

Pitching in and wearing many hats

Harry Delong called the meeting to order, the first public meeting to be held in the new fire hall and community centre. The meeting was in the business hub, a space to stimulate innovation and enterprise in the village, and evidence was everywhere of people working to create a special space in a modern building.

Harry, who used to be superintendent at Kejimikujik National Park and National Historic Site, said he would like to welcome everybody to the meeting of the North Queens Board of Trade, and that the board had taken a chance that the building would be ready for the meeting.

"As you can see," he said, "It is still a work in progress. You can see where we are going with this. It will be a sort of rustic, cottage theme." Design of the hub was done by Hailey Thomson, who is Queens Region Councillor Brian Fraelic's daughter, and in another neat connection, is the wife of Dave Thomson, one of the founders of the Mahone Bay community hub.

Don Kimball, who is the board's financial officer, sat at the front. Don, who is a carpenter and a woodworker, had made from Nova Scotia oak a gorgeous top for a long table that will serve as a



Tom Sheppard

boardroom table, replacing the table's old pine top. The table had been in the basement of a local church.

Don had also made the live-edged tables around which the members sat, from pine cut on his property. The planks on the tables were joined beautifully in the middle, but the edges were curved and flowing. He used the same designs to make the shelves along the walls of the community hub.

The end walls of the hub are done in staggered pieces of pine, cut from wood donated for the effort by the Mersey Tobeatic Research Institute in Kempt. The work of putting up the walls was done by Richard Lane and Jane Barker, and by Ethan Payzant. Harry Delong, who wears many hats, ripped the wood in special short pieces for the walls. He, and Felka Kind, who lives in Brookfield Mines, did a lot of the painting for the centre.

One of the first tenants of the

community hub area will be the Midway Community Forest, which is a fitting thing, given that the large, new fire hall was truly a community effort, with so many people working to make it a reality. The Board of Trade has been a big part of that.

The first firemen's breakfast has already been held in the hall, and those using the new state-of-the-art kitchen pronounced it excellent. The old fire hall, which for years housed those looking after the safety of the many villages in North Queens, and which brought the community together for breakfasts on the third Saturday of every month, has disappeared. It was taken down a couple of weeks ago by Gerry Van Dyk, and all that remains is a smooth parking lot next to the new fire hall.

The chairs in the hub were comfortable, on wheels, the last being put together just before the meeting by Paul Henderson, who is the head of the interim board running the North Queens Business Centre and Innovation Hub, and also the project manager. Paul and his wife Amanda have a young family in the community and Paul said he had been basically living at the fire hall, getting things ready. He works in his other

life as the front store manager at the Pharmasave, on the Caledonia Corner.

Harry Delong said that since the board was there initiating the meeting space, he would ask Paul to make a few comments on where we were and where we were going. Paul spoke of the use being planned for the hub and community hall. Advance polling for the election would be held there, and after Elections Canada leaves on the twelfth, things would get finished. Other events are already scheduled. "Things look good," he said. The hub is currently being governed by the interim group but will be run by a board of directors, and in fact the group is looking for people who would like to be directors.

The centre will serve as a polling station during the federal election on October 19. Harry said it would be a great opportunity for people in the community to see the new facility, and by that time they hoped it would be fully staged and in its final condition. The board wants community members to see what the hub and centre can do for them. There will be a grand opening scheduled for the fire hall and community centre once construction is com-

pleted.

After this talk subsided, the board got down to its agenda business, the first being to think about Remembrance Day services in the community. With the Legion Hall closed recently and the Legion branch disbanded, the organization of the usual services for Remembrance Day is up in the air. Yet people want them. The Board of Trade cannot do the organizing, so it is hoping that others will come forward to set up services.

And so the meeting went on, with talk about locating and decorating the community Christmas tree on the corner, maximizing the centre's broadband and connectivity, and progress on the community's new post office, which may be open by Christmas.

Also discussed were plans for making a park along the lake in the middle of the community, and about setting up a proper stage for the community centre, which will be hosting a dinner theatre (roast pork and lots of laughs) on October 17. There was discussion about the municipal committee being set up to locally recognize Canada's 150th birthday in 2017; coincidentally, that year coincides with Caledonia's 200th birthday, so there was a lot of interest in the plans.

When the meeting was over, Board of Trade members stuck around to move furniture, clean debris and put together furniture. In a small community, there is no rest for the weary. Everybody pitches in.