



**Council Workshop Summary**  
***Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)***  
**Monday, July 5, 2010**

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**Alternate formats for this document are available upon request**

Council, Town of Markham

Mayor Frank Scarpitti (Chair)  
Deputy Mayor Jack Heath  
Regional Councillor Jim Jones  
Regional Councillor Joe Virgilio  
Councillor Don Hamilton  
Councillor Carolina Moretti  
Councillor John Webster  
Councillor Dan Horchik

Staff, Town of Markham

John Livey, Chief Administrative Officer  
Brenda Librecz, Commissioner of Community & Fire Services  
Andy Taylor, Commissioner of Corporate Services  
Andrew Brouwer, Deputy Clerk (Meeting Coordinator)  
Ralph Capocci, Chief of Staff  
Stephen Chait, Director of Economic Development (Facilitator)  
Catherine Conrad, Town Solicitor  
Dennis Flaherty, Director, Communications & Community Relations  
Paul Ingham, General Manager, Operations  
Mark Ingwersen, District Manager, West  
Peter Loukes, Director, Operations  
Joel Lustig, Treasurer  
Victoria McGrath, Director, Sustainability Office  
Sandra Tam, Manager, Markham Small Business Enterprise Centre

Presenters & Guests

John Kiru, Executive Director, Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas  
Diane Ploss, Municipal Advisor, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing  
Karen Wallace, Municipal Advisor, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing

Participants

Owners, 48 Main Street, Unionville, Member, Unionville BIA  
Matt Cheng, affiliation unknown  
Roger Clements, Member, Markham BIA  
Tiffany Hsieh, Reporter, Markham Sun & Economist  
Rob Kadlovski, Member, Unionville BIA  
Diane Kobelansky, Chair, Markham BIA Board of Management  
Bernie Korte, Member, Markham BIA  
Anne Laxton, Unionville Historical Society  
Barry Laxton, Unionville Villagers' Association  
Tracy MacKinnon, Member, Unionville BIA  
Christine Matthews, Staff, Markham BIA  
Greg McCormick, Chair, Unionville BIA Board of Management

Martha Mingay, Member, Markham BIA  
Ruth A. Raymer, Member, Markham BIA  
Avery Rhijnsburger, Member, Markham BIA  
Sharon Taylor Wood, Member, Unionville BIA

### Opening Remarks & Introductions

A Council Workshop was held at 7:00 p.m. in the Canada Room, Civic Centre. Mayor F. Scarpitti welcomed participants, provided opening remarks and introduced presenters, including Diane Ploss and Karen Wallace, Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing; Stephen Chait, Economic Development, Town of Markham; and John Kiru, Toronto Association of the Business Improvement Areas.

### Presentation - Diane Ploss, Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing

Referring to PowerPoint slides included in the meeting file, Ms. Ploss provided an overview of the legislative context for business improvement areas (BIAs) in Ontario, in particular more recent Bill 130 amendments made to the Municipal Act, 2001, which defined BIAs as a local board, an entity which can be created or dissolved by the municipality at their discretion. Bill 130 amendments also require BIA boards of management develop and approve policies and procedures for:

- Meeting procedures, including procedures for board and member meeting notice;
- Rules governing when meetings may be open and closed to the public, noting that the municipality's closed meeting investigator may review if a BIA board of management meeting was properly closed to the public on application; and
- Sale of land, hiring of employees and procurement of goods and services.

Ms. Ploss highlighted various municipalities' responses to the BIA boards of management requirements under Bill 130, which varied between no response, to a focus on compliance, to a focus on enhanced relationship, or a combination of responses. For many municipalities, Bill 130 amendments were an opportunity to review the relationship, purpose and vision for BIAs in their community, in addition to structural and administrative changes, such as the creation of municipal service boards.

A BIA board of management's role following Bill 130 amendments was noted, including:

- Making recommendations to council regarding composition, activities of the Board and its officers;
- Developing and approving procedures for meetings, facilitating input on annual budgets, annual reporting and audits;
- Coordinating service contracts;
- Facilitating board elections; and
- Facilitating significant projects and initiatives.

A council's role relative to the BIA board of management following Bill 130 amendment was noted, including:

- Establishing BIA boundaries and composition of boards of management;
- Setting and outlining responsibilities;
- Establishing compliance requirements; and
- Determining means of communication.

Ms. Ploss highlighted that the success of a BIA may be measured through a number of lenses, including:

- Communication, accountability and transparency;
- Mutual respect and shared interest;
- Unified purpose; and,
- Flexibility

#### Presentation - Stephen Chait, Town of Markham

Referring PowerPoint slides included in the meeting file, Mr. Chait outlined the history and development of the Unionville BIA and Markham BIA, noting that geographic boundary changes reflect flexibility and adaption to change over time. Mr. Chait outlined the Town's services provided to BIAs, which included both fee-for-service and in-kind services to support events, provision of benches and flower baskets/barrels, waste pick up, snow removal, parks development/maintenance, accounts payable and financial reporting. A financial summary was shown, which indicated a comparable budget between the Markham BIA and Unionville BIA (\$202K and \$199K in 2009, respectively).

Corrections and clarification to some of the information were noted by participants, including the current size of the Markham BIA board of management (By-law 44-87) and deletion of the Tannery Pond improvements, recognizing that some projects were included due to its general benefit to the BIA area, while not within the BIA boundary itself. The value of the services provided by the Town to Markham BIA and Unionville BIA was noted by Mr. Kiru, Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas as being generally higher than most Ontario BIAs and certainly those in the City of Toronto.

Mr. Chait indicated three questions would be posed to the participants after Mr. Kiru's presentation for discussion.

#### Presentation – John Kiru, Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas

Mr. Kiru played a YouTube video highlighting the history and development of Ontario's first business improvement areas, including some of key success factors and creative responses to local business development.

Mr. Kiru highlighted some of his experiences and best practices in Toronto and internationally, including:

- New mechanisms of increasing revenue, such as the City of Toronto's Capital Improvement Initiative (City provides standard capital improvements, BIA pays for enhancements);
- City of Toronto Façade Improvement Program, which provides grants of between \$10,000 and \$12,000. The Program is especially important given Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements to make private businesses physically accessible;
- Examine opportunities for corporate sponsorship at events to reduce operating costs;
- Use of technologies to track retail traffic patterns;
- Foster ongoing communication through "best practice" business lunches;
- Municipally-sponsored business retention and expansion studies to understand longer term strategies for local business improvement; and
- Examine parking provisions and encourage on-street paid parking.

Mr. Kiru's research has shown that BIAs typically evolve in the following pattern from their start-up:

1. Focus on streetscape enhancement;
2. Focus on promotion of special events;
3. Focus on attracting and retaining the appropriate mix of retail businesses based on a broader shared vision; and
4. Focus on education member businesses in business attraction and retention strategies.

Mr. Kiru noted that while each BIA and municipality has its unique differences, it is important to look at best practices in Ontario and elsewhere. In particular, BIAs and municipalities should focus on enhancing their relationship through open and regular communication, and BIAs should move towards a longer term vision through the development of a business retention and expansion program.

#### Facilitated Discussion

Mr. Chait requested that the participants break into small groups to answer the following questions (responses summarized below):

- What does a successful BIA look like?
- What three actions can Markham and its BIAs take to achieve a successful relationship?
- What would be required in terms of time, money and other resources to achieve each action?

#### Summary of Responses (Unedited)

- A successful working relation is dependent on communication – listening, sharing information, holding annual meeting and other forms of ongoing communication
- The importance of respect, cooperation and partnership between stakeholders important
- Suggestion that annual meetings be attended by Councillors and key staff from departments such as Economic Development, By-law Enforcement and Operations
- Ensure a clearer understanding of the roles and expectations of various stakeholders, including the BIA boards of management, BIA members, Councillors, Town staff
- Develop standing rules/procedures, while allowing flexibility
- Foster participation by members and potentially compulsory attendance by members
- Suggest that BIAs have a link to their websites on the Town website/portal
- Suggestion that there be one key point of contact to liaise between BIAs and Town departments
- Economic Development, Sustainability Office and Culture Department should be more involved with BIAs
- Suggestion that BIAs undertake joint purchasing
- Sponsors should be sought by BIAs and better promoted at events
- Efficiency and effectiveness important in BIA operations
- Important to recognize the unique aspects of each BIA
- Equal partnership between the Town and BIAs, including financial and shared goals
- A protocol for communications would be helpful and would include email and standards for staff follow up
- Web site for Ontario Association of Business Improvement Areas should be reviewed to seek assistance with Markham BIA projects and to seek best practices/templates (e.g., minutes, agendas)

Closing Comments - Greg McCormick, Chair, Unionville Business Improvement Area

Mr. McCormick thanked Mayor Scarpitti for organizing the meeting.

Closing Comments – Diane Kobelansky, Chair, Markham Business Improvement Area

Ms. Kobelansky thanked Mayor Scarpitti for organizing the workshop and felt that although there may be disagreement on some matters; open dialogue was important and helpful. Ms. Kobelansky indicated that a vision for the Town's BIAs is very important.

Closing Remarks & Next Steps – Mayor Frank Scarpitti

Mayor Scarpitti provided closing remarks.

Mayor Scarpitti noted next steps:

- Mr. Kiru to return sometime in autumn, 2010 (or as available) to facilitate further discussion on the ideas suggested in the group sessions, noting that some Councillors may not be available in September or October; and
- Both BIA members were encouraged to bring forward their thoughts and ideas.

Mayor Scarpitti thanked all guests and presenters for their efforts and participants for their time and valuable participation.

Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 10:02 p.m.

(Original Signed)

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F. SCARPITTI, MAYOR

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A. BROUWER, DEPUTY CLERK