

Communications & IT Report – March 2020

Communications:

Starting a few days after the last Board meeting the Covid-19 situation started to take over as the number one issue for the Foundation and has occupied most of our time.

Looking back, on March 4th, our Executive Director emailed our Managers and others about Covid-19 reminding them of our strong history of responding to contagious viruses and including steps we needed to be taking to respond effectively to this new threat.

To give an idea of the speed of our response to Covid-19, the province initiated their Covid-19 website on March 4th and held its first daily update on March 13, 2020.

Our first notice asking people to please not visit if they had a fever or cough etc. was done on March 6th and placed at the doors of our lodges. Our first Facebook post was on March 12, which asked that all visitation stop. This was modified on March 14th to a full stop on any outside visitors. I am pleased to say that the Foundation was one of the first organizations in Alberta to take these steps to protect our seniors and the support from residents and the public has been overwhelmingly positive.

The March 12th post reached over 18,000 people, had over 3700 engagements and was shared 248 times. This is far beyond any of our previous posts. I was told by one of our town councilors that he was told that this post was, for many people in Peace River, one of the first indications as to the seriousness of the Covid-19 issue.

Since then we have been sending out daily communications and updates to staff keeping them informed of government actions and the evolving covid-19 landscape.

We have also written communications and letters to all our tenants and their families informing them of the processes we have in place to help protect everyone as best we can. And we were one of the first local organizations to publicly inform everyone of the work we are doing in this regard, both in our Facebook posts and on our website. Updates are incorporated as we proceed.

In the middle of this, we had our online auction of items from the Autumn Lodge. We were able to use our website infrastructure to put up pictures and basic descriptions of the items and to have each item link to a bid page which emailed the bids to us in real time. The auction is over now, and we received over 260 bids during the auction which had to be tracked and tallied daily. We are presently taking steps to contact all successful bidders and arrange for pickup of the items.

IT & Technical

On the IT side, much of the work done last year has become extremely useful in assisting in our office's response to Covid-19. Several of our office staff are now working from home with full access to their work computers and the shared data drive.

Both Yardi and Avanti are web-based, and Office 365 incorporates OneDrive and Teams which allows our users to communicate with each other, share files as needed and access their own files regardless of location. Pulseway, which was initially chosen to allow us to monitor all of our computers for performance and stability issues, also includes a remote access component which makes it possible for

our people working at home to remotely access their own office computer securely as if they are in front of it. Access to the computers can be kept separate so confidentiality is maintained between the positions.

Additionally, we had one notebook hard drive failure. The hard drive was replaced, the system was rebuilt and, because of office 365 and other mitigation we have in place no data was lost and the end user was able to access their files from another laptop during the interim.

In the Office – The new normal

We are following strict protocols in our office to keep everyone safe. No one goes into any other office but their own. If we need to talk face to face, we stand outside the office and speak to the person inside but often use the intercom and BeeBEEP, our internal office messaging system. We no longer have coffee and lunches together and the maintenance staff don't come to the office in the morning to be dispatched.

We do not allow anyone from outside of our office to come into the office and all packages are left at the door. We put gloves on to receive the item and disinfect it to the best of our ability before it is handled. Lunches are taken at our desks and the door handles and other high contact items are disinfected multiple times throughout the day.

We wash our hands, and sanitize everything, a lot, and I've learned that moisturizers actually do work.

And, as mentioned earlier, several employees are working from home.

Personal

We are doing our best to keep positive and we feel fortunate that we can, hopefully, make a difference in the overall outcome of this situation. It's that opportunity that keeps us motivated throughout the day. It's always like this, of course, but somehow the Covid-19 issue has made me more aware of why this work is so rewarding.

However, I will say that I miss the sound of a busy office, the background noise of people walking from one place to another, and the smiles as everyone makes their way throughout the day. So often, it's almost silent now, especially when there are only two of us here. I miss the Friday mornings, where we all put a dollar on the table and laughed and joked as our numbers were erased by our co-workers until one of us reaped the windfall. I miss the lunch hours where you get to know people beyond the function of their jobs and hear them talk of family, the dogs and cats, and other little critters, and what they did on the weekend and sometimes, if you have a problem you have a friendly ear that will listen and maybe, if you're lucky, offer some wisdom with to which to proceed. Human interaction is desirable and valuable.

And, as far as the Board meeting is concerned, I'm going to miss seeing you all and hearing everyone greet each other as they walk in. I'll miss the meal we have and not just because it's usually really, really good, but because again, we always get to know each other a little better for sharing the time together.

I hope that things get back, at least part of the way, to the old normal, but in the meantime, onward and upward and let's work together to help everyone get through this.