

**Project Summary Report for March 2008
Brainerd Lakes Chamber**

ADVOCACY

Regional Business Council:

Zoning for city of Brainerd: Recommended that we set up individual meetings with the city, township and county about plans for coordination/annexation and Tim will gather comp plans for jurisdictions bordering Brainerd and review. Crow Wing County meets on the third Tuesday for a committee of the whole for in-depth discussion about topics. This would be an ideal time for a joint meeting with the planning commission about regional planning once the new land services manager is hired. We need to actively promote the success of the regional transportation planning cooperation occurring between the counties and cities. Focus on bite size pieces of the plan for implementation. Paxton is working with Crow Wing County highway engineer on a promotional pamphlet about the request for \$300,000 to fund a regional multi-modal transportation plan. The pamphlet would be used to educate local units of government and congressional delegation during April DC trip.

Brainerd Main Street Program:

Advisory Committee – Mark Ostgarden is now an ex officio member, Randy Moores of Northwind Grille and Vince Kline of Bob & Fran’s are new voting members. The Advisory Committee will be looking at streetscape themes and making a final recommendation on street/sidewalk layouts prior to the 2nd Construction Open House.

Promotion Sub-committee – Working on the image improvement campaign, the sub-committee completed a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis and began looking at strategies for how they are going to achieve their goals and objectives.

A press release was sent out summarizing the consumer perception survey results.

Events – The Jaycees are bringing their BBQ, the Street Fest on Seventh back downtown. Downtown businesses are working on the Street Fest Sale that will take place in cooperation with the Jaycee’s event. Missy Lake and Melissa Hagen are co-chairing the Street Fest Sale.

The **Bunny Bash** started out with a bang with families arriving at Woody’s Photography twenty minutes before it started for pictures with the Easter Bunny. Over 80 families attended with an estimated 100 children. 4-H participants had their bunnies on display. For a very wintry, inaugural Easter event, this was good turn out.

Design Sub-committee – Seven sections out of twenty-nine have been drafted by the committee. They will submit the sections to the Advisory committee for review after ten have been drafted. Steve Lund will lead the April meeting as chair.

Weekly Sweeps – A growing group of volunteers is working to create and coordinate a weekly litter pick-up program for Brainerd’s CBD. The details are still being worked out but will most likely draw on the volunteer resources in the community. This is part of the Design sub-committee.

Economic Restructuring Sub-committee – Has completed a rough draft of a business resource guide. They discussed and reviewed the information in the Comprehensive Plan related to the CBD and brainstormed for future projects.

Meeting Topic	No. of meetings*
Downtown Street Reconstruction	0
Promotion	2
Advisory Committee and special meetings	7
Downtown Events	1
Radio/TV Shows and other PR meetings or events	1
Brainerd City Council	1
Meetings with Business Owners	4

Design	4
Economic Restructuring	2
Brainerd Restoration	1

* attended by Main Street Coordinator

Priorities for April

- Continue to present the Promotion Sub-committee's market research results beyond the Main Street program committees.
- Continue to work with WSN/SRF team in preparation for the 2nd Open House.
- Attend National Main Street conference in Philadelphia

Brainerd/Baxter Business Council:

The committee met at Kueper's Construction in Baxter and the primary topic was development in the City. Baxter has issued 7 housing permits in 2008 to-date, down considerably compared to previous years. Commercial construction permits issued for \$5million in 2008, compared to \$15million per year previously. They are considering a round-about at the new Baxter Town Square development and Excelsior. The new FOG ordinance was approved and plans are to publish it in mid-April. Businesses will have 180 days to comply and the city is proposing economic incentives to comply.

Staff organized a task force to review changes in Brainerd's zoning ordinance. The comments were compiled into an eight page report and shared with Brainerd's P&Z commission.

Pequot Lakes Advisory Committee:

Ruth Ann and Bernice attended the Pequot Lakes EDA meeting and presented to the committee the survey results from members and also learned about the results of the EDA's survey of businesses in Pequot Lakes. The EDA was very surprised at how many businesses were not Chamber members. Downtown Master Plan for Pequot Lakes – The advisory committee wonders if there is a meeting about the master plan, will people attend. Could information be shared on-line? Staff will coordinate a meeting with the City P&Z about the Master Plan. The committee needs to find a replacement for Deb Hallbeck-Sibley Station.

Crosslake Advisory Committee:

Evaluated the St pat's event-committee agreed the event was very successful and the new additions (extra garbage cans, extra privys, extra crowd control) were great improvements and recommended the time return to 2 p.m.

Winterfest subject- Ruth Ann will arrange for a meeting with Lonny, Jeremy, Diane, Lisa and the chairs of Winterfest to discuss the event as the Chamber has been asked to take it over. Subject was brought up by Diane as to how to get garbage cans around town- need further research. Change of date of next meeting because of Tourism Summit-new date is April 30

TOURISM

Tourism Advisory Committee: The TAC met on Wednesday, March 12, 2008 at Ruttger's Bay Lake Resort. Items discussed were the tourism summit, familiarization tours, social capital survey results and the Chamber long term marketing plan. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 9, 2008 at the downtown Brainerd Lakes Chamber office. Items to be discussed are the tourism awareness campaign, tourism summit, familiarization tours, board response to the long term marketing plan, Northwest Sport Show recap and the Finding Babe promotion.

Oxtrot: Promotion of the Oxtrot continues...

- Online blogs are continuing and are being posted once a week – one from Babe and one from Paul.
- A total of 23 statues have been sold and will all of the statue locations, as well as artist and ox sponsor, will be noted on the 2008-2009 Brainerd Lakes Area Map.
- Radio ads are currently being drafted and will run on two radio stations – WLTE and WCCO – in the Minneapolis-St. Paul beginning next week (4/12) through Labor Day.
- Artwork for the Cub Foods bag has been finalized and Gretchen is coordinating the next steps with her Cub Foods contact.

-The editing process for the Charter Media Video on Demand piece featuring the Oxtrot has begun. Gretchen is working closely with her contact, Tom Wakefield, at Charter Media on getting the details of this video nailed down.

-Production on the online survey to win a Brainerd Lakes weekend getaway in correlation with the Oxtrot has begun.

-The actor, dressed in full Paul Bunyan apparel, and holding a large Oxtrot sign, appeared at the Commerce and Industry Show on Saturday, March 29, 2008 from 11 A.M. until 2 P.M. The actor roamed the show and encouraged individuals to check out the Oxtrot booth in the Gold Medal Arena.

WALA marketing: The Chamber continues to manage the redevelopment of the WALA web-site. The site map was completed and an initial design provided by Faster Solutions.

Tourism Summit: The program was finalized and the event promoted. Thirty people have registered to-date. Local news coverage should be strong.

Tourism Appreciation campaign: Paxton is working with Moore Consulting on a tourism awareness campaign to create a stronger bond between visitors, the business community, and residents. The program will kick off at the tourism summit and include store front posters, buttons, counter top table tents, banners, partnerships with local media. The timing is perfect – in conjunction with the GFO.

Annual visitor map: The 2008-2009 Brainerd Lakes Area Map is in the final stages of editing. All ad spots have been reserved/sold and all advertiser locations and ox statue locations are in the process of being dotted on the map. The map is scheduled to arrive the week of May 5th in time for the Governor's Fishing Opener.

Attractions familiarization tour: The schedule has been finalized and approved. Brenda Zawatzke, Joan Rosenow and Gretchen Ennis are working on coordinating the contents of the Brainerd Lakes Area Reference Manual which will be distributed to all tour-goers.

Governor's Fishing Opener:

The Sponsorship committee is working hard to continue to raise the rest of the cash needed for this event; they have been somewhat challenged this year with the economy and the Brainerd School District's financial situation. Activities have been set for both the Governor and the media (the Governor's will be officially confirmed after the Security Tour April 9). The program for the Community Picnic on Friday has a place for recognition and presentations and would be a great venue for the Board of Directors to be present. The Ox Trot will also be unveiled at the Community Picnic.

MEMBERSHIP

Member Outreach:

The Member Outreach Committee is working on improving the recognition of new CHOW attendees. One idea is to use different colored nametags. They also want to improve pre-registration and will change communication to express that pre-registration is appreciated.

The Latte 'n Learn topic for April was determined to be customer service based off of a member survey. Staff liaison for this committee is Emily Wolf until Miranda Anderson returns from maternity leave.

Ambassador Committee (Brainerd/Baxter areas):

The ambassador committee continues to attend AWV, though March was a slow month, we only did 3. The committee has stepped up to help out with the Governor's Opener, and Roger LaPointe has done a wonderful job taking the lead with the GFO registration area.

Ambassador Committee (Pequot Lakes/Breezy Point/Crosslake areas):

Ambassadors did one AWV and facilitated CHOW Time. Ruth Ann, Laurie Hoenig and Roger LaPointe also conducted an orientation for two new Ambassadors. The committee is also in the process of revamping and simplifying the Ambassador North Handbook.

Branding Initiative/Event & Communications:

The Manufacturing Roundtable held March 6 had the Chamber brand. The event was taped and aired on Channel 8 on CTC and Charter.

Chamber Connection added an Echo publication that printed March 27. We are still waiting to hear on future dates.

Your Chamber Connects reprinted the January and February committee photo inserts using Lakes Printing. Feedback was very positive and will continue to use them to print committee photos.

The Chamber worked with Josh Porter of Avalon Studios on this year's booth at the Commerce & Industry Marketplace. The Chamber definitely had a presence with a front and center booth with the new Chamber logo. The Connect, Lead, and Grow themes were also well represented. We received very positive feedback on the booth. A survey was also conducted on communication tools such as the hot deals newsletter and E-News and results are being collected.

Projects and Programs for Membership Overview

CHOW North:

March Chow time was held at Crosslake Auto Body and Detail with 38 in attendance

Lakes Area Young Professionals:

The LAYP event in March was at the Holiday Inn and Wendy Erie was the speaker on Best Life Habits. There were 15 in attendance. The committee is working on creating a more structured planning schedule and will be meeting the last Wednesday of each month.

Business After Hours:

BAH was held at Nor-Son in March and was a huge success. There were well over 200 attendees, as it was open to not only chamber members, but subcontractors for Nor-son. The prizes were amazing as well as the food.

CHOW South:

The March CHOW hosted by Close~Converse was attended by well over 100 people. The event took place at the new Baxter Village *Phase II* with a theme of metamorphosis. Along with butterfly nets to hold business cards, attendees also viewed pictures of the changing area and enjoyed food from Famous Dave's.

Latte 'n Learn

The March Latte 'n Learn was held at Prairie Bay and featured Wendy Erie on 7 Strategies to Live Your Best Life. There were 24 people in attendance and everyone enjoyed their own personal Caribou Coffee beverage (a new benefit for Latte 'n Learn!)

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Bridges Workplace Connection Advisory Committee Update (Workforce): At the March 7th quarterly meeting the committee spent the majority of the meeting discussing the final plans for the Career Exploration event and a discussion on how to sustain the Bridges workplace Connection. Gottsch, Paxton and Pam O'Rourke met with Sue Biehland from Central Tech Prep and discussed funding opportunities through Perkins funding. Sue will be meeting with her committee and they will discuss some possible funding for the Bridges program for the future.

Commerce and Industry: Sales for the show were in-line with last year's total income and we again held the event for two days (Friday and Saturday). We are conducting a survey of the exhibitors asking for their opinions not only on the Commerce and Industry Show, but also the impact on the Career Exploration held the first four hours of the show. Those results will be available after April 9th. Friday morning we had a good number of public and students at the show, Friday evening seemed to be down in attendance, but Saturday was extremely busy and well attended. Laura Richard with Burger King was the Chair of this year's event for her second year and was instrumental in the setup and show this year.

Career Exploration Day: The Career Exploration event was attended by 721 students who arrived by busses from Brainerd, Crosby, Pine River, Staples Motley, Pillager and Pequot Lakes. We received thank you cards and evaluations from the majority of the students and their responses were very appreciative for the event and hoped that other students in the future would have the same

opportunities. We have also conducted a survey for the Career Exploration vendors. A meeting is scheduled on April 9th to discuss the event and review the survey results.

Leadership, the Lakes: Attended Business Day at the Capitol in St. Paul and met with legislators John Ward and Paul Koering.

Crosslake Retail: The Crosslake Retail committee is in favor of the Welcome/Visitor Recognition Campaign and would like to utilize the posters, table top displays, and sticker or buttons.

The Crosslake Retail tour will take place at 5:30 p.m., Monday, May 19 and will begin with a potluck at North Wedge Greenhouse. The tour is open to Crosslake retail members who would like to learn more about other retailers in the area before the busy tourist season is in full swing.

Emily Roragen will attend the May 6 Crosslake Retail meeting to share information about the revitalization of Main Street Brainerd, including challenges that have been faced and how they were overcome. The meeting will be held at the Crosslake Community Center and will be open to both Chamber members and non-members in the Crosslake Area. Non-members will receive additional information about becoming a member.

Pequot Lakes Retail Committee: The Committee chair and Sue Galligan had a meeting with the Mayor of Pequot Lakes, a city council member and the city clerk to discuss concerns and questions from the retail businesses. Plans are to expand shopping in Pequot Lakes on Thursday evenings with weekly events (Paul Bunyan Bowling and movies in the park). Businesses will take advantage of the additional people in the area during the Governor's Fishing Opener with spring sales and a Bobber Scavenger Hunt. Attendance at the meetings has been increasing each month! The Pequot Lakes Retail Tour is scheduled for April 17th at 5:30 p.m.

St. Pat's Day Celebration and Parade: Seventy floats were entered in the 34th Annual St. Patrick's Day Parade in Crosslake, which drew nearly 7,500 people in attendance on Saturday, March 15.

The committee has voted to move the parade start time back to 2:00 p.m. The decision was made based on heavy feedback from the community and other factors.

Implementing the Sheriff's Mounted Patrol and the CLC Law Enforcement Club heightened security and safety awareness, and no major incidents were reported by the City of Crosslake. Volunteers did aid in the return of two lost children.

910 of the 1,500 "Blinkie" Buttons were sold. Plans for next year include making arrangements for volunteers to additionally sell the buttons at various bars and restaurants at key times.

The additional event activities (Ms. Blarney contest, Crosslake Firefighter's Pancake Breakfast, Live Music from Elvis, Kid's Day O' Fun, Pot O' Gold Treasure Hunt) were all very successful and will all likely be included again next year. The committee will tap into additional recommended resources for volunteers, especially for the Kid's Day O' Fun.

Preliminary figures show that the actual income received is \$2,000 higher than projected, and the expense is approximately \$200.00 under budget. The estimated net profit is \$6,043.25.

2008 Crosslake Days: The first committee meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 16. The theme will be the same as last year, "Pirates of Crosslake". There will not be a boat parade this year. The sponsorship request letter will be included in the May edition of Your Chamber Connects.

2008 Stars & Stripes Committee: The committee is progressing with July 3rd plans (Fireman's Rodeo, bands, carnival games, fireworks) and July 4th (Games & Parade). Still in need of additional sponsors and parade entries can download the forms from our website.

Bean Hole Days: Paul Bunyan will be looking for Babe the Ox and the beans this summer! Gretchen will be adding the lost beans to the Ox Trot articles.

Sporting Clays Committee: The first committee meeting took place down at Rice Creek in Little Falls, and there was an abundance of ideas that were gathered. The date has been set for June 10th, and we are in the process of getting information out to our membership. There will be an e-newsletter sent at the beginning of April to introduce it to everyone, and Lakes Printing will be developing the back of the Your Chamber Connects so that everyone will see it in this way as well. We will be including an insert in the following envelope if the response is not what we are hoping for.

Government meetings during the month:

- Hanson attended the Pequot Lakes City Council and Crosslake City Council meeting.
- Hanson, Paxton, and Roragen also attended a meeting with Pequot Lakes Planning and Zoning to discuss the Downtown Plan and how we can inform and educate the businesses about the plan and allow them input on the plan.
- Paxton attended the EMT Council meeting in St. Paul
- Manufacturing roundtable meeting with Governor Pawlenty
- Business Day at the Capitol
- Paxton attended two meetings of the Brainerd Planning and Zoning Commission about the new zoning ordinance
- Roragen attended one meeting of the Brainerd City Council
- Roragen attended one meeting of the Brainerd Planning and Zoning Commission about the new zoning ordinance
- Paxton attended Crow Wing County planning commission meeting to speak in support of the proposed shared capital resort ordinance (approved previously by the Board).