mail to her art contacts to see if anyone is interested.

EDC Committee Report: Russell reported that the EDC committee discussed the town-wide Wi-Fi availability. Vulcan completed a similar project for about \$3000. Russell asked Dylan Mainprize, a local computer expert, to estimate a cost and advised that the

north end of town could be covered for about \$3000. Wi-Fi access would be valuable to encourage tourists who want internet access to stop in Claresholm. They would be able to connect for no charge. The EDC will support this initiative also. This project would also provide internet access to Trade Show participants, which was one of the services businesses asked for at the past show, at the Community Centre.

Russell reports good communication between the town and the Chamber/local businesses. Our current mayor is very open to the betterment of this relationship, a positive prediction for the future.

Roxanne asked if the EDC would get involved with slow food project? The EDC could be approached in future.

Museum Donation: The Museum's request for the Chamber's donation increased from \$1000 to \$1500 this year. This increase was because of the Wi-Fi project they were proposing. The Chamber is still considering this request in light of the fact that the Chamber may take over this project for the Museum and bear the cost along with The Town of Claresholm. If this is the case, the increase in the donation amount would not be necessary.

John Vanderfluit of Lazy J Motel reported he provides internet access and has 3 routers. Would there be security issues for the Chamber? Also, what would the monthly costs be? This estimate (\$3000) is for the hardware/initial setup cost. Monthly costs must still be assessed.

Correspondence:

Russell: The Chamber received a letter from Anola Laing (Claresholm Museum) re: an extensive salt & pepper collection which was offered to the Museum. The Museum has declined as they don't have the space or the manpower to handle such a large exhibit. The Chamber members suggested that this, or part of the collection, might fit in well with the "slow food" ideas discussed today as part of a display. Roxanne suggests that we don't discount this idea.

Moved to adjourn: Val Umscheid

Next meeting: Tuesday, April 19, 2011. Location to be announced.