

**Kountze Chamber of Commerce**  
**Regular Meeting**  
**City Hall**  
**March 10, 2016**  
**2 p.m.**

**In Attendance:** Lauri Thompson (State Farm), Linda Miller (BBVA Compass), Rusty Mott (Cornerstone Baptist Church), Milton Lollar (Lollar Automotive), Kathleen Von Feldt (Benchmark Plumbing), Daniel White (First Baptist Church), D'Ann White (WhiteHall Crafts), Larry Shows (First United Methodist)

Lauri Thompson called the meeting to order at 2:03 p.m.

Pastor Rusty Mott led the invocation.

D'Ann White read the minutes. There was one correction: John Ferguson did not say he would cook at the banquet, and has asked to not be considered for the task. Linda Miller moved to accept the minutes with the correction. Larry Shows seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Treasurer's Report given by Kathy Von Feldt. The following balances were as of February 29, 2016:

- Citizens Bank (general checking)--- \$9085.83
- Education First (checking)---\$316.83
- Education First (savings)---\$20,528.83

This week, Kathy Von Feldt called the IRS to see where the Chamber stands. The last return that has been filed for the Chamber was on June 30, 2011. (Our fiscal year is from July-June). Just prior to the new board's induction, the Chamber received an invoice from Steve Epps, CPA, for \$805.00 for the 2013 tax return. Upon investigation, it was discovered that Steve Epps prepared a return for what he thought was the 2013 year, because that was the year he worked on it. The IRS considers the return for what year December fell in the fiscal year---since December, 2012, fell in that year, the return is for the 2012 year. Due to all this, the returns were prepared on the wrong forms. Steve Epps also sent an invoice to the Chamber to file an amended return because the previous board had submitted an incorrect list of board members. (Total invoice was for \$905.00.) Additionally, in June, 2013, Steve Epps invoiced the Chamber \$75 for a consultation fee. Finally, even though Steve Epps prepared the form, it was never mailed to the IRS.

Lauri Thompson stated that we need to have all taxes filed to date in order to keep our non-profit status. There has been some discussion among the board members that \$980 seems a little excessive for a simple tax return. Elaine Allums asked what Steve Epps office said. Kathy Von Feldt stated that she has not been given direct answers. Lauri Thompson has also called Steve Epps' office, but not been able to talk to Steve directly. His office does not have any figures or documents. The Chamber needs to provide documents and income for the missing years. Kathy Von Feldt stated that she has been rebuilding 2015 and most of 2014, and she is also trying to reconstruct July 1, 2013-June 30, 2014, but has only found one bill for the entire year. She also has check stubs for that year, but there is no receipts for the debit charges. She will mail the 2012 return, and she also stated that, since we do not owe anything, there will not be any penalties or interest. Since gross receipts were over \$100,000, due to the Music Fest, we have to file the 990 form. Kathy Von Feldt also stated that the IRS has warned that as soon as the 2012 return is filed, that there is a good chance the Chamber will receive a revocation order from the IRS, but we can go to the website for the reinstatement. Daniel White asked if an extension could be filed so that we will not lose our non-profit status. Lauri Thompson stated that she would rather just get the taxes completed. However, Elaine Allums reminded the Chamber that it is tax season. D'Ann White suggested that the Chamber go ahead and file the extension to prove that we are doing what we can to file as soon as possible. Kathy Von Feldt stated that if no one objects, she would call her CPA in Beaumont and ask for advice.

Current plan of action proposed:

1. Mail 2012 return
2. Decide on CPA
3. Kathy will continue to work the numbers

Daniel White so moved to proceed, and it was seconded by Kathy Von Feldt. All in favor, motion carried.

**Old Business**

Award Nominations---D'Ann White reported that there were only two businesses nominated for Business of the Year: 1 small business, and 1 large business and they will be announced at the Banquet. There were two Citizen of the Year nominees: Thomas Cryer and D'Ann White. Ballots will be sent out soon. Elaine Allums reported that she has not yet heard from John Ferguson on the Teacher of the Year.

Bylaws Report---D'Ann White reported that she only received 9 votes regarding the proposed Bylaw change; all votes were for the change. Lauri Thompson asked if there were any objections; there were no objections, vote carried.

Banquet---Last year's Banquet was held at the Music Hall, but Lauri Thompson stated that there are tables and chairs in the pod, so we can use them at any location. She previously asked Natosha Brown how many, and Natosha replied that there were 48 chairs and "a lot of tables." Natosha Brown had also suggested the Chamber renting the tables and chairs out for some income. Lauri Thompson's idea is to make the tables and chairs available but to charge a security deposit. Kathy Von Feldt suggested make this available as a member's only benefit. Milton Lollar stated that the members would be more accountable, and D'Ann White and Linda Miller concurred. It was agreed by general consensus to make the tables and chairs available for members' use, with a security deposit.

Lauri Thompson has been contacted by the Silsbee Chamber and Sour Lake Chamber, and they want to work with us. The presidents will meet for lunch on April 13, 2016, and have a planning meeting to benefit the chambers by cooperation. She suggested that we table a formal banquet this year and instead have a Chamber Mixer, and proposed that we have one mixer per quarter, with each Chamber hosting the mixer (ex: Kountze host the first mixer, Sour Lake the second, etc). Milton Lollar asked how Kountze will benefit from a partnership with Sour Lake's Chamber. Lauri Thompson stated that we could glean ideas from the other Chambers, and gave an example of at a County Fair, carnival, parade, etc. we could pool money for all the Chambers.

Linda Miller suggested that instead of having a banquet that we send out special invitations to our next month's meeting inviting the awards recipients and have a reception. We could keep next month's business to a minimum. It was decided by general consensus to postpone the banquet until 2017 and have an awards presentation at the April meeting.

Kathy Von Feldt introduced the discussion of having one evening meeting per quarter in order for more members to attend. D'Ann White suggested that the April meeting be moved to the evening, since the awards will be presented. This will give more of the members a chance to attend, especially since the Teacher of the Year recipient would not be able to attend at the normal meeting time. Milton Lollar suggested having the reception at 6:30 p.m. Elaine Allums asked the office if there was any we could have someone open City Hall for an evening meeting and reception, and they told her they would get her a key. Kathy Von Feldt volunteered to make food trays. Linda Miller so moved, and Kathy Von Feldt seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Commercial---Lauri Thompson reported that the EDC had planned to vote on Tuesday, March 8, 2016, but were not able to meet. However, the EDC board members have agreed to offer 50% sponsorship for 18 businesses (9 businesses/quarter). The initial commitment is for six months, and then after six months, they would evaluate to see if it was successful. The question was presented as to what was hindering us from moving forward with the commercials. Lauri Thompson explained that the Chamber needs to vote to approve the expenditure. The other 50% of the cost will be split four ways between the Chamber and the three businesses. The Chamber's portion for both quarters will be \$2362.50. Each business will pay \$393.75 per quarter. Milton Lollar asked what the Chamber will get out of this sponsorship. Lauri Thompson explained that each commercial will begin and end with the Kountze Chamber. This will give the Chamber exposure and hopefully increase membership. Kathy Von Feldt also stated that we receive on average \$3700-\$4000 per year in membership dues. This sponsorship is a way for the Chamber to give back to the businesses. Daniel White so moved, Milton Lollar seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

## **New Business**

Plaques & Awards---There will be six awards given this year at the Awards Reception. Kathy Von Feldt suggested setting a \$500 limit for all six awards, and so moved. D'Ann White seconded. All in favor, motion carried.

Christmas Lights---Elaine Allums found a list for all poles on which Christmas lights were placed each year. Two Christmas lights are still up and need to be removed.

Linda Miller suggested that we dispense with the reading of the minutes at each meeting since the minutes are submitted to the membership via email. This will help shorten meeting time. A few copies can be provided for those present that have not seen the minutes. This was decided by general consensus.

Website report---Daniel White reported that he never received any calls from Doug Moore (owner of WebPro500). The membership list on the website as now been updated. The current hosting of the domain will expire on April 15, 2016. The board members have discussed moving the hosting back to Spring Print.

Daniel White moved to adjourn. Larry Shows seconded. All in favor, meeting adjourned.