

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

June 14, 2017

Ms. Rennie Harper, Mayor
(and Council Members)
Town of Nipawin
PO Box 2134
Nipawin SK S0E 1E0

Dear Mayor Harper and Councilors:

RE: NIPAWIN BID'S SIGNIFICANCE TO TOWN OF NIPAWIN

On April 25, 2017 I sent a letter to Mayor and Council which I believe was presented to the Administration and Finance Committee meeting on May 2nd. I have revised this letter somewhat and I would like to request that it please be presented to the entire Nipawin Town Council.

I am writing to you as Chairperson of the Nipawin Business Improvement District Board of Directors. My purpose is three-fold: 1) to discuss with you the importance of the Nipawin BID to the Town of Nipawin's economic and community objectives, 2) to request Town Council reconsider allowing the Business Levy to be implemented by the Nipawin BID, and 3) to request a future meeting between the Nipawin BID Board of Directors and the Nipawin Town Council.

To reiterate my last letter, at the Nipawin BID Board meeting on April 25, we had a great meeting with Town Administrator Barry Elliott and Town Councilor Kerry Skowronski. During this meeting, we asked questions about the new proposed "fee-for-service" initiative and we learned the Town of Nipawin viewed the Nipawin BID as a community group that should apply to the Town for its annual operational funding.

The purpose of this letter is to encourage the Nipawin Mayor and Council to view the Nipawin BID as an organization which has significantly greater importance to the Town than as a mere "community group." Furthermore, I would like to encourage you to reconsider your decision to disallow the undertaking of an annual business levy to help raise operational funds for the Nipawin BID.

Nipawin BID as a "Community Group"

As my Nipawin BID Board colleagues and I learned about the fee-for-service initiative, and the understanding that the Nipawin BID would be expected to submit a proposal and compete for annual operational funds from the Town of Nipawin, we were a bit surprised and perhaps a bit dismayed that the Nipawin Town Council views the Nipawin BID as a mere community group (and I don't mean to belittle community groups – they do important and terrific work! Indeed, as a member of Rotary, I belong to one of those community groups).

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I have been a member of the Nipawin BID since moving to the community over three years ago. During that time, I have watched the BID grow, develop, and prosper as a result of the enthusiasm and energy of a committed group of volunteer Board members (and a highly energetic and dedicated Executive Director!). These individuals are each deeply committed to the prosperity and growth of the Town of Nipawin.

I would like to encourage the Town of Nipawin to view the Nipawin BID as so much more than simply another community group in town. In fact, the Nipawin BID is much more than a community group. In particular, the Nipawin BID has no self-serving interests or objectives. Each of our objectives are around the development and prosperity of the downtown core of Nipawin. Our organization is fundamentally about building community – the community of Nipawin! In this sense, then, the Nipawin BID functions more as a quasi-economic municipal department than it functions as a “community group.” In many ways, we are like an arms-length community development department of the Town. Our goals and objectives are the same as the Town’s goals and objectives! And from the Town’s perspective, what’s really beautiful about this arrangement is that you get the services of your citizens (your Board of Directors) for free! Apart from a modest operational budget, the community development services of the Nipawin BID Board of Directors are completely free. Where else can you find a community economic development and downtown revitalization service such as the Nipawin BID that completes its work for the Town for free?

The Nipawin BID has had many significant successes. These successes include a number of initiatives such as the following:

- Nipawin Town Square designed and developed – 2016
- Town Square has received national recognition as top project in western Canada
- Over \$196,000 raised through grants for programs to revitalize the downtown core since 2015
- Accreditation of the Mainstreet Saskatchewan program – 2016

As a result of these successes, and the significant work the Nipawin BID does FOR the community of Nipawin, we would encourage you to view the Nipawin BID as a quasi-economic municipal department undertaking significant work of the Town.

Nipawin Business Levy

To undertake the good work we do, for the past two years, the Nipawin BID has discussed the implementation of a business levy. This business levy is important for three reasons:

- It will connect the Nipawin BID directly to the business community in Nipawin. Through the business levy, the Nipawin BID becomes more *answerable* and *accountable* to the businesses of Nipawin.
- It helps encourage Nipawin businesses to play more of an active role in the Nipawin BID. Once they see they are paying a levy to help the Nipawin BID operate, and once they see the significant successes which the Nipawin BID has undertaken, the business community is much more likely to step forward to play an active role in the initiatives of the Nipawin BID. This is good for the entire community!

- It creates a “fee-for-service” environment where the direct beneficiaries of the Nipawin BID’s activities (downtown businesses) actually begin to pay a portion of the benefits they derive. In this way, it’s much like campers and recreational users at the local regional park paying an entrance fee to use the park – they are the users and the beneficiaries; they should pay for the operation of the park. The same is true of the imposition of a business levy for the Nipawin BID.

For these three reasons, I would like to ask Town Council to reconsider allowing the business levy to move forward. The Nipawin BID Board expects the business levy to generate approx. \$22,000 in revenue (at \$100 per business per year, as per the resolution of Council in September 2017). This is \$22,000 that does not have to come from the municipal tax base. AND, it helps make the Nipawin BID accountable to the businesses it serves.

Summary

The Nipawin BID is an important component of the Town, with the same objective and goals – the development, growth, and prosperity of the downtown business core. As a result, we encourage Town Council to view the Nipawin BID not as a “community group,” but as a quasi-economic municipal department of the Town. With this recognition should come secure town funding independent of the submission of a proposal to an annual competitive funding process.

Furthermore, as a portion of the Nipawin BID’s funding, the Town should allow the imposition of the business levy that has been talked about for over two years. This business levy will not only provide funding to the Nipawin BID, but it makes the BID more accountable to the needs of businesses in town.

Thank-you furthermore for a solid funding base for the 2017 fiscal year. We greatly appreciate the Town’s commitment to the operations of the Nipawin BID.

The Nipawin Business Improvement District Board of Directors take their role with the Town of Nipawin very seriously. As part of the Board’s Risk Management analysis, financial stability has been identified as the key operational risk for the future of the Nipawin Business Improvement District. As a result, the Nipawin Business Improvement District Board of Directors requests to have a meeting in the near future with the entire Town Council to work together to ensure future financial stability of the Nipawin BID.

If you have any questions at all about the Nipawin BID, please do not hesitate to give me a call. On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Nipawin BID, I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

(letter submitted via email)

Dr. Tom Weegar
President, Cumberland College
Chairperson, Nipawin BID Board of Directors

