

**The Gathering Place  
Minutes of Annual General Meeting  
March 25, 2023  
10:00-The Gathering Place**

Present: Dennis Chippa, Executive Director  
Scott Todd, Board Chair  
Lee Dreany  
Angel Vibert  
Judy Szumik  
Monica Habel  
Bill Bowman  
Cathy McLeod, Secretary

Guest: Claude Daigle of Kendall, Sinclair, Daigle Chartered Accountants

**1. Call to order and identification of voting members:**

Moved by: Angel Vibert

Seconded by: Cathy McLeod

to call the meeting to order. All in favour. Meeting called to order at 10:10

**2. Acknowledgement and Mission Statement.**

**3. Approval of Agenda for March 25, 2023:**

Moved by: Lee Dreany

Seconded by: Bill Bowman

to approve the Agenda as presented. All in Favour. Motion Passed.

**4. Review of Financial Statements for Year Ended June 30, 2022:**

Claude Daigle reviewed the Finance Statements of The Gathering Place. The Audit Board approved them on February 28, 2023. Page 6 shows a deficit of \$31,156 which is much improved from 2021 at \$106,295. Page 4 it is recommended that a goal be set to pay down the \$25,000 long term debt.

Dennis explained to Board that the Lion's Club is giving \$10,000 to buy fridge and freezer. BlueSky is donating the money to buy to go trays. Claude advised to ear mark the \$10,00 for the fridge and freezer in the books to show auditors that it went to capital. Open an account in quick books and show it as capital received.

Question on audit: The grants expire March 31<sup>st</sup>. Can we look at moving he AGM dates? We carry a lot of after the books close or should we move our year end date of June 30<sup>th</sup>? Claude informed the Board that if we want to move the year end date, we would have to ask CRA in order to set a new date.

Moved by Angel Vibert

Seconded by Lee Dreany

to accept the Independent Auditor's Report. All in Favour. Motion passed.

**5. Review and adoption of the Minutes of Annual General Meeting of March 1, 2022:**

Where are we going as a Board? Are we taking of too much and no money to cover it? There was no balance sheet available to the Board. We need to be able to read and understand the financial information. Claude is willing to come in on a monthly basis if needed. We will need a full time Administration Assistant and full time book keeper as the budget may be 1 million dollars next year. We need to revisit the Strategic Plan and bring everything into line and stick to it and not take on more than the money can handle.

Moved by: Bill Bowman

Seconded by: Lee Dreany to adopt the Minutes of Annual General Meeting of March 1, 2022. All in favour. Motion passed.

**6. 2022 Annual Report of Scott Todd, Board Chair:**

Report talks of The Gathering Place being placed in the position of increasing services to homeless and of the challenges through the pandemic to keep providing services to the vulnerable people and those living in vulnerable situations within the City and surrounding area.

Chair expresses need to prepare for the challenges of recruiting, attracting and keeping employees at work. We need an engaged Board with experience and knowledge to help with the new challenges. Last year the Board approved the group health care benefits plan in recognition to have healthy employees. The employees, volunteers and managers created new and innovative ways to serve meals, provide a safe place to keep people warm and support the vulnerable people who need some social support. Our in-house experts on housing and homelessness quickly accepted and planned for the winter warming centre and needs to keep all people safe.

Chair acknowledged how Executive Director Denis Chippa led the efforts on behalf of many people in our community to find funding and a location to support people getting out of the cold and provide meals and food to a wide and diverse population. Executive Director successfully negotiated new funding agreements with DSSAB and other government agencies to support our staff and the population we serve. This new funding brought new issues around governance, financial reporting and staffing.

As we move forward in 2023 the Board will need to quickly set a new strategic vision for The Gathering Place and plan the Board's actions and follow up around the new visions with financial reporting, regular meetings, better communications, modern technology and staff support.

In his closing he informed the Board that we will be seeking assistance from a trained and experienced person to help the new Board with understanding roles and

relationships of the Board, employees, Executive Director, volunteers and our clients.

## **7. Report from Executive Director – Dennis Chippa**

Executive Director Dennis Chippa made note of the challenges of working through the pandemic and the re-opening late in the year. At first the reopening was hybrid service of both dine in and to go operations. It cut down on some costs but increased with the need of environmentally friendly to go containers. The removal of some structures such as the picnic tables etc., gave the parking area back. The Outreach program got a Chevy refrigerated van through provincial funding from Ministry of Environment at no cost to us with exception of increase in insurance cost but it serves both the food rescue and food outreach well.

Food rescue expanded to take in Sobeys as well as Erb Transport, and we have become two day recipients of Cobs bread. Our food rescue program statistics show that not only are we able to be self-sustaining and work towards lowering costs but also reduce the city's food carbon foot print.

Food Outreach continued to expand to provide weekly meals to West Nipissing and Mattawa as well as Golden Age Center, OutLoud and CMHA. The partnership with CMHA has also expanded to include many of their clients who we are now offering support to. Dennis feels the outreach of both food and food rescue to other parts of the community and other communities will help us long term develop better relations in areas we haven't pursued.

The garden was a source of tremendous produce success and tremendous community support. We took possess and built several raised garden boxes at the former school on Elmwood which is now a Children's Aid drop in educational location. Funding was received from Community Foundations of Canada to set up the project and the relationship was a very positive one.

Ended up taking on the operation of the city's daytime warming center for two months. This came from a lack of preparation by others to set up an emergency for winter weather and as always The Gathering Place stepped up. It was a difficult set up with no time to prepare but managed to get something complete and open for the first week of February and stayed open daily through mid-March. District of Nipissing Social Services Administration (DNSSA) board paid for some staff and other costs. The center was set up at the old health unit building. For security reasons we decided to close it. It is hoped a more permanent solution to the problem will be found.

Funding saw some drop in the number of donations but we managed to get some more significant ones. With Soups On unable to be set up face to face due to covid, we tried an ordering method where restaurants had special soup of the day and people could order for pick up or delivery. It wasn't tremendously successful but worth the try.

Coldest Night of the Year was more successful with a much larger intake of teams and donations which were mostly online which cut down on the work load and Dennis took on the project on his own as the organization was a bit more streamlined. It made for a less enjoyable experience but it was offset by a shorter, less stressful day.

Funding from DNSSAB Subsidy was our first and while it was \$50,000 it was far less than he and the Chair had hoped for. It came with no strings attached and was used for supports with both kitchen staffing, purchasing and outreach. The same applies to funding from United Way and a second smaller amount from Second Harvest which went to the Outreach program.

Staffing was relatively stable but we did suffer our first Covid Outbreak and were down a total of six staff and volunteers for a short time during the winter but managed to pull off meals and warming center with amazing support of students and our volunteer.

Looking ahead we will work on those things we always do: preparing and delivering meals to those who need them, while keeping a close eye on the bottom line. With the support of staff, volunteers and the board Dennis is confident this will happen.

**8. Appointment of Auditors for the Financial Year ending June 30, 2023:**

It is recommended by Executive Director to stay with the current auditors of Kendall, Sinclair, Daigle Chartered Accountants. Their cost is \$12,000.00. In order to keep the costs down, Dennis will get a clear understanding of what they need for the audit to go smooth. We can have a preaudit to make sure we got everything in order before submitting to them. The more organized our information is the smoother and less time spent by them on it and reduces the cost.

Moved by: Judy Szmik

Seconded by: Monica Habel

To appoint Kendall, Sinclair, Daigle Chartered Accountants as the Auditors for the year ending June 30, 2022. All in favour. Motion passed.

**9. Recognition of Directors Judy Szumik and Monica Habel**

Dennis welcomed Judy and Monica and thanked them for bringing their experience and expertise to the Board. It was suggested that we should have a budget and accounting meeting every month and to budget for building repairs.

**10. Motion regarding changes in operational banking procedures:**

10.1 As the increased use of donations via Electronic Funds Transfer are becoming a reality, it increases the potential for fraudulent victimization towards the Gathering Place. Therefore, we should set up a separate account, away from the operational or savings account to be used for the purposes of EFTs to the Gathering Place with access only by those with signing authority subject to our normal transfer policies.

10.2 While there has never been a problem with money going missing through deposits, this is an extension of our “two person counting” policy for fundraisers. We have identified potential liabilities in that one person prepares the deposit, sometimes with a significant amount of cash involved, and prepares it alone. This will allow for two people being in the room when deposits are prepared, especially cash is involved.

Moved by: Lee Dreany

Seconded by Judy Szumik

That the implementation of a separate account, for only EFT transfer and transfer usage, be set up, and the institution of a two-person set up the deposit policy be adopted as moved.

All in favour. Motion passed.

11. **Election of Executive - Defer until full board.** If anyone interested in holding any positions to let Scott know. Election to be deferred until we have a full board present.

12. **Adjournment:**

Moved by: Lee Dreany

Seconded by: Monica Habel

To adjourn meeting. All in favour. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m.